

*Arcadian*  
*Club*  
SCARNING



Newsletter    May 2004    No.12



This is the twelfth newsletter that has been produced since our first was published in 1998.

We are lucky in having Fred who expertly prepares and sets up the contents into an attractive publication twice yearly. I know of other groups who have great difficulty in obtaining a competent editor, particularly 'The Friends of Norfolk Dialect' who are having great difficulty in replacing their editor who is giving up through ill health and pressure of work.

A great deal of effort goes into arranging news items and many hours on the computer.

You may have noticed in a March edition of the Eastern Daily Press, Keith Skipper in his weekly column, lists his top ten local books, and one of the top ten listed is Augustus Jessopp's 'Arcady, For Better For Worse' published in 1887.

Augustus was in good company as Keith includes in his selection Benjamin Armstrong, Henry Rider Haggard, his daughter Liliias Rider Haggard and Mary Mann.

Norfolk can boast of many great writers covering a wide range of our County's life that has enriched our knowledge of days gone by and we are privileged to number Augustus Jessopp amongst them.

90 years ago in 1914, the year of Jessopp's death, Norwich Public Library in its bi-monthly 'Readers' Guide wrote an appreciation of Jessopp's work and lists his books stocked by the library at that time. Some of them are still on the shelves today or can be obtained.

A copy of the 'Readers' Guide' of May 14, 1914 was sent to me some time ago by Ron Fiske and I think members of our group would appreciate reading some of this in our newsletter.

'One of the most famous East Anglians of the Victorian Era was Dr. AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, Schoolmaster, rector, and antiquary. He was born at Cheshunt, Herts., on 20<sup>th</sup> December 1823. Educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, he became an Honorary Fellow. At the age of 24 he married Mary Ann Cotesworth. He was curate of Papworth St. Agnes, Cambridgeshire, from 1848 to 1854, Headmaster of Helston Grammar School, Cornwall from 1855 to 1859, when he was appointed Headmaster of King Edward VI School, Norwich, a post he held until 1879. During his long Headmastership at Norwich, he effected reforms in the school

buildings, he proved his ability as a successful master, and by his kindness to the scholars, he endeared himself to them. In 1879 he became Rector of Scarning, Norfolk where he remained until, 1911, worthily fulfilling the duties of a country clergyman.

He was select preacher of the University of Oxford in 1896, an Hon. Canon of Norwich Cathedral, Chaplain-in-Ordinary to King Edward VII and sometime Honorary Secretary of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society – an appointment secured by his antiquarian research.

His most popular works are 'Arcady,' a fascinating picture of rural life, the complementary volume 'Trials of a Country Parson' and 'One Generation of a Norfolk House' which deals with Henry Walpole.

It was chiefly at Scarning that he wrote his books and articles, winning thereby a high reputation for his literary skill and his antiquarian knowledge.

His writings are characterised by their easy, lucid, and polished style, and are rendered attractive by their author's delightful sense of humour and his popular method of presentment.

(Acknowledgements to Readers' Guide)

David Bunting



This year we have experienced an unusually cold late winter that has had us all shivering. In our modern world it is annoying that with all the technology at our disposal so much disruption is caused by a slight covering of snow.

Many of us older folk remember the days (especially in 1946/7 and 1962/3) when we really had deep falls of snow but we managed to cope far better than we can today.

In 'The Trials of a Country Parson' published in 1890, Augustus writes a chapter 'Snowed up in Arcady.' A small extract is worth repeating.

*'I drew the curtains open, pulled up the blind, and lo! There was snow indeed. Not on the trees – that was well, at any rate – but all the air was full of snow. Not coming down from the clouds, but driving across the fields in billows of white dust, piling itself up against every obstacle – pollard, stump or gatepost, hedgerow, wall or farmstead, rolling, eddying, scudding along before the cruel north-easter, that was lashing the earth with its freezing scourge of bitterness.*

*At about the distance of a pistol shot from my window the high road runs straight as a ruler between low banks and their hedges, and we*

can see it for half a mile or so till some rising ground blocks the view.

This morning there was no road - only a long broad stripe of snow that seemed a trifle higher than the ploughed lands that lay to the northward, and which were almost swept bare by the gale.

To the southward there were huge drifts packed up against every little copse or plantation, and as far as the eye could see, not a human creature or sheep or head of cattle to lessen the impression of utter desolation.

