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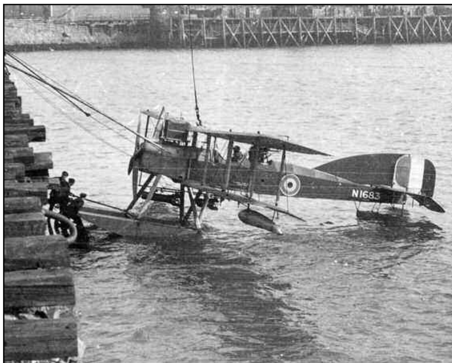
Christmas 2010

Journal of the Ottery St. Mary Heritage Society

Including...

One Family's War: Frank Shepherd recalls his family's war torn history - p4



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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At our November members' meeting at the Institute we were transported back in time to Medieval Ottery, exploring the social history of the town in the 14th century.

Congratulations to speaker Chris Wakefield, for expertly sharing his research with a rapt audience in a superb hour-long presentation, beautifully illustrated throughout.

Chris chose the life of a peasant farmer with a few acres as the context for a look at various everyday personal experiences that were common in the Middle Ages but are very different today. And what of the Black Death? We can barely imagine the scale of social trauma caused by the plague of 1349 which would have killed around 40% of Ottery's population!

All this examined and illustrated with contemporary paintings, written works and video clips – thank you Chris for an excellent and thought-provoking presentation

We attended a coffee morning at the Institute on October 12, entitled "The King's School Looks Around". We were asked to share our expertise with the students, answering their questions about the Ottery area, and giving creative responses to their research. An interesting project, which provided an opportunity to engage with young people and, it is hoped, encourage their interest in the town's heritage and history.

On October 26, members enjoyed a day out in Exeter. Our morning visit was to the Devon and Exeter Institution in Cathedral Close, for a conducted tour of the great Library and the building, parts of which are Tudor in origin. In the afternoon we had the privilege of viewing the treasured documents of the Cathedral Library.

The Coleridge Anniversary Lunch on October 23 was undersubscribed. It was disappointing to see only thirty members at this prestige annual event. Not only is this occasion aimed at raising the profile of Ottery's famous son, but it is an opportunity to promote our Society to the wider public – it is an event which I feel we should all

/continues on p2

Letters, articles or any other submissions to the Journal can be emailed to otteryheritage@googlemail.com

Editorial

I have been much preoccupied recently with the medieval history of Ottery (as regular attenders at our monthly meetings may have noticed). It is an important period of our history and most of the local records that are still around from that time need to be transcribed and published - not just for our own enlightenment but for the sake of all future generations of Ottregians. We have started that task with the little Lay Subsidies booklet and there are two more slim volumes to come next year.

But perhaps the most important records we have of Ottery as it was 600 years ago - the court proceedings - remain unattended in the vaults of the DRO. It would require a considerable effort to get them published but I honestly believe it would be an exciting and rewarding experience for a small group to get together to tackle this.

Some learning of new skills is involved - for me just as for anyone else in the group, but it is eminently do-able - no question. It would be a work-at-your-own-pace sort of job with contact as required with the others in the group.

The present transcription "group" is just two members - it's not big enough to take on the court rolls. So if you think you might like to help with this, then please contact me on otteryheritage@googlemail.com.

Lay Subsidy puzzle solved

In conversation with Vaughan Glanville, I discover that "Furze Farm" noted as a "lost" farm in the Society's Lay Subsidy booklet was most likely sited in the vicinity Furzebrook. Vaughan tells me he lived there when he was young in a house which was a very likely candidate for a farm. That leaves Holway, Cutcliff, Hembry, Stone, Hurne and Lane yet to find.

From the Chairman (cont from p1)

make an effort to support. This year we reduced the number of courses by popular request – was this a mistake? Perhaps there is a need to examine the format. Some feedback would be useful.

Members are reminded that we do not meet in December. The next Heritage meeting at the Institute will be on Tuesday, January 11th. Guest speaker Colin Pady's talk is entitled "From Carthorses to Computers", the story of farming in the 20th century.

My thanks to you all for your support. I look forward to seeing you all in January.

Wishing you all a blessed Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

Robert Neal

Forthcoming Events

Unless otherwise noted, all the Society's meetings are held in the Institute, Yonder Street, Ottery St. Mary.

2011

11th January (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Carthorses to Computers
The story of Farming in the 20th century
Speaker: Colin Pady

15th February (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Ottery St Mary Church Roof
An illustrated talk from the point of view of a carpenter
Speaker: Simon Lowne

15th March (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Mills in the East Devon Landscapes
An illustrated talk on the history and technology of milling
Speaker: Martin Watts

19th April (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Adventures in the Wine Industry
A wide ranging view over the wine industry
Speaker: David Bond

17th May (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
The History of 'Fields of Sidmouth' from 1800
Speaker: Trevor Roberts

21th June 2011 (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
AGM plus The Green Man of Ottery
Speaker: Sue Andrews

19th July 2011 (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Green Lanes of East Devon and beyond
Speaker: Valerie Belsey

20th September 2011 (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
In the Footsteps of Peter Orlando Hutchinson
Speaker: Philippe Planel

18th October 2011 (Tuesday) 7.30 pm
Woodbury Castle - The Hill Fort
Speaker: Bungy Williams

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Anthony John Jones

30 April 1931 – 21 August 2010

We are sad to record the passing of Tony Jones on 21 August 2010, a Trustee and loyal member of the Heritage Society since its formation in 1999.

Tony was born in Coventry where, as a child, he befriended June; her family had been relocated to a few doors away, having lost their home in the Coventry blitz. In their teens they became sweethearts, were eventually married and raised a family of three girls and a boy.

Initially studying for a history degree, Tony graduated from Birmingham University with a BA degree in English, later taking his Masters at Exeter.

He joined Rolle College Exmouth as Senior Lecturer in English, and immediately involved himself in local community matters. He founded the "14-20 Club" for young people and for a time sat on the Exmouth Parish Council. He was also a founder member of Exmouth Museum.

He and June retired to Ottery St Mary where, as keen gardeners, they joined the Ottery St Mary Gardening Club.

