

Arcadian
Club
SCARNING



Newsletter May 2003 No 10

**INDEX,
ALPHABETICAL LIST OF
NAMES, SUBJECTS ETC.
WITH REFERENCES –**

–the Concise Oxford Dictionary



AT OUR LAST meeting in October 2002 we were privileged to have as our main speaker Dr. Henry Stapleton who gave us a talk, and a rallying call on the need to index Augustus Jessopp's works for posterity.

Henry made an appeal for volunteers to record the events, and references, including the Norfolk dialect, Jessopp came by, as a result of his extensive research, some of a rare nature, that no other local historian had discovered on little known happenings during medieval times in our county.

As one of those who rashly(?) came forward as a volunteer, I have made an attempt to index "The Coming of the Friars", one of Jessopp's most popular works at the time of its publication. This book contains three chapters on the Black Death in Norfolk during the years 1348/1349. This is an area in our history that I am particularly

interested in, because as you can imagine, this terrible disease decimated life, not only in this county and country, but also throughout Europe and the Middle East. In my wanderings along the bookshelves of our antiquarian bookshops I have found only one work on this subject entitled "The Black Death" and this is by a German author, Johannes Nohl, published in 1924. The book goes into great detail on the origins and the terrible loss of life world wide, of which our Islands were just a small part.

As far as I am aware, Dr. Jessopp is the only antiquarian writer who has touched on this painful subject in our county of Norfolk in any great detail, and much of the information he gleaned came from his examination of court rolls hidden in a strong box at Rougham Hall, the home of the North family, with whom he was well acquainted.

I have so far indexed the three chapters relating to the Black Death, as well as a chapter entitled 'Village Life in Norfolk 600 Years Ago'. So far, I have covered about half of the 344 pages in this volume so there is still much to work through. To bring together the index into a central reference is also a task in itself. I am told this can be done effectively by computer, but as I am not that proficient, as yet, with the technology, I have recorded my efforts the hard way in my own handwriting.

I am led to believe that when the proposed new library is built, and up and running in Dereham, the hope is that Jessopp's work can be lodged there for the benefit of future generations, but as most of the material on Jessopp, at the moment, lies in private hands (i.e. members of the Arcadian Club), there is very little available for the library at this moment in time.

It is anticipated that when the new library becomes functional, areas will be set aside for Dereham worthies of the past, such as Bishop Bonner, William Cooper, Noel Armstrong and others, and it would be gratifying if Jessopp could be added to the list.

My own view is that he deserves more recognition than so far given him not only for his time at Scarning and his many books on antiquarian subjects, but also for his educational achievements in the county, at the Norwich School where he was headmaster for some twenty years, a factor that we tend to overlook in our studies.

David Bunting

We are pleased to have been able to make donations of £40 to each of Scarning Village Hall Trustees and to St. Peter and St. Paul Church which have been acknowledged with thanks

Augustus Jessopp



Resumé of a talk given to the Arcadian Club by Henry Stapleton at Scarning on 19 October 2002.

AUGUSTUS JESSOPP was a man of many parts. He was a great headmaster, a devoted parish priest, a distinguished historian both of national and local history, a prophet too in regard to church affairs. He anticipated what was to come about concerning the payment and pensions for the clergy; he foresaw the removal of the freehold and the setting up of what is now the General Synod. He even wrote eloquently of the importance of faculties and a need in effect for Diocesan Advisory Committee, complaining of the "vandals" who were ruining so many churches by their "restorations".

Though one must not forget the books he wrote for his Greek and other pupils at Norwich School, the articles in the Dictionary of National Biography, the longer, larger books like *One Generation of a Norfolk House* and the *Life and Times of St. William of Norwich* and the outstandingly simple *A Short History of the Church of England*.

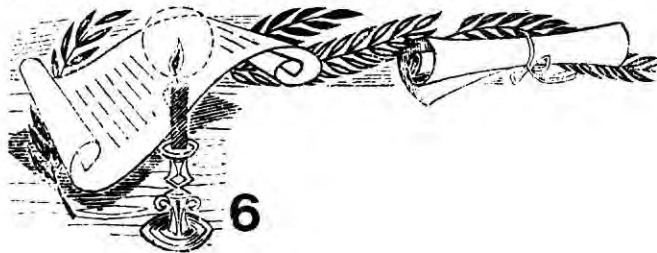
I am specially concerned about that series of mostly blue cloth bound books published by T. Fisher Unwin between 1899 and 1914. These

were collections from the periodical *The Nineteenth Century* and have been identified by John Creasy.

He wrote about monasteries, *The Ups and Downs of an old Nunnery*, *Daily Life in a Medieval Monastery*, of village life, *A Rustic Retrospect* (of Scarning), *Village Life 600 years ago*, of the clergy, *A 14th Century Parson*, *A Country Parson in the 18th Century* ghost stories, *An Antiquary's Ghost Story of Mannington Hall*, *The Phantom Coach*. Major articles include one on St. Alban's and Bury St. Edmunds, *The Black Death in East Anglia*, *The Building up of a University*, and perhaps most interesting of all to the church historian the unique account of the strange sect of the Muggletonians in *The Prophet of Walnut Tree Yard*.