By the time we got down to breakfast, the wind had lulled and fresh snow was falling.

That was at any rate, an improvement upon the cursed north-easter.'

David Bunting

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Did you pay your subscription last October (£5)?  
If not, Ann will be happy to receive it at the May meeting.



## **D**oris is DEAD!

Members of the Arcadian Club will know that Dr. Jessopp wrote many essays which were then bound together in book form and published throughout Gt. Britain.

Such a book is 'Idyls of Arcady' and during an idle moment, I picked up a copy of it and started reading his essay entitled 'Doris'.

Dr. Jessopp had the time and opportunity to study in detail the lives and characters of those who lived in his benefice. He had a great sympathy for the hardships endured in his day and if you have the opportunity to read 'Doris' you must constantly remind yourself that this is the life story of a *real* person who lived one hundred and ten years ago. It is a sad story and told simply. Life was cruel and hard and yet a sense of love and loyalty is woven through it. It is obvious that Dr. Jessopp was greatly moved when he recounted the story of the life of Doris and so too will you be when you read it.

Doris was born in Nestane' where stood a windmill. Could this be Necton? Its owner had prospered and had a son and a daughter. The son was a riotous, dissipated rake. The father was growing old and the son broke his heart, spent his money and robbed him. The father mortgaged his

mill and a little row of cottages. The daughter was a high spirited, passionate girl who tried to hold things together. She managed the mill and kept the accounts but as fast as things looked better, the hulking brother of hers would bully his father and make off with such money as he could get. In desperation, she decided to marry the first man that asked her, come what may.

There was a jaunty young shoemaker in the next village of Skeorn's Inga (Scarning) who lived in one of a row of shanties, one room above and one room below. The shanties held four families, one of them a family of nine, three grown men, two grown women and four growing boys and girls, the youngest ten years old. Jaunty Jem was a good workman. 'Folks say as you'll marry the first man as asks you. Will you marry me?' Her brother had just slunk away with more of his old father's money, so what should she do?

'Marry me? I want somebody who can help me keep the mill and the accounts. *You can't write your name.*' She hesitated. Jem was a proper man and she could *teach* him to read and write. She married him and things went from bad to worse. Jem was bored with the lonely life of the mill and took to drinking more and more. Then Doris was born and other children with appetites that were frightful.



The old miller her grandfather, sitting among his gooseberry bushes, decided to look at his papers. He still had *something* he could call his own. They brought him a box which held old conveyances and although he couldn't read, he took them out and complained they were damp. He spread them on the gooseberry bushes to dry in the sun, when a sudden gust of wind carried them away. Doris was convinced that it was the work of the devil and the ruin of her grandfather who died a few days later.

There was no will but all that was left, mill and lands, came to the brother. Farewell to the mill. Jem took his wife and four sturdy youngsters to Dereham to soak himself in beer.

Jaunty Jem's career was not a long one. One day when Doris was just fourteen Jem rolled into the gutter, staggered out, lurched against a loaded cart, which passed over him, crawled home and next day, Mrs. Jem was a widow with eight ragged shoeless children hungry and demanding victuals. Without more ado, they were bundled off to the workhouse, a ramshackle block, squalid, noisome and filthy. Dr. Jessopp expressed relief that the workhouse was outside the boundaries of his parish.

At the age of fourteen, Doris was apprenticed by the parish as a maid-of-all-work. She must have been a handful. Before she had been at her place



for six months, she was left in charge of the house with the children to see to. There had been heavy snow and groups of gaunt lean men, out of work, were begging from door to door.

Full of sympathy, Doris dashed into the house, snatched a loaf from the cupboard and gave it to the hungry men. The children were frightened and later complained that as a result of this action, they too had had little to eat! Then there was a scene. 'Take my children's bread and give it to the tramps?'

Doris answered back, 'Skinflints that you are. Give the brats stones to suck once a day in these cruel times, they'll be none the worse.' As a result, Doris was carried before the magistrates and sent for a month to Swaffham Bridewell!

Swaffham Bridewell was a dreadful place. There were eleven prisoners including one lunatic. One pound per annum was allowed for straw for all the prisoners. Dr. Jessopp says that some were in fetters. He also mentions the filth, the blasphemy and the despair. As Doris was taken there, she passed a group of Salvationists who called out, "You're a-going to hell!" Doris stood still and the twinkle in her laughing eye meant anything but fear. Dr. Jessopp refers to her outstanding beauty and she could have married a dozen times.

