

WILTSHIRE WORKING MEN'S BENEFIT SOCIETY

1887



1963

Wilts Conservative Benefit Society Club Festival and Fete

The festival and fete (which is not always an annual one) of the East Knoyle, Semley, and Tisbury Lodges of the Wiltshire Working Men's Conservative Benefit Society took place on Wednesday at East Knoyle. Despite the very unfavourable weather for the greater portion of the day, the proceedings were as enjoyable as climatic conditions would permit.

There was a very good attendance from the Countryside, although it rained heavily all the morning. To the regret of all present, Mr. F. Tuck, the secretary of the East Knoyle Lodge, was unable to be present, as he is only just recovering from a rather severe illness, and in his place the duties of making the local arrangements for the festival were well carried out by Mr. E. J. Signal (secretary of Semley Lodge). He was assisted by a Committee, consisting of Messrs. Mallett, Coombs, and Forward (East Knoyle), T. Marshall (secretary of the Tisbury Lodge), Gray and Bennett (Tisbury), and Stone, Baker and Douch (Semley).

The members of the Lodge assembled about eleven o'clock at the Seymour Arms, and, headed by the East Knoyle Brass Band (under Bandmaster C. Sturgis), marched in procession to the historic church, where Sir Christopher Wren's father was rector, and at the Rectory of which his illustrious son was born in 1632. Divine service was conducted in the church by the Rev. G. H. Noel (curate in charge), who preached a capital sermon appropriate to the occasion, and at the close Mr. J. Milborne, the organist, played the National Anthem.

After the service the procession was re-formed, and the members proceeded to the rear of the Seymour Arms, where a spacious marquee had been erected. Here the dinner was held, there being a large attendance, including several ladies.

Mr. J. Hastings, of Wincombe Park, presided, supported by Mr. J. Hastings, Jnr., the Rev. G. H. Noel, Mr. E. H. Miles (agent to the Right Hon. George Wyndham, M. P., of Clouds), Mr. Victor Hewett (chief secretary of the South Wilts Constitutional Association, Salisbury), Dr. T. B. Rutter (of Mere, medical officer of the East Knoyle Lodge), and Messrs. J. Jones, F. J. Signal, W. N. Ledbury (chief secretary of the Society, Trowbridge), F. White (chairman of the Central Committee, Trowbridge), F. Alford, A. Jacob, J. Saul, S. Staples, A. T. Baker, J. King, E. W. Chubb, J. Milborne, Jnr., R. J. Meadway, (Tisbury), C. Harvey, A. Neil (Salisbury), J. Worth (Semley), J. Gray, C. Creed, S. Gulliford, F. Fowles, T. Hyde, &c.

A first class repast was provided by Mr. C. King of the Seymour Arms.

The Chairman after dinner gave the loyal toast, which was honoured with the singing of the National Anthem to the accompaniment of the band.

Dr. Rutter, in proposing the next toast "The Bishop and Clergy of the Diocese, and Minister of all Denominations" said the Bishop of Salisbury, who had recently come in the Diocese, was already getting about among the people, and was well known to some of them.

He, (the speaker) had on previous occasions had an opportunity of saying what Canon Milford had done for the parish of East Knoyle, and they hoped soon to welcome his successor. The Rev. Mr. Miller. (applause).

Ministers of other denominations had sometimes to take a back seat - (laughter) - but it was recognised that they did a large amount of thoroughly good work in an unselfish way, and one rejoiced that they were included in such a toast. Dr. Rutter went on to say that he was glad that toast came before that of "The Army and Navy", which was generally associated a good deal with the blowing of trumpets. They must recognise that war was the greatest crime that nations could indulge in, for everyone knew that when war came it was as if the very hell was let loose, and when all the base passions of men had full fling. It was, therefore, delightful to think that the ministers had a chance when their toast came first. (laughter). He coupled with it the name of Mr. Noel.

The Rev. G. H. Noel, in responding, agreed with Dr. Rutter that the Bishop was well about his diocese, which was a very extensive one, and he knew of the excellent work that Dr. Ridgeway had done in London. He hoped that the Society would prosper and continue its good work (applause).

Mr. Victor Hewett was entrusted with the toast of "The Army, Navy, and Reserve Forces.", and he took the opportunity of making a vigorous reply to Dr. Rutter. He differed entirely with what the Doctor had said on the subject of war. Undoubtedly war was a crime, but it was not a crime to spend money on the Army and Navy, or to suggest that such money was being wrongly spent, (Hear hear.) he, (Mr. Hewett) personally had the greatest belief in the Army and Navy in protecting our shores and possessions, and in making for the peace of the World, which was so very much talked about just now. (Hear hear,) He had heard some people say that they would not care if Germany did conquer England, and that it would not matter. Well, he did not believe that there were any such persons present, and those who held such ideas he considered required the services of a Doctor, and they had his heart felt sympathy. (Laughter.)

The duty of the country was to prepare for any emergency whereby they could ensure that peace which brings happiness, contentment, and well being into all parts of the world. (Applause.) He felt sure that no Englishman would refrain from drinking the health of "The Army and Navy," and he coupled with the toast the name of Mr. Milborne. (Applause.)