Tony was a founder member of the Ottery St Mary Heritage Society and a committee member from the start. He brought to the society a great deal of experience from his earlier involvement with Exmouth Museum and his keen interest in local history.

These local interests plus involvement with their family which, by this time, was increased by eight grand-children, made for a busy and active retirement. When failing health forced Tony's resignation as a trustee of the Society, he continued with his research, in particular the effects and legacy of the civil war on Ottery and the South West, and continued to support our meetings until shortly before his death in August.

We express our deepest sympathy to June and the family. We shall miss him.

Robert Neal

Letters

Write to: Te Editor: Heritage Journal "Melbury" Longdogs Lane, Ottery St Mary EX11 1HX or email otteryheritage@googlemail

4, Tyes Orchard, Plymtree,
Cullompton, Devon. EX15 2JT
June 17th

Dear Chris Wakefield,

I read your booklet on the OSM Lay Subsidies of the 14th century with considerable interest and enjoyment.

What initially attracted me to it in the bookshop window in Otter was, of course, the cleverly chosen cover - the colourful and lively 'Children's Games' by Pieter Brueghel. It was only later that I noticed Ottery's Parish church featuring seemlessly in the top corner of this Flemish masterpiece!

While I appreciate the humour and subtlety of this, I have to say that I really feel you should have acknowledged both the source of the cover illustration and your 'fraudulent' superimposition of the photo. Your apparent failure to do so does not redound to the credit of the Ottery Heritage Society!

Yours sincerely,

Heather Wheeler

Editor's reply: I take the point. In future the cover graphics will be acknowledged and any fraud confessed!

Ruth Foster

We are sad to record the passing of Ruth Foster, wife of Dr Michael Foster to whom we extend our deepest sympathy. Michael is at present recovering from major heart surgery and we join in wishing him a speedy recovery to good health.

Doreen Cross

Regular faces at our monthly meetings have been Rev Hugh Cross and his wife Doreen. We were saddened to learn that Doreen passed away in October and send our deepest sympathy to Hugh at this sad time.

Robert Neal

One Family’s War

Remembering with honour
Frank Shepperd 1898-1918 of Ottery St Mary
Alfred Edward Shepperd 1899-1919 of Elliott, Tasmania

OTTERY ST MARY 1909
Francis and Sarah Shepperd’s sons, Frank (11) and Richard (9) (Believed to have been taken to record Richard’s first day at The King’s School)

OTTERY ST MARY 1902
Francis Henry Shepperd with a member of his staff outside the family business in Silver Street. (Believed to have been taken when the shop was decorated for the coronation of King Edward VII)

Some time in the early 1880s, four young people emigrated to Tasmania. Two of them were Lewes and Francis Shepperd whose father Alfred ran the family wine and spirit business at Ottery St Mary that had been established in 1830 (see photo above). Lewes was a clerk to a shipping company in London and Francis the miller’s clerk at Beckington in Somerset. Just around the corner from where he had lodgings, lived a family called Franks. The other two emigrants were their eldest son Harold and their second daughter Sarah, who was the same age as Francis.

Lewes and Harold both became farmers at a place called Elliott, a small settlement some miles south of Burnie on the north west coast. Lewes married a girl called Fanny Gale and they had six children, their second son being Alfred Edward born in 1899; Harold married and had a son called James, born in 1889.

Meanwhile, back in Ottery, Alfred senior’s health failed, he was admitted to hospital and remained there for the rest of his life. His eldest son who would have inherited the family business also died. We can only guess the rest, but it seems probable that Alfred’s wife Anne, who was then in her 60s, felt that running the business on her own was too big a challenge, and that she wrote to Lewes and Francis in Tasmania asking them to return and take over. Further conjecture is that Lewes declined but Francis accepted. What we do know is that Francis and Sarah must have returned to England together, for they were married at Beckington in 1889 and Francis took over the reins at Ottery.

Eleven years later, their family was complete, the two youngest children being their sons; Frank born in 1898 and my father Richard born in 1900. Both boys attended the King’s school, initially at The Priory in Paternoster Row and later at Thorne (see photo above). Frank appears to have been the brains of the family for he won several prizes there. But at the end of his schooldays in July 1916, Britain was at war and conscription had been introduced. He joined the Army Service Corps (later RASC) as a Private and served in Salonika as a driver with 913th MT Company. Conditions there were bad and although he survived the war, he became a victim of the influenza epidemic of 1918/1919 and tragically died on 24th December 1918, one month after the Armistice. He is buried at Bralos British cemetery in Greece.

Tragedy had struck the family in Tasmania too, for Lewes and Fanny both died during a flu epidemic in 1913. Thereafter, their two eldest children also called Lewes and Fanny, who were then aged 21 and 18 respectively, took on the daunting task of looking after the family. Five years later, Alfred Edward enlisted in the

TASMANIA 1918
Lewes and Fanny Shepperd's family, with Alfred Edward (19) in uniform. (Believed to have been taken prior to Alfred Edward's departure for Britain with 12th Bn AIF)

12th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Forces and a family photograph was taken whilst he was on embarkation leave (see photo above). James Franks also enlisted at about the same time and the two young men from Elliott left for the war aboard SS Zealandic, which sailed from Melbourne on 5th October 1918.

