

Newsletter

October 2024

Hello, and welcome to our latest Newsletter. I hope you enjoyed the August offerings, and we have two articles from previous issues reaching their conclusion in this issue.

Articles this issue:-

Thomas Gange pt 2 Life after transportation

One of Trowbridge's famous sons Pt 2

Identifying a photograph

Apologies

One of Trowbridge's Famous sons Part 2

Yvonne M

When Thomas's body was cut down it was taken by his fellow shearmen, placed on a cart and carried on the long journey across Salisbury Plain (about thirty-eight miles) back to Trowbridge, in a procession, which would have stretched for nearly a mile. When the cortege reached Trowbridge fifty young girls dressed in white, led the cortege to St James Parish Church. Here the curate was forced to conduct the funeral service with full Church rites. He was later reprimanded by the absentee vicar for allowing Thomas to be buried in hallowed ground, but the vicar feared repercussions if he had the body removed from the churchyard, so it was allowed to remain there.

Thomas always pleaded his innocence of the charge against him, but steadfastly refused to name the culprit. Now the big question is – was he guilty or not? Let us examine the facts.

Against him was the evidence of Ralph Heath; but was that very reliable?

In his first statement Heath had stated that there was one man with a pistol. It was only later he claimed that a second armed man entered his house, and this man was Thomas Helliker. The other workmen who were guarding the mill along with Heath did not collaborate his story. There is, on record, a statement made by John Pearce, one of Heath's assistants at Littleton. His account was written down shortly after the attack. I do know it exists, as it is mentioned in an article by Dr Adrain Randall, which appeared in the Wiltshire Scene in March 1985 – This article was part of research that Dr. Randall was carrying out for his book – Before the Luddites published by Cambridge University Press. All the evidence I am reporting comes from Dr Randall's research, whom I met and who helped me prove Thomas was part of my family.

John Pearce's statement made no mention of a second man. He said that only one man – the short one – had carried a pistol. The rest had been armed only with bayonets on poles. He paints a less than heroic picture of Ralph Heath. Pearce stated that when the shearmen had announced their intention to burn down the mill Heath had replied, "*You may do as you like, burn it down or let it stand. We can't hinder you. I shall sleep in peace which I have not done for a good while*" The leader of the men had, again according to Pearce, allowed

Heath to go into the mill and rescue his own cloth before it was set alight. So why did Heath point the finger at Thomas? Well, maybe the fact that he was reportedly paid a reward of £500 for giving his evidence had something to do with it. Interestingly Pearce was not called at the trial.

In Thomas' defence the following facts are now known.

Firstly, Thomas is reported to have had an alibi for the night in question - a Joseph Warren went to the police on the night Thomas was arrested. He claimed that he had been with Thomas from about 6 30 pm on the night in question. Warren stated that he had found Thomas drunk outside the home of John Waller. He took him inside; locked the door and the two of them slept in the kitchen until the morning, when he opened the door and let Thomas out. Warren did not appear at the trial. Mr Read, the Bow Street Magistrate had wanted to question Warren and as was the norm, probably lock him up. But Warren could not be found. He turned up again in Leeds in September. Read believed that the shearmen's union had sent him away, with money and references "*for fear of discoveries*" Bt, Warren's statement should be treated with caution as he and Thomas were good friends.

Secondly Thomas was only an apprentice at the time, so would not have been a full member of the union. It is therefore doubtful that he would have been picked to go to Littleton, let alone been given the task of holding the overseer hostage.

Thirdly his fellow shearmen were convinced that he was innocent, and they would have been aware as to who had been at Littleton. Thomas too would have known, but he steadfastly refused to say anything. A rumour was that Thomas was protecting his own brother John.

But why did Naish and Jones go to so much trouble to have Thomas, or did anyone, executed? Well, Jones wanted to modernise his factory, which meant machinery would replace men, so he badly wanted to crush the unions and bring the shearmen back into line. As a magistrate he would have had the power to ensure that "*applications to the fountain of mercy on his (Thomas') behalf would have been prevented*". Thomas was "*the severe example*" which Jones and Naish hoped would achieve their goal. It is almost certain the authorities knew he was not guilty, but he was the one man they could make a case against, so Thomas was sacrificed in the name of progress.