The toast was enthusiastically received, and Mr. Milborne, responding as an old sergeant in the Volunteer Force, humorously said that he was afraid it might be considered at the "blowing of trumpets" if he said that he had just joined the Reserves, and was quite willing to be called out if necessary. (Hear, hear.)

The Chairman, in giving the toast of the day, "Success to the Wiltshire Working Men's Conservative Benefit Society." said he ought to have added women as well, for they must not forget they now had lady members. He considered that the great Friendly Societies, of which theirs is one, was amongst the most valuable and beneficial organisations to be found in the country (Hear, hear.) The Chairman went on to show how they encouraged thrift among the working classes, and enabled them to put out of the fruits of their industry sufficient to meet sickness, which came upon them at some time or other. He thought that every man and woman in this country ought to belong to a Friendly Society. (Hear, hear.)

They were now living under the National Insurance Act, respecting which there were many differences of opinion. One set of politicians told them it was a complete failure. He was not going to argue these points, but he would mention one in which it had been beneficial, and that was the Act had induced a large number of people in the country to join a Friendly Society who had not previously done so.

He was informed that ten millions of people had joined Friendly Societies since the Act had been in force, and if it did nothing else it would have done a great thing in influencing so many people to join such societies. (Applause.) He was one of those who thought that the Old Age Pensions would have been a better thing if they had been on a contributory basis. (Hear, hear.)

Their own Society had been in existence for the past 25 years, the members numbered over 15,000, besides those who had since joined for the purpose of the National Insurance Act, and the total funds of the Society was £185,000. The work must be enormous, for there were no fewer than 155 Lodges. The amount subscribed last year was £21,000, there was paid in members in the same period £6,548, and the dividend, interest, and credit placed to members' accounts was over £30,600. The expenses of this vast organisation were only £1,000.

In conclusion, the Chairman congratulated all the members on belonging to such an excellent Society, and wished it continued success. (Applause.)

The toast was heartily received - Mr. Marshall, responding for the Tisbury Lodge, said they started it eleven years ago, and they now numbered 128 members, including those who had joined under the National Insurance Act.

Mr. Bignall responded on behalf of Mr. Tuck for East Knoyle Lodge and regretted his absence. They had 49 adult members, 9 women, and 20 juveniles, independent of those who had joined under the new Act. In the Semley Lodge of which he was secretary, they had 44 adult male members, 6 women, and 24 juveniles, also 21 men and 5 females had joined under the new Act. (Hear, hear) He thanked the members for their good attendance that day, and he would like to see more join their Society. Having read a list of subscriptions from gentlemen in the neighbourhood, Mr. Bignall returned thanks for the same and he also thanked the Chairman for his attendance that day, and those gentlemen who had supported him. He also acknowledged the independents on behalf of the three Lodges, to Mr. Hugh Morrison for the use of the tent, and also to the Hon. George Wyndham (through his agent, Mr. Miles) for allowing them the free use of the bandstand and other appliances in connection to the fete.

Mr. W. N. Ledbury, chief secretary of the Society, on being asked to say a few words spoke of the progress the Society was making, and acknowledged the excellent work done by the district secretaries, expressing his great regret that Mr. Turk was not able to be with them that day. Mr. Ledbury emphasised the point that the money that was saved in the Society remained the money of those who belonged to it. (Hear, hear)

Mr. Creed, in suitable terms gave "The health of the Medical Officers of the three Lodges" coupled with the name of Dr. Rutter

Dr. Rutter humorously remarked that after the trouncing he had received from Mr. Hewett, he hesitated to make any further remarks. (Laughter) He was sorry there were no other members of his profession present, and while they had to go and see members on their ha...e, it was a pleasure to come and see them at social gatherings such as the present. (Hear, hear). With regard to Doctors and the Insurance Act, he believed that the majority of friendly societies did not want to see their medical men underpaid, and that as long as doctors could see they were not likely to lose by the Act they would be the greatest supporters of the principle of insurance. They all much regretted the absence of Mr. Tuck and on Dr. Rutter's suggestion the Chairman afterwards put it to the meeting and it was agreed to send a message of sympathy to him and regret at his continued absence.

Mr. E. H. Miles gave "The Visitors" coupled with the name of Mr. Victor Hewett.

Mr. Hewett in a humorous reply said it was his privilege to go to as many gatherings of that kind that he was beginning to feel like a "district visitor" in spite of his appearance (Laughter.)

Mr. J. Gray in m..... terms, ...mitted "The Chairman" whose health was drunk with m....l honours and the Chairman acknowledged the compliment.

Mr. Miles mentioned that the Hon. Geo. Wyndham would have been present at the gathering had not his Parliamentary duties detained him in London. The speaker gave the concluding toast of "The Host and Hostess", and Mr. C. King responded on behalf of himself and Miss. King.

During the afternoon as far as the weather permitted sports were indulged in. Mr. W. E. Bradford and his musical party from Bristol gave a series of enjoyable entertainment in the marquee, and in the evening there was dancing to the music of the band. Altogether the day's proceedings were as enjoyable as could be expected under the circumstances.

Western Gazette, 2 August 1912