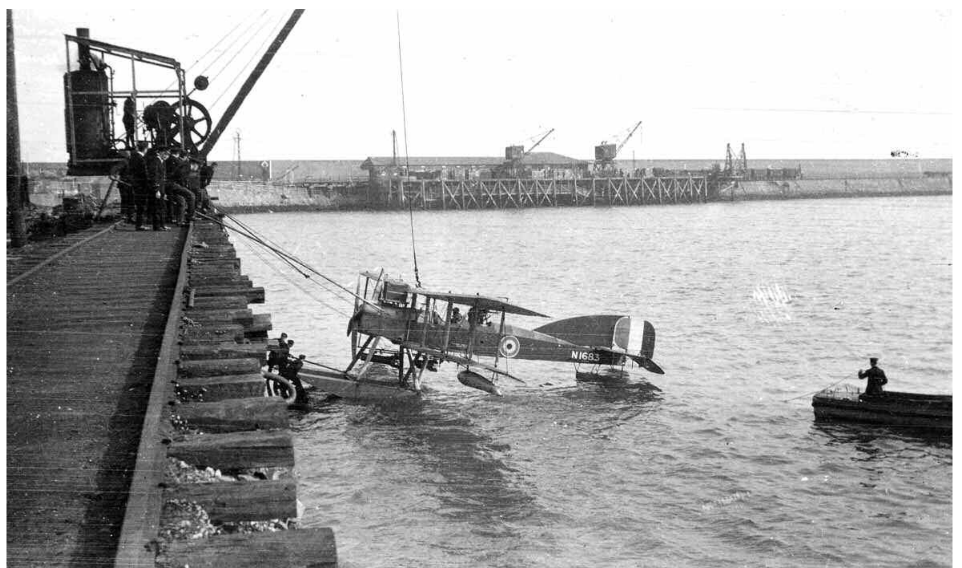
The 12,000 mile voyage half way around the world took six weeks, so the armistice had already been agreed before they arrived. One can only imagine the feelings of young men like James Franks, who were lucky enough to turn around and sail home without having to fire a shot in anger. Sadly, Alfred Edward was not among them for the influenza epidemic was raging in Britain too and, like his cousin in Greece, he was struck down and died at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire, on 9th January 1919 and is buried in the Australian cemetery there (see photo end of article).

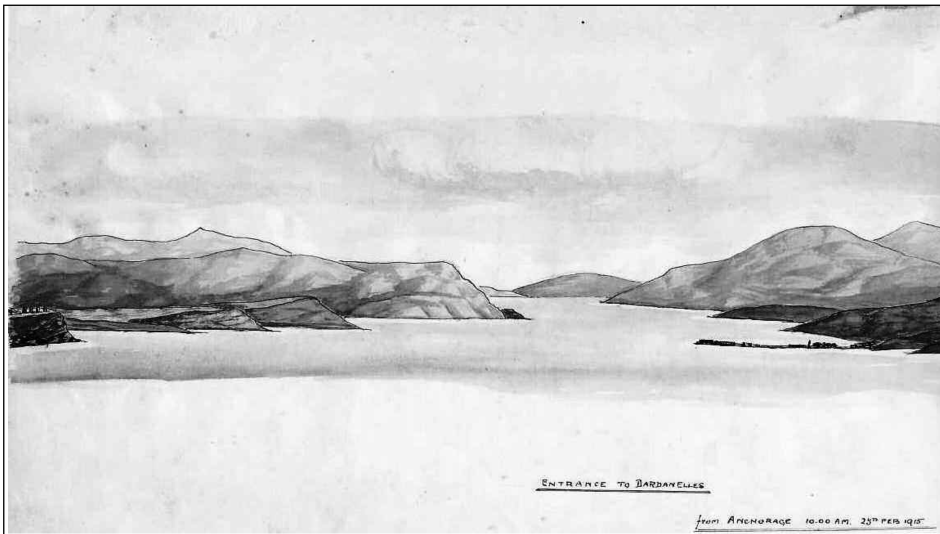
The third member of the family, who served in the Great War, and the only one to survive it, was my father, Richard. He was a member of King's school Volunteer Training Corps, VTC, and left to join the Royal Naval Air Service in 1917 at the age of 17. Pilots were turned out in a hurry in those days and progress to a commission was astonishingly rapid. After basic training at Greenwich, he was sent to Vendome in France to start his flying training and qualified as a pilot just after the formation of the RAF in April 1918. He was then sent back to England to learn to fly seaplanes at Lee-on-Solent. This included dropping bombs on Fawley Marshes and engaging in mock fights with other seaplanes using a camera gun to assess his marksmanship. On completion, he was gazetted as a temporary 2nd lieutenant (see photo below left) and assigned to an operational seaplane station at the seemingly unlikely location of Fishguard, where he flew on anti-submarine patrols in Short 184 aircraft armed with 230 lb bombs (see photo below right). Two months later upon the formation of 245 Squadron RAF, he became one of its founder pilots.

One more man deserves a mention, although pedantically he was not 'family' until after the war when he married one of my father's older sisters. Geoffrey Neville Baildon, who was born in about 1890, joined Cunard as a cadet on leaving school and in those days a commitment to join the Royal Naval Reserve went with the job. So he was mobilised before war was declared and served as

SOUTHAMPTON 1918
2nd Lieutenant Richard Shepperd (18)
(Believed to have been taken to record his qualifying as an RAF pilot)

FISHGUARD 1918
Short 184 aircraft N1683, ready for an anti-submarine patrol, is lowered into the harbour at Fishguard. (2nd Lt Shepperd is recorded as the pilot of a similar aircraft N2830)





THE DARDANELLES 1915
Drawn by Assistant Paymaster G N Baildon RNR on board HMS Agamemnon

Assistant Paymaster on HMS Agamemnon. One of my most treasured possessions is a typewritten copy of his 'War Diary' that he maintained from 29 July 1914 to 31 July 1916. On passage to the Dardanelles another ship from his squadron, HMS Formidable, was torpedoed off the south Devon coast and he mentions a 'very ably handled' Brixham trawler, that rescued a number of survivors in gale force conditions accompanied by driving rain and hail. The trawler was called Provident and her crew were subsequently decorated by King George V. To this day, a photograph of them taken after the investiture is proudly displayed in Brixham Museum.

It is fascinating to speculate upon how this young seagoing lad from Liverpool ever managed to meet and eventually marry my late aunt. She was one of three sisters and I understand that before 1914 they had never left Ottery St Mary. Upon the outbreak of hostilities however, they immediately volunteered their services as nurses. So there is a possible clue to this mystery in another treasured possession I have, which is the original manuscript of a book Geoff wrote (but never published) called 'The Agamemnon and the Dardanelles'. In it he describes from his own perceptive observations, every action the ship was involved in during that sad debacle. As his action station was the 'lower top' with its grandstand view and he later went ashore on 'W Beach' one of the invasion landing places, many of these observations are uniquely vivid and superbly illustrated with his own drawings (see photo above). In lighter vein, he also mentions some rare opportunities for relaxation. One was when a party of nurses from a hospital ship came on board and he, in his own laconic words – 'Was invited to entertain them. Showed them round … and then gave them tea'. So who knows – as the old saying goes, stranger things have happened at sea!