But whatever the truth is, Thomas has become a Famous son of Trowbridge, and the following is the inscription on the monument to him in St James Churchyard

First Inscription

Sacred to the memory of Thomas Helliker, the thread of whose life was cut in the bloom of youth. He exchanged mortality for immortality March 22, 1803 in the 19th year of his age.

The fatal catastrophe, which led to this unfortunate event, is too awful to describe. Suffice it say that he met death with the greatest fortitude and resignation of mind, considering his youth he may be said to have few equals. He died a true penitent, being very anxious in his last moments that others might take a timely warning and avoid evil company.

This tomb was erected out of his earnest request by the cloth working factories of the counties of York Wilts and Somerset as a token of their love to him and veneration of his memory.

This stone was formerly placed over the remains of Thomas Helliker who departed this life on the 22nd day of March 1803 aged 19 years.

Second Inscription

At a time of general disturbance throughout the manufacturing districts of this county he was condemned for an offence against the law which he was afterwards believed to be innocent and determined rather to die than give testimony which would have saved his own life but forfeited the lives of others.

Some of the cloth-workers of this town being desirous to perpetuate the remembrance of such an heroic act of self-sacrifice have restored this memorial in the year of our lord 1876

Trowbridge Town Council commemorated the 200th anniversary of Thomas' death in March 2003. They provided me with copies of the local paper, which carried the story of Thomas and his execution and called him the "Young Martyr". I also learned that the trade union movement still revered Thomas as

“an early trade unionist who paid the highest price for defending his trade”
Each year; to commemorate this sacrifice, there is a Thomas Helliker memorial lecture featuring senior trade unionists

IDENTIFYING A PHOTOGRAPH

S. Mursell

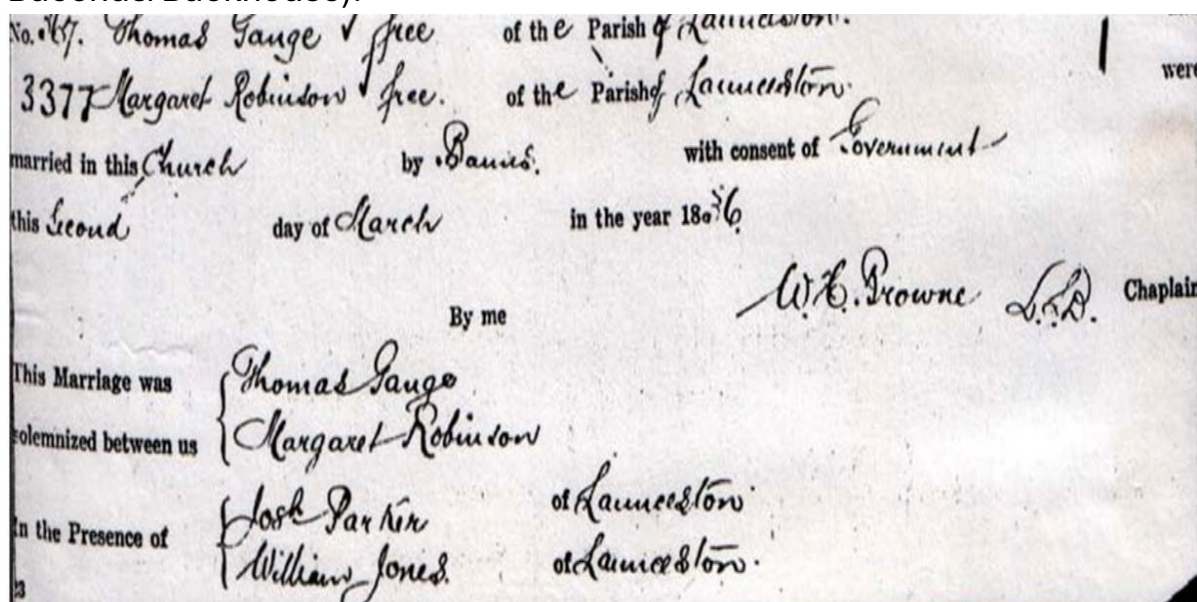
I loved my many visits to my great aunts and uncles in the New Forest and, one in particular of their houses had a wedding photo on the wall – I was always drawn to this. When this generation died, and the houses were sold, I lost track of the picture. Move on many years, I was visiting a relative who had lived in the house after the older generation, and I asked him if he knew of this picture. He turned around to the wall behind me and said, ‘do you mean this one?’ He is the uncle of Suzey who I mentioned in a previous article. All my family were in this photo as guests, but we did not recognise the bride and groom. On the reverse of the picture was a name – my great grandfather or my great uncle – same name? I made a list of all the family members in the photo and had a guess at the date by the age of my father and aunts. I also checked where the photo was taken as it was in a field behind a farmhouse and barns – it still looks exactly the same today! The problem was – whose wedding, was it? I narrowed it down to a possible 1915 marriage, so I checked all the local marriages around that time. Why were my relatives there? I discovered that the bride was a first cousin of my granduncle’s wife. After that, all the other family there made sense. As well as being related they were also close neighbours. All this is guesswork – I just hope that one day I will be able to say this with certainty.