It is an amazing collection and for me one of the most curious is *moles*. When I was politically-incorrect in my first parish in Yorkshire I gained some notoriety in trying to catch moles!

What I find most intriguing is the way Jessopp as a local historian records the history people tell him in conversation, what is known as *oral tradition*. For years this was under suspicion as being unreliable. Only what was written was considered accurate. In the past century,



however, it has been recognised that this is both reliable and accurate.

In my sermon in Scarning Church I spoke about Elizabeth Beevor, the wife of John Beevor, Rector here from 1780-1799. Jessopp has recorded how she was known as the 'Wistful Lady'. He has heard old villagers recall how upset she got when this sad and childless woman was in the company of children, how 'she would pat them and pat them again'. Elizabeth's memorial in the chancel records her burial there in 1799. This leads on to the account of the discovery of the long tresses of Ann Blackall (died 1672) whose grave was then disturbed.

Then there is the amazing recollections he records about the roof and rood screen of Little Fransham church, a lovely typical Norfolk parish church, all the more beautiful for the rare yellow clematis that climbs over the gate into the porch.

He listened to two ninety year olds, Charles Pestell and his wife chatting about old times. He heard how the 'vandal', Parson Swetman, Vicar 1803-1840 had had the angels sawn off at the roof's beam ends; you can still see where the dire deed was done. But there is something more he heard. That was that Charles memory of people talking of a *previous* vandalism. There had once been a sort of balcony across the chancel arch on which stood four "images". People would gaze

at these figures during boring sermons hoping they might move.

What were they? Jessopp probed with questions thinking that Charles had mistaken these for the angels; but no, he stood firm. They were images. And he was right. These were the rood screen figures of Our Lady and St. John which stood at either end of a probably hanging crucifix. The others may have been attendant angels or the statues of saints of a parish guild. The rood itself had been removed at the Reformation but these figures survived into the 18th century.

There are several similar stories too; one about “Nonmete Hill” and “Old Grograms” in *Hill Digging and Magic*, another concerning the Institution of an 18th century incumbent. When the Parson came to be “constituted” the local tearaway purloined the church key and threw it away. The key plays a significant part in the ceremony.

I have had proof of the way oral tradition can preserve a surname. We have a portrait of a family group. There is mother and father and his two sons and on one side, the butler. His name is the good East Anglian name of Catchpole. What could be more likely than that the lady who was known as “an apothecary’s daughter from Norwich should bring to her Devonshire home a butler from her own county.



I am not too sure about my second concern as I am not at all knowledgeable about it. But Jessopp records a great deal of Norfolk dialect, e.g. *Arcady* 159. I can't get my tongue around it all, much as I love to hear it. I do not think that his contribution has yet been recognised. Here I look to the Norfolk Dialect Society to see if he has in fact recorded a whole tranche of dialect that is not to be found elsewhere.

So my hopes are for these projects for the Society. First, so we can find our way to the various stories and names, could we have some volunteers to index say one book each? Secondly would somebody make a record of all the various pages where he records dialect? Thirdly, can we have somewhere to store all the Jessopp research material that is increasing all the time? I gather Dereham library is being refurbished. What about a Jessopp Room or Cupboard or just a Box? And finally can we perhaps arrange for an event to take place annually in the church, so that Augustus Jessopp be remembered and, connected with that, what about a special exhibition too?

Afterword. *I am delighted to have had six volunteers to help with the indexing. A splendid start!*

Henry Stapleton 31 October 2002

A MAN BEFORE HIS TIME?

OR
HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF?

Recently I picked up my copy of *Arcady* – for better for worse with the intention of browsing through it with thoughts of this newsletter in mind. I have often said to members of the Arcady Club that Dr. Jessopp's books are not ones where you open them at page one and read steadily to the end. Rather is his style one suited more to dipping in at random. We are sure to find something of interest. This is my own personal idea of 'Random Roaming' - as he calls one of his books!

On this occasion I started and ended with his introduction and the more I read, the more I was amazed how history has repeated itself. He could almost have been writing at the present time.

For example he mentions the serious agricultural depression during his time as a curate at Papworth St. Agnes. He says that the labourers are complaining that their wages have declined, but that they complain with less passion and resentment than previously, which had been the outcome of the Labourer's Union of his day. He says there has been no smashing of machinery, no burning of stacks, no malicious destruction of

property, no attacks on farmers, no pillage. Also that if there were violent language and bitter words, and much slander and abuse of those who least deserved it, these things were only what must be expected in time of great excitement.

He then turns his attention and attacks the inadequate housing situation in East Anglia and says he was shocked and humbled by what he saw. True, he refers to a wooden hut seventeen feet three inches long, fifteen feet wide and nine feet high in which were housed a husband, his wife and their three children. Things are not that bad today, but we do still have a serious housing problem in that the younger generation (first time buyers) are unable to find the mortgages required to match the greatly inflated house prices, and are forced to stay in the houses of their parents.