The impact of the Great War upon my family does emphasise two points that are often overlooked today. They are that during and immediately after that war, more people died from sickness than were killed in action and second that, as a result of the submarine menace, Britain came closer to total defeat through starvation at home than it did during military engagements abroad.

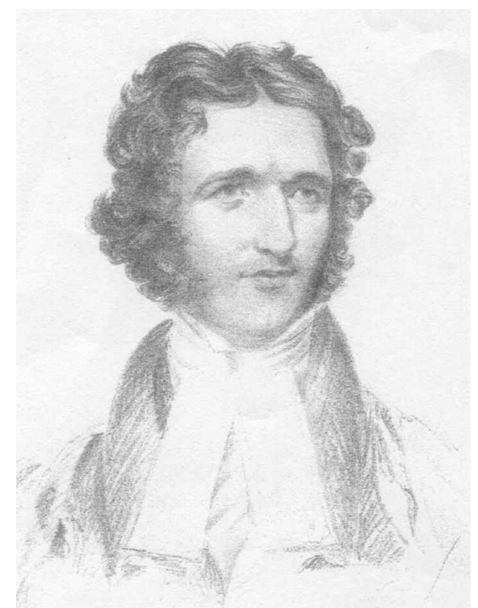
Richard Frank Shepperd

SUTTON VENY 2010 – Alfred Edward's headstone in the Australian cemetery at Sutton Veny, Wiltshire

A Kennaway Mystery.

Lucy Channon pursues a chance find hidden in the back of a picture frame...

In June 2010 a lady by the name of Tracy Butler came to Escot and gave to the owner, John Michael Kennaway, a framed picture and its unexpected contents. She had purchased the picture at a car boot sale merely for the modern frame. On opening up the frame she discovered, behind the trivial print, several old and yellowed sheets of paper. All but one of these contained a poem, each copied out in a different handwriting. The remaining sheet bore a finely drawn pencil portrait of a gentleman. Close examination suggested that they had all been torn from a book, probably a 19th century Commonplace Book. In that period it was quite usual for



Included among the hidden pages was this competent pencil sketch of Edward Irving (left) – a Scottish clergyman and supporter of the Apostolic Catholic Church in Scotland.

educated gentlemen and ladies to keep a large notebook, or Commonplace Book, in which they recorded poems, philosophical thoughts, or quotations which appealed to them. Sometimes friends were invited to contribute. A member of the Kennaway family must have owned such a notebook as one of the poems is initialled by a Kennaway. The others contain other signatures, dates, or record Escot as the place of writing.

The earliest dated sheet has an apparently original two verse poem which has an almost missionary zeal, comparing the blessings of sunshine to the blessing received:-

When the Gospel sheds its cheery beams /
On gracious souls. . . .'

At the bottom of this poem is a dedication:-

Written in token
Of Christian regard and remembrance
by
C. R. A Steinkopf

Steinkopf appears to have been a Lutheran minister at the Savoy church in London in 1835. John Kennaway, 2nd Baronet, was frequently in London. Presumably he made the acquaintance of Steinkopf and invited him to visit Escot as a friend.

On the other side of this sheet is copied out the well known poem 'When I was Young' by Samuel T. Coleridge, beginning -

'Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,
Where Hope clings feeding like a bee.
8oth were mine! Life went a maying
With Nature, Hope and Poesy,
When I was young! '

Below the poem is the signature of the man who copied it out:-

Tho. Louis
Escot March 2nd 1828

The final stanza is missing from this poem. There are several possible reasons. Did the writer just run out of space on the page? Did he deliberately leave off the last verse? Or, as suggested on the internet, was the final part of this poem added by Coleridge later than March 1828? At the top of the page is an apparently unrelated, delicately painted watercolor illustrating a Mogul's Palanquin. This is a reference to the first Baronet's close connection with India as an officer in the private defence army of the East india Company. This implies that the Commonplace Book from which this page is torn belonged to the first Baronet.

Another sheet, undated, bears a copy of a hymn entitled 'Missionary Hymn'. With the exception of one word it is identical to the hymn in the Anglican church Hymnbook 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' which begins

'Thou Whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard....'

In the Escot version it reads:-

'Thou whose creating word...'

There is no clue as to who transcribed this hymn.

A rather sad part of a sonnet, undated, is the last of the poems on sheets torn from the same Commonplace Book. It is written in an elaborate script and has the title 'Sonnet Written on parting with his Library' by W. Roscoe. This short piece presents some puzzles. It is unfinished. With only eight lines it is just over half of a complete sonnet, which invariably has fourteen lines. Also the confident script of the title progressively gives way to writing which grows smaller and weaker, then breaks off in the middle of a sentence. Why? Was he ill, perhaps dying, and overcome by the thought of becoming too weak to enjoy his beloved books? Or, was he forced to sell his library for financial reasons? Again were circumstances forcing him to move far away?

There is evidence of a W. Roscoe, in an entry dated 1823 in another Commonplace Book held in the Exeter Reference office. This probably pre dates the Sonnet, if we consider the date of the associated sheets. It is a religious poem entitled 'The Cross' and is written in the same elaborate script as the 'Sonnet'

One other sheet apparently torn from the same book contains, not words, but a very competent amateur pencil drawing of the head and shoulders of a youngish to middle aged man wearing clerical bands. The inscription at the bottom reads:- *Rev Ed. Irving*. There is no indication as to the artist. A pencil inscription at the top of the page appears to have been erased and another superimposed which reads:-

'A richly gemmed crown
Be his on that day.'

Edward Irving, 1792-1834, was an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland. He was handsome and of a commanding presence and became well known for his fiery and controversial sermons. In 1822 he was appointed vicar of the Caledonian Church in Hatton Garden, London. This is possibly where he made the acquaintance of Sir John Kennaway. Their friendship must have developed to the point where he was invited to inscribe in the Commonplace book.