Wiltshire Wills project

Wiltshire and Swindon Archives hold 105,000 historic wills dating from 1540 to 1858. This collection has now been digitised inhouse in partnership with Ancestry and was published online at Ancestry in 2018.

(John) Thomas Gange and the Swing Riots Part 2

As was stated in Part 1, Thomas applied for an application to marry, and he duly married Margaret Ismay Robinson on 2 March 1836. Margaret was born in 1809 and emigrated with her parents Thomas Robinson and Jane nee Bacchus (sometimes written as Backhouse, she is perhaps connected to the well-known North East Quaker family of Bacchus/Backhouse).



On his arrival in Van Diemens Land, Thomas had been assigned to John Darke Snr, as a ploughman at Mills Plains near Launceston, two of his children, James Thomas Gange (1837); and Frederick William Gange (1838); were born and baptised at St John's church in Launceston. When John Dark moved to Port Philip with lands in the Baraboo Hills, it seems that Thomas and his family followed to the mainland as he had a further two children, twins Robert John, and Susan Sara born in Melbourne in 1840, implying that they also had moved to the Port Philip area.

By 1843 Thomas was employed by the Misses Drysdale and Newcombe as Overseer/Station Manager. The ladies were business partners in the Squatters Run, Borong goop south of Geelong and held the freehold property of Coriyule and Garrangill which Thomas oversaw, he was also manager of their horse stud.

Between 1840 and 1855 Thomas and Margaret had a further 6 children Jemimah Susannah (1843); George Mitchell (1845 Geelong); Keziah Frances (1847); Kerrenhappach Margaret (1849 Victoria); Thomas James (1851) and David Bacchus (1855)

The latter two boys both died as infants.

When in 1848 the land was put up for sale The Misses Drysdale and Newcombe purchased Lot 13 Coriyule (569 acres); Lot 14 (240 acres) and Lot 44 Garrangill (168 acres) and Thomas and his growing family moved to Garrangill.

Although they were now established in the area life was not easy and tragedy struck the family in 1849 when their eldest son James aged 12, went swimming in one of the water holes near their property in Bellarine, sadly the boy drowned and his body was not recovered until the following day as very few people on the station could swim, the inquest held returned a verdict of accidental death by drowning.

In 1853 Thomas was well established in the area and was showing the Colonial Cart Stallion "Czar", in his own name, who was a regular winner in that category. On the death of the Miss Drysdale in 1853, Miss Newcome carried on with the land until her marriage in 1861 to the Reverend James Dodgson, and left Australia to pursue missionary work with her husband. It is presumed it was at this time she gifted the ownership of Garrangill to Thomas and his family, in appreciation of his long service as manager at Coriyule and Garrangill.

In 1864 when the Shire of Bellarine was established, as well as Garrangill, Thomas owned 320 acres of land and by 1867 he owned a further 156 acres in Swan Bay.

These lands were occupied in turn by his son Robert, his son in law Robert McDonald and Thomas' widow Margaret.

In 1870 Margaret sold the 320 acres, and on her death in 1882 according to her will the remaining land was divided into 6 lots of 28 acres and left to each of her surviving children, with her unmarried daughter Keziah Gange inheriting the homestead.

Thomas Gange had been born Church of England, but while in Australia had converted to methodism, he was a trustee of the chapel at Bellarine

(built 1849). However, on his death his family appear to be associated with the Anglican church in Drysdale.

Of his life in Australia Thomas was involved with the Portarlington Road District, being a board member, this was one of the first Road Boards established in the colony in 1855. He became Honorary Treasurer and was elected to the Board every year from 1861 to 1865. He was also a founder member of the Indented Heads Farmers Association formed in 1856. He was also a member of the Geelong and District Agricultural and Horticultural Society and in March 1855 he exhibited his cart horse stallion “Czar” regularly winning first place, he also showed another stallion “Darlington” which took first place in that category. (an interesting name as his mother’s Bacchus family had connections with Darlington in the Northeast of England).