We often hear teenagers who are in some sort of trouble, say, "There is nothing to do. I was bored." Again, Jessopp is on target when he says that what is lacking in his day is 'facilities for recreation and some intellectual amusement', the initial difficulty being the want of money. How often do we hear this sentiment echoed by the present generation? The problem is now being recognised with skateboard parks and bowling alleys being provided but we still have a long way to go. Jessopp recognised the problem a hundred years ago when he had Scarning village hall built for recreational purposes. Again,



Jessopp hits the nail on the head when he comments 'When with great efforts a man starts a club, the keeping up of the facilities is what we find it hardest to manage.'

Perhaps less obvious but of interest to many of us is a farsighted comment by Jessopp when he calls for a movement to improve on Church music! He says he would have liked to vary the monotony of 'classical' tunes with the livelier measures of Moody and Sankey or the Salvation Army!

Dr. Jessopp then deplores the fact that there is little demand for agricultural allotments. He finds that few are eager to get hold of a piece of land which they may experiment on after their day's wages have been earned. This has been equally true until quite recently when I understand some interest has been shown. I well remember my own efforts when, with wheelbarrow and trailing children I once made my own way to my small cabbage patch where weeds strenuously contested my efforts to subdue them.

Jessopp refers to the general lack of interest in political matters. He says of the locals that they have no opinions, no views, no theories. He adds that the inhabitant of Arcady is a very practical person who knows what he wants in the main, but is absolutely without any notion how what he



wants can be obtained for him by anybody but himself. He adds that the Arcadian is utterly unable to grasp the abstract notion even of a body politic. There certainly seems to be evidence of this when we are told fewer and fewer people bother to vote. So there was apathy in his day too?

Last of all Jessopp turns his attention to the longevity of people and the cost to the ratepayer. He asks, "Did people live too long?" Happily he says we have not come to that opinion. On the contrary, he felt it would be hard to evaluate the moral value of these waning lives, lingering among their children's children. Today, we have the same moral dilemma – the high cost of medical treatment and retirement pensions for the elderly.

Jessopp calls for suitable provision for the old and infirm and ends by saying, "I think rich people have very little idea how far a little money would go to making our villages more lovely and our villagers' lives more happy."

Fred Hoskins

And these comments and thoughts are made in just the introduction to his book! If you haven't read it, find a copy and get immersed. It is very readable.

Reminiscences

by Constance Battersea

[1843-1931 [Macmillan, London, 1922]

Owing to lack of space the following was held over from the Summer newsletter.

IT IS ALWAYS a pleasure to obtain fresh material on the life of Augustus Jessopp, and last year I was visiting some friends of my recently deceased uncle at Sheringham, and one of them, Miss Maureen Collings, a keen observer of Norfolk history and writers on the county, produced extracts that will interest our members.

Miss Collings is not a Norfolk person by birth but was born at Eltisley, a couple of miles from Papworth St. Agnes where Augustus Jessopp was curate before he went to Helston, in Cornwall.

Before she retired to Norfolk, Miss Collings used to work in Cambridge at the well-known booksellers Heffers and naturally has a trained eye for a good book. Recently she acquired a copy of a book by Lady Constance Battersea [1843-1931] entitled 'Reminiscences.'

Lord and Lady Battersea owned a house at Overstrand called the "Pleasaunce" which later became a Christian holiday home. There are

references to Augustus Jessopp in the narrative and we have produced them in this newsletter, which not only gives a generally accepted view of Augustus' personality but also his political leanings which are surprising to me as I always considered Augustus to be on the right of the political agenda.

The following is an extract from her Visitors' Book:

'It was Lady Dorothy Nevill who introduced us to that very interesting Canon Jessopp, rector of Scarning parish at the time when we knew him. He was a keen historical student, principally of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and had an amazing knowledge of Norfolk customs, habits, and speech, not only of that period but of many others.

*One of his works, entitled **One Generation of a Norfolk House** (that of the Walpoles), has been very widely read and deservedly appreciated, the ghost story contained in its pages adding to the interest it awakened. In spite of his literary power and his good parish work, for he was a most devoted pastor, it was impossible to obtain preferment in his favour, from either the Conservative or the Liberal Prime Ministers. As he said himself, his politics did not appeal to Lord Salisbury nor his theology to Mr. Gladstone.*

He had a striking personality, being very tall, with fine features, brilliantly blue eyes, and a

happy, pleasant smile. He looked particularly well in the dress of a Royal Chaplain, for this distinction had been granted him.

I often recall having seen Canon Jessopp and George Meredith (then our guest) sitting cosily over the fire together indulging in reminiscences of past days.

By some extraordinary freak I had imagined that Canon Jessopp was a Conservative, and this error of mine was the cause of much merriment on the part of the two elderly gentlemen, who kept on ejaculating, "Fancy such a thing!" between peals of laughter, in which I joined. I remember not only how handsome and distinguished they looked, but what a delight it was to listen to their racy talk.

Canon Jessopp was a great lover of music, and when young had a charming voice.

He encouraged hearty congregational singing in his church, not fancying the anthems, except in cathedrals, but loving old-fashioned hymns, and getting his congregation to select and propose their favourites for successive Sundays.

David Bunting