The final sheet of paper appears to have been taken from a different and later Commonplace Book. The poem it contains is an elaborate *'Ode on an Unfinished Drawing of Flowers'*. It is in a fairly lofty, though somewhat immature style, replete with classical references and similes. At the bottom is the name *C. E. Kennaway*, but a note at the side records *'copied by A.O.K.'*

C. E. Kennaway is Charlotte Elizabeth Kennaway, who was born between 1800 and 1804. A.O.K. is Agnes Olivia Kennaway who lived 1849 - 1936. Agnes was the niece of Charlotte, being the daughter of Charlotte's brother Charles Edward.

These papers provide a tiny but fascinating glimpse into the lives of the 19 century Kennaways and their friends, but leave us with many questions yet to be answered.

Lucy Channon

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THE TALE OF WILLIAM PIKE – Part Two

Above: Dr William Brydon rides into Jalalabad – the sole survivor of the massacre of 16,500 British troops and camp followers retreating from Kabul in 1842. The painting is by Elizabeth Butler. *courtesy of wiki commons*

In an earlier edition of Heritage, I introduced you all to Private William Pike, who was born in Ottery St Mary in December 1817. He enlisted in Her Majesty's 40th Regiment of Foot on the 3rd May 1838 and, having undergone basic training at the Regimental Depot, he sailed to join his regiment in India.

European nations had first begun setting up trading colonies in India in the seventeenth century, with Britain, France, Portugal and the Dutch all being particularly active. The defeat of the French and her native allies at the Battle of Plassey in 1757 saw Britain emerge as the dominant power and, over the next one hundred years, she progressively expanded her influence over the whole of the Indian subcontinent. This was achieved through a combination of military conquest and the negotiation of treaties with the various native princes.

Throughout the whole of this period India was effectively governed by the East India Company. "The Company" was empowered by the British Government to manage all aspects of Britain's interests and trade with India, with her own Army to enforce her rule. The Company's Army had both European and locally raised regiments, with Officers trained at their own Military Academy at Addiscombe, near Croydon. A number of British Regiments were also stationed in India to assist the Company should the need arise, and the 40th Regiment was serving in that capacity in the 1840s.

William Pike's Service Record states that "he is in possession of a war medal for services in India and a bronze star for the battle of Maharajpoor". The war medal was almost certainly that awarded for the First Afghan War (1839 – 1842) during which the 40th Regiment played a part. This was the first of Britain's entanglements with Afghanistan and it was a bloody affair.

Afghanistan was considered a "Buffer State" between India and Persia, so it was necessary for the tranquillity of India that whoever ruled that country should be strong and pro-British. Unfortunately in 1839 the ruler, one Shah Soojah-ool-Moolk, was both weak and unpopular, and Persia invaded. The British responded by sending a Force to expel the Persians, restore the Shah to the throne, and to install a British Envoy in Kabul. The fact that the Shah was extremely unpopular with his subjects seemed to have been overlooked ! By October 1841, the Afghans had had enough. They rose up, deposed the Shah, murdered the Envoy and massacred the British garrison. Further forces were sent to restore the situation and teach the Afghans a lesson. The Afghan forces tried to block the advance to Kabul by taking up a strong position in the Tazeane Pass but were driven out and completely defeated. Kabul was re-occupied in September 1842. Peace returned to the frontier region (for a while, at least). Deja Vu!

William served in the force sent to restore the situation. On their way to the frontier, the 40th Regiment camped at Quetta, where they experienced one of the worst outbreaks of disease amongst any regiment in the British Army. Fortunately William survived the outbreak and proceeded with the regiment into Afghanistan. Once there he would have found the country just as hard and inhospitable as our troops in Afghanistan are finding it today. Hot, dry and dusty, against a foe who gives no quarter and where mistakes often prove fatal. A totally different place from Ottery St Mary and the home he knew.

But William had little time to ponder on such things, as trouble was brewing elsewhere in India and the 40th Regiment was again needed to play it's part.

Britain's initial reversals in Afghanistan caused problems for them in other parts of the continent. Seeing that the Company was not as invincible as previously thought, other subjected

peoples felt that the time was right to flex their muscles. In the State of Gwalior, the Regent, one Dada Khasgee Walla, was found to be "continually insulting the British authority" and would not desist. Action was required "to stop the rot".

The British launched a two pronged attack across the border into Gwalior on the 29th December 1843. They found the Mahrattas waiting for them in two fortified positions, one at Maharajpoor and the other in the hills around the town of Punniar. The enemy was soundly beaten in both locations, the power of the Mahrattas was broken, and all in a single day. Subsequently a British Envoy was appointed and the Regent was forced to finance the stationing of Company troops within Gwalior to protect our interests.

In six short years, William had left Ottery St Mary, joined the Army, sailed half way round the Globe, settled down to garrison duties in India, taken part in two campaigns and seen extensive military action. During that time, he would have seen comrades killed and wounded in action, and watched helplessly as others died of disease or heat stroke. Perhaps even more upsetting, during long spells of inactivity in the hot summer months, he would have seen men literally driven mad by the heat, the flies, and the boredom. Many took to alcohol, drunkenness being a major problem in the Army of Queen Victoria.

We do not know how William coped with such stresses but one imagines at times his thoughts must have strayed back fondly to earlier times in Ottery with family and friends and the lush Devon countryside. Did he regret his decision to "take the Queen's Shilling ? We shall never know. But there were many more adventures in store for Private William Pike and we shall discover these in the next episode.

Jim Woolley

Letters, articles or any other submissions to the Journal can be emailed to otteryheritage@googlemail.com more information at www.otteryheritage.org.uk

Coleridge the Magus

Nick Pruce examines Coleridge's genius

This talk was delivered by the author at the Society's Coleridge Anniversary Lunch on 23rd October 2010.