When the Indented Head Road Board became the Bellarine Shire Council, Thomas was one of its founding Councillors he was elected unopposed every year until his death in 1868.



In Margaret Gange’s will of 1882 as well as apportioning the land she set aside a half an acre of land as a private burial ground on Garrangill known as Mount Mitchell, containing memorials to many of the Gange family.

Of the remaining children of John Thomas Mitchell Gange and his wife Margaret Ismay Robinson, all but Keziah Francis married, and went on to have large families with many Gange descendants in the area today.

I think, perhaps despite the rocky start (John) Thomas Gange did very well for himself.

I would like to thank the Bellarine Local History Group, and Wiltshire Machine Breakers by Janet Chambers who has researched quite thoroughly the men from Wiltshire who appeared at the Assises in 1830 and 1831.

October 2024

Military Matters – My Own!

Martin Barrett

You may remember from the previous Newsletter, that I mentioned I would let you know how I became involved in Wiltshire Military history. Some of you may remember this story from a posting I made in Facebook a couple of years ago but there are many people new to the WOPC who might find it interesting.

William Charles Barrett was one of 7 brothers (another story one day!) from the Hindon/Chilmark area who all served in the Great War. William was my great-uncle and gave his life in the Battle of The Somme on 20 October 1916. Below is a picture of William's Memorial Plaque which was issued to the next-of-kin of servicemen killed in the First World War.

He is obviously of great interest to me, but I did not know he even existed until I started my research a few years ago. I found out - from the WOPC web-site - that he is buried at Heilly Station Cemetery, Mericourt-L'Abbe, France and I now have a lot more information about his life and service – all adding to his memory and to the respect I hold for him.

Early in 2019, I alerted my brother to the location of his burial and he and his family, on a holiday in Northern France that same year, visited the CWGC site at Heilly. My brother posted a picture on Twitter of one of his sons standing beside the grave of Private William Charles Barrett.

A couple of months later my brother was contacted by someone on Twitter claiming to be a descendant of our fallen great-uncle. Now, I had not found a marriage record for William so initially thought this was very strange. I contacted the person and discovered that William had a girlfriend, Ethel, before he enlisted in the 2nd Battalion of the Wiltshire Regiment in August 1914 and his subsequent shipment to the Western Front in October 1914.

Ethel gave birth to a boy in December 1914 and, being unmarried and with no father's name on the birth certificate, had given the baby the two *middle* names of Charles and Barrett. It seems, from memories within the family, that William never saw his child and perhaps never knew of his son. The baby grew into a man and had a family of his own.

In 2020, I established contact with one of his children who is my second cousin and visited her in Kent. My second cousin herself is now a great-grandmother and we regularly correspond, finding out more about each other's families that neither of us knew existed. I have never had a cousin of any sort before, so I am extremely happy and lucky! Although William did not survive the war, he is very much remembered by his descendants, all of whom he never knew, especially at this time of year around the anniversary of his death.

His memory lives on in different ways. My grandfather – one of William's younger brothers - gave his son (*my father*) *precisely* the same name as his fallen brother, William Charles Barrett. Our Dad in turn gave myself and my brother the middle names of Charles and William respectively. We never knew any of this until a few years ago, of course.

To complete the circle back to the first part of this story. You may recall that my brother took a photograph of his son standing next to the grave in Heilly and posted it on Twitter – his son is, of course named...William.

Our WOPC We Will Remember Them information serves as an important reminder to us all of the ultimate sacrifices made by our ancestors, but it can also provide a starting point to discover (by chance or not) more information - and in my case relatives - than we already knew. Good luck with your research!

I hope you've enjoyed this story concerning serendipity which was really the starting point for my association with the WOPC.

Back to WOPC military matters in the next Newsletter.



Apologies

Sorry for such a short Newsletter this time. I had hoped to do many more items including a guide to FreeBMD and possibly a short Christmas Quiz.

However, since starting this issue I have had a cataract removed from my left eye with another operation on my right eye due in 10 days so I have been struggling to say the least.

Hopefully by the New Year my eyes will have sorted themselves out and I can get back to normal

Merry Christmas Everyone