I have entitled this talk "Coleridge the Magus" because I want to consider how Coleridge spread his spell, what that spell was (and is), how it affected his contemporaries and successors, and how it still affects us today. It was Carlyle, of course, who called him " a kind of magus, girt in mystery and enigma" and I will discuss later whether this description was intended as a compliment. The other day, though, I came across an essay about "The Magus", a novel by another son of Wessex, John Fowles, which is not about Coleridge at all. The writer of the essay said that he had found it difficult to maintain a willing suspension of disbelief while reading the novel: the same "willing suspension of disbelief" which Coleridge said, in Biographia Literaria, constituted "poetic faith". That a writer's coinage has entered the language is not so unusual, but the fact that the connections have been made seems to suggest "a thousand circlets" spreading out from a flower-head falling in a pool, an image that Coleridge would have recognised!

How, then, did Coleridge spread his spell? First of all, despite his illnesses, his nerves, his procrastinations and his perfectionism – Keats said that he was "...incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge" and his daughter Sara said that "He could not bear to complete incompletely, which everybody else does" – he wrote. For publication he wrote poetry, plays, journalism, political pamphlets, literary criticism, biography and autobiography; he wrote a prodigious number of letters; and for himself he wrote his notebooks; he wrote about theology, social theory, economics, education, civil liberties and constitutional law. I have kept these lists shorter than they might be because lists are not intrinsically interesting. They could be much longer. However, I will add one more edited list. I have taken it from the acknowledgements at the beginning of Volume IV of Coleridge's Notebooks. It includes thanks to experts on hydroponics, musical boxes, mesmerism, the migration of nightingales and Ramsgate street cries, all of whose help was sought in the decipherment and understanding of the Notebooks. My original list contained seventeen items, and I had only written down the most unusual ones. He wrote

a lot and he wrote and thought about a wide range of subjects. He was not alone in that. That is what writers do. So where was the magic?

The contemporary reception of his writing was not always ecstatic. Southey, not admittedly a sympathetic critic by 1798, wrote of "The Ryme of the Ancyent Marinere" that "Genius has here been employed in producing a poem of little merit". Hazlitt's judgement on "The Friend" – two year's worth of painfully produced hard work on Coleridge's part – was that "prolixity and obscurity are the most frequent characteristics." When Coleridge wrote to Lord Liverpool, who was Prime Minister at the time, about false philosophy, Lord Liverpool reflected, "Mister Coleridge's object is to rescue speculative philosophy and make it best suited to the interests of the State; at least, I believe this to be Mister Coleridge's meaning, but I cannot well understand him." I wonder if any modern thinkers write private letters to David Cameron about false philosophy, comprehensibly or not? Southey, Hazlitt, Lord Liverpool – and they were not the only critical voices. Even Byron, who thought "Christabel": "...the wildest and finest that I ever heard in that kind of composition," wrote of Coleridge "...explaining Metaphysics to the Nation/I wish he would explain his explanation."

So far, so not very magical. But remember that the last volume of Coleridge's Notebooks and the "Opus Maximum" were not published until 2002, so it is only in the last eight years that it has been possible for readers to have a full overview of Coleridge's writings. In 1840, six years after Coleridge's death, John Stuart Mill wrote that Coleridge was: "...one of the two great seminal minds of England in their age." (the other was Jeremy Bentham); and: "No Englishman has left his impress so deeply..." But he also wrote: "The time is yet far distant when in the estimation of Coleridge and of his influence upon the intellect of our time, anything like unanimity can be looked for." The time when everybody agrees will probably never arrive. Norman Fruman's "The Damaged Archangel", about Coleridge's plagiarism, is still causing scholarly arguments forty years after its appearance. Books about all aspects of Coleridge's life and work continue to be published every year. For example, this year saw the publication of a book about the real ancient mariner, Simon Hatley (who shot a black albatross; he also sailed with Alexander Selkirk – Robinson Crusoe – and William Dampier – on whose writings Swift drew for "Gulliver's Travels.") Here again is an example of the "thousand circlets", of Coleridge's light being cast into his future and our present, and back into our shared past.

Coleridge's public utterances were not confined to print. In his younger days he preached in Unitarian chapels and gave lectures in which he argued against the war and against the Slave trade, but his radicalism always had a theological bent. In his middle years he lectured on philosophy and literature, though being Coleridge he did not always allow himself to be confined by his published topic. When Hazlitt first heard Coleridge preach he was impressed. He quotes Milton when he writes that Coleridge's voice "rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes." Then Coleridge launches into his subject "like an eagle dallying with the wind." Hazlitt was writing this in 1823, years after he had become disenchanted with Coleridge and having shown himself capable of the most wounding criticism. Yet he continues, "...I could not have been more delighted if I had heard the music of the spheres...truth and genius had embraced under the eye...This was even beyond my hopes." Hazlitt was impressed! The lectures were always a struggle. Ill health, nerves and lack of preparation meant that Coleridge was not always at his best and sometimes he failed to turn up at all. Whenever his lectures were advertised, they were well attended. Everyone knew Coleridge could talk, this was why they were sometimes disappointed by his lectures.

How he could talk! It was in his talk, his conversation, his 'oneversazione' that he most enchanted people. Washington Alston, who painted his portrait, wrote: "I am almost tempted to dream that I have once listened to Plato in the groves of the Academy." Charles Lamb was even more ecstatic: "He would talk from morn to dewy eve, nor cease till far midnight... he had the tact of making the unintelligible seem plain." Of course Lamb was an old friend from school, so to show that he was not completely dazzled, how about this exchange: "Lamb, you have heard me preach, I think?" "Coleridge, I have never heard you do anything else." Wordsworth described Coleridge's talk as a "majestic river," Leigh Hunt writes of "his voice undulating in a stream of music," and Thomas Gratton said, "I thought it would be pleasant to fall asleep to the gushing melody of his discourse." There is a theme creeping in here, I think. Coleridge could talk for England and not everyone was a fan. Henry Hillman said of his talk: "One third was admirable, another third was sheer absolute nonsense, and of the remaining third, I know not whether it was sense or nonsense." Not only did he talk a lot, but he talked about a great range of subjects. Gioacchino de'Prati, an Italian exile, wrote: "Whether he was speaking on metaphysics, theology, poetry, history, or the most trifling subjects, his genius threw a new light upon the object of his discourse." Coleridge was perhaps aware of his limitations. When Sir William Hamilton, the mathematician and astronomer, voiced his reservations of Coleridge's metaphysically idealistic applications of biology and physics: "I am not sure I understand them all," Coleridge replied, "The question is, sir, whether I understand them all myself." Coleridge's talk did not just attract intellectual admiration. Coleridge's nephew Henry, admittedly not an impartial observer, wrote in the preface to Table Talk: "(He) charmed by innocence as well as by eloquence. Women of taste...tended to proclaim him abundantly lovable." Another person for whom Coleridge was not just a great intellect was Anne Gillman, wife of his host, doctor and friend: "He possessed a more heavenly nature than was ever before given to Man." She may well have had a say in the wording of his memorial tablet in Highgate Church: "His disposition was unalterably sweet and angelic." One woman was not charmed by Coleridge the Talker. Madame de Stael found him a "master of monologue mais qu'il ne savait pas le dialogue." Possibly a mote and beam situation there!

Coleridge wrote and preached and lectured and talked. That was how he wove his spell and as we have seen, not all his contemporaries were bewitched. Some were, however, and his successors even more so. Of his contemporaries, perhaps it is the poets who owe him the most. Not those of his own age, but the

next generation. He gave his friends Southey and Wordsworth a lot, but once they had tired of his behaviour they were reluctant to acknowledge the artistic debt they owed. Who knows, if they had stuck with him and his ideas they might have written better, avoided the contempt of the Young Turks and not ended up as Poets Laureate! Byron's: "Bob Southey! You're a poet – Poet Laureate,/And representative of all the race." must have hurt; and Shelley's "To Wordsworth" – "Thou wert as a lone star.../Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be." could have been a mortal blow, at least to his self-esteem. What did the next generation owe to Coleridge? We do not always need to work it out for ourselves. Scott recognised the influence of "Christabel" (which he had heard recited before it was published) on "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" and Byron wrote to Scott that he was "partly in the same scrape myself." ""Siege of Corinth" leant on "Christabel" - "was it the wind through some hollow stone,/sent that soft and tender moan?" – a close, though unintentional resemblance." It is a question of atmosphere –witchery by daylight – as much as anything, and we can follow this feeling into Keat's "Eve of St Agnes" in which a room is "Pale, lattic'd, chill and silent as a tomb." as well. The exotic world that Coleridge conjures up in "Kubla Khan" is often echoed in Byron; and Shelley's "Ozymandias" also recalls its sense of power and loss: "...that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,"

Future generations of poets sought to emulate those aspects of Coleridge's work which had been most sternly criticised at the time. A world in which "moonbeams are playing on a charnel house" is the stuff of Poe's "The Raven" – "...this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore."; of Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" – "The mirror crack'd from side to side"; and of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, son of Coleridge's nitrous oxide - sniffing friend, who not only wrote about that Gothic world, but lived it: "It's only two devils that blow/Through a murderer's bones to and fro." He poisoned himself at the age of forty -six and his last work, "Death's Jest Book", was published posthumously. Swinburne called Coleridge "the greatest poet born into this world" and lines like: "Cold eye-lids that hide like a jewel/Hard eyes..." show where his influences lay. Gerard Manley Hopkins' ideas about sprung rhythm owe a debt to Coleridge's thoughts on accent and quantity, and his drawing together of God and Nature would have pleased Coleridge: "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change." Oscar Wilde could not have contemplated writing "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" without the example of "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner": "I never saw a man who looked/With such a wistful eye..." – though he does not use the ballad form as flexibly as Coleridge.

Nearer our own time we can sense Coleridge's magic in the "moon-lit dome" of Yeats' "Byzantium"; the fractured structure of Eliot's "The Waste Land" echoes that of "Kubla Khan"; and isn't Coleridge, who incorporated into his poetry his intense reaction to his own physical world, identical to Hardy's "... man who used to notice such things" and the inspiration for Seamus Heaney's "Seeing Things" in which "The stone's alive with what's invisible:"? On a lighter note, "Kubla Khan" and its creation have provided inspiration to Stevie Smith, whose "Thoughts on the Person from Porlock" include the idea that Coleridge was already stuck, that the person was called Porson, that his grandmother was one of the Rutlandshire warlocks (and not from Porlock), and that he had a cat called Flo. In Douglas Adams' "Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency" a ghost has made Coleridge finish "Kubla Khan" and alter parts of "The Ancient Mariner" for its own nefarious purposes. Appositely, the plot features a Coleridge Dinner! Dirk Gently has to go back in time to stop Coleridge finishing "Kubla Khan" and thus save the world. And Fred Porlock (not his real name) interrupts Sherlock Holmes in "The Valley of Fear."

"Hear the rime of the Ancient Mariner/See his eyes as he stops one of three" sounds familiar but different. It is the opening of Iron Maiden's take on the story. The best bits of the song are where they just copy Coleridge's words. They have the good grace to use quotation marks. They are not the only Heavy Metal band which has used STC for inspiration. How about this? "To seek the sacred river Alph/To walk the caves of ice/To break my fast on honeydew/And drink the milk of paradise" is from Rush's "Xanadu".

I think we can all agree that Coleridge has left his mark on poetry, whatever Hazlitt might have thought about his "nonsense verses".

Where else did he leave his mark? He wrote "...if only ten minds have been awakened by my writings, the intensity and the benefit may well compensate for the narrowness of the extension." He was aware of how complex his ideas were, and how difficult they were to communicate, yet he did not compromise on his ambition. The scale of this ambition is reflected in these words to John Thelwall: "My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great, something one and indivisible." His daughter wrote: "He was almost always on the star-paved road, taking in the whole heavens in his circuit." He wanted to achieve unity between the individual and society, between Man and Nature, and between Man and God. He talked of, "The only attempt that I know of ever made to reduce all knowledges into harmony...to unite the insulated fragments of truth." Yes, he was ambitious.

His ambitions for the individual still seem desirable, and who can say they have yet been achieved? In his "Second Lay Sermon" he advocates: "making the means of subsistence more easy to each individual; securing to each individual the hope of bettering his own condition or that of his children; developing those faculties which are essential to a man's humanity, that is, to his rational and moral being". It seems like a good manifesto to me. He saw that "our manufacturers must consent to regulations" and followed this with a pamphlet campaign supporting a Bill to prohibit children under nine years old from working in cotton mills and to limit older children's working hours to twelve and a half hours per day. It was defeated. Coleridge's words about Lord Lauderdale, one of the Bill's opponents, sound almost Swiftian in their irony: "Whether some half-score of rich capitalists are to be prevented from suborning suicide and perpetuating infanticide and soul-murder is, forsooth, the most perplexing question which has ever called forth his determining faculties, accustomed as they are well-known to have been, to grappling with difficulties." He hated utilitarianism. "Persons are not things. Go...question the doctor whether the workman's

health and temperance...have found their level again?" At the other end of the political scale, foreign policy, he seems equally hard to disagree with: "I never think that statesman a great man who will assert that state policy cannot and ought not to be always regulated by morality." John Stuart Mill wrote of "On the Constitution of the Church and State": "Has the age produced any other theory of government which can stand comparison with it as to its first principles?"

Another aspect of Coleridge's writing about man in society (though he would never have limited himself in that way), was his literary criticism. I was going to erase that sentence, because it is nonsense, except that the fact that I did write it says something about Coleridge. I wrote it because literary criticism is not about Man and Nature, and not about Man and God, which are the other two topics in this section of my talk. But of course for Coleridge these categories were meaningless. For him, poetry is about Man and Society and Nature and God. So I will include it here for convenience. When I looked at my notes I found that the first entry in the section on "Biographia Literaria" was from a letter from Coleridge to Humphrey Davy: "...the relation of thoughts to things. I have been dubitans, affirmans, negans,...imaginans et sentiens." I.A. Richards chose it as an illustration in the first chapter of his book "Coleridge on Imagination". I had forgotten that there was such an obvious link between Coleridge's thinking on poetry and on science. I will limit myself to two quotations about Coleridge's literary criticism. Richards writes: "Coleridge's criticism requires us to reconsider our most fundamental preconceptions, our conceptions of man's being – the nature of his mind and its knowledge." Kathleen Coburn, the great Coleridge scholar who edited most of the Notebooks wrote: "Coleridge's search for a criterion of poetry involved him in the wider search for a criterion of life."

Coleridge was intensely interested in science. He was even more interested in making a bridge between science and poetry. The term "scientist" was only coined just before he died, and he would have described Davy and Beddoes and his other scientific friends as "natural philosophers". He discussed with them burning topics like animal magnetism and the vital principle. He suggested to Davy that: "...all composition consists in the balance of opposing energies." By emphasising their variety he linked Shakespeare (lunatic, lover and poet) with Davy (water, flame, diamond, charcoal) – now that is magic! He wrote that chemistry is the "poetry of the natural world." When he looked at Nature it made him think. Darwin cannot have seen this, because it did not appear in print until 2002, but Coleridge wrote in his Notebook: "...the capability, to become, may be given." He suggested that: "The dodo formed the transition from the water fowl to the Gallinaceous or Ostrich tribe." Darwin would have been interested! Yet if he had lived to read it, Coleridge would have been as disturbed by the implications of "The Origin of Species" as Darwin knew his contemporaries would be. In the same Notebook Coleridge wrote: "The attempt to solve the problem of Existence, Order and Harmony, otherwise than by an Eternal Mind...is too revolting to common sense."

Coleridge preached as a young man and never ceased to place religion and the Church at the centre of his thought. And his thought was surprisingly modern. John Stuart Mill wrote of "... the enlarged and liberal appreciation he extended to most thinkers from whom he differed." I am writing this on the day that Pope Benedict arrives in Britain. Here is Coleridge: "I should not so far despair of a union between the Protestant and the now papal but still Catholic Church." His religion and his humanity were inextricably linked. In "Aids to Reflection" he wrote: "The outward object of virtue is the greatest producible sum of happiness of all men." His writing excited and inspired his successors. For Thomas Arnold, his ideas "...became a programme of action." John Henry Newman, who became a cardinal, said that Coleridge contributed to the "...spiritual awakening of spiritual wants," while a man of a very different religious stamp, F.D. Maurice the Christian Socialist, said that: "Mister Coleridge's help has been invaluable to us." Gladstone, commenting on the State in its relation with the Church, found Coleridge's work "...alike both beautiful and profound." In the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot drew on Coleridge's ideas about the Church and State for his "The Idea of a Christian Society", published in 1940; and on the 18th of March 2008, Rowan Williams gave a Holy Week lecture in which he quoted Coleridge's description of the Church as a " 'critical friend', in the political sphere."

I took my title from Carlyle, and said that I would return to him. He certainly damned Coleridge with faint praise. He called him: "A man of great and useless genius." Yet there was also affection: "I never heard him discourse without feeling ready to worship him and toss him in a blanket." Coleridge was far from perfect, but did you know that Goebbels read Carlyle's "Frederick the Great of Prussia" to Hitler? Or that Samuel Butler said that: "It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs Carlyle marry one another, and so make only two people miserable and not four."? Other contemporaries were more generous to Coleridge. This is de Quincey: "The largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive...that has yet existed among men." Hazlitt, despite his hostile reviews, thought Coleridge: "The only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius." And Thomas Arnold enthused: "Old Sam was more of a great man than anyone who has lived within the four seas in my memory." Leslie Stephen, in the Dictionary of National Biography, wrote that: "Coleridge alone among English writers is in the front rank at once as poet, as critic, and as philosopher." And this is D.H. Lawrence: "I'd like to know Coleridge, when Charon has rowed me over." And today? Well, you are all here to honour him. And I found this on a website called 3 quarksdaily.com. It is dated 12th April 2010 and is discussing Coleridge's thoughts on perception. "He was a meta-cognitive theorist far ahead of his time...a startlingly contemporary figure." He was indeed a magus.

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