She took up with Joe Bickers but would never marry him. "'Tain't no use your talking," said Joe; "I've been trying to make her marry me for all forty years – 'tain't likely you're a-going to talk her over!"

Joe Bickers, who was fifteen years older than Doris, grew blind and useless. He soon took to his bed and used to bellow snatches of songs. "Hold your noise, you old fool! The parson is coming along!" she would cry out, but she remained steadfastly loyal to him. She was his slave. It is amusing to read how one suitor went down on his knees to her, but she soon sent him packing.

The strange couple lived in a ruinous hovel. The house next door became so dangerous that the owner dismantled it and used some of the rafters to prop up Joe Bickers' wall. Bats flew in and out at pleasure, the wind whistled and the snowflakes found an easy entrance. They put their big four poster bed on the ground floor and it was a tight fit and this was where Dr. Jessopp would regularly visit.

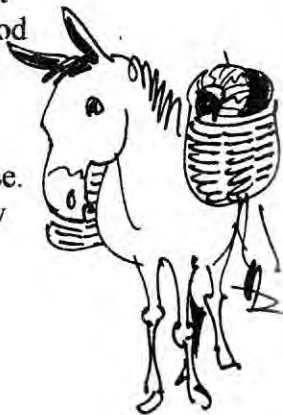
When Joe died, Doris took her donkey and cart and somehow contrived to pick up a livelihood.. She never begged and had many friends who were always willing to give her a shilling. In her way, she became a formidable personality. When her donkey cart became rickety she took it to the

wheelwright, a kindly man. "Mr. Tuck, I want you to mend this cart. What will it cost *you*? That's my meaning, for you must mend it and I shan't pay you for it. Leastways, I don't think I ever shall." The cart was mended and she went on in the old way, doing little jobs - and then the donkey broke down.

The knacker offered to shoot it for half a crown and use it for dog meat but Doris refused. After some bargaining, it was agreed that the animal should be shot and buried for a shilling but not used for dog meat. This was duly done and Doris was desolate. She had lost an old friend and that morning, was sure he looked at her in a way that said goodbye.

This is a story where the reader finds it increasingly difficult to put the book down. Doris becomes a living personality as of course she was indeed, wandering along the lanes. When the donkey had gone, she found it increasingly difficult to make a living. She was often wet and hungry, no fire in the grate and scanty provisions in the cupboard. The hard life began to tell on her. Her hair became grey but there was still plenty of it and she kept her good looks.

Then she took to her bed but resented any suggestion that she should go to the workhouse. "I never set my foot in the Union yet, and they



shan't make me. Who's going to look after me - a-peeping and a-picking and a-sniffing about?" "So," Dr. Jessopp says, "we had to make the best of it." As she became more and more feeble, he called more often, a journey of two miles. Doris was surprised at this. "You ain't got nothing to gain by it - you ain't obliged to - you ain't a-going to tell me as you like it." They had long talks which they both looked forward to.

Arrangements were made for a kind neighbour to look in two or three times a day and at first Doris resented this as an intrusion.

There came a day when Doris, much to Dr. Jessopp's surprise, asked him to write a letter for her. It was to her younger brother who she had brought from the workhouse at the age of fourteen, to help Jaunty Jem. He had not like Jem's drinking ways and had left. He was now a thriving miner. The letter was written and her brother came. He had travelled for fourteen hours and was willing to take Doris back with him. Doris however refused to go and he was anxious to return to his wife who was paralysed. He left word that his sister should want for nothing and left some money. "I knew he would come," said Doris, "He was always a good boy."

As Dr. Jessopp was leaving, Doris asked him to say a prayer for her in church. "Will you be so good as to ask 'em in your church next

Sunday...just to ..all on 'em...just to say a prayer for a bad woman as has lived as she hadn't ought to...? Possible? He may look in and hear 'em!" Jessopp carried out her wishes to the letter and it is easy to see he was greatly affected from the way he writes.

The night that she died, she sent for her neighbour who, following careful instructions, found in a hole in the chimney a little hoard of seventeen shillings. It had been stored up against the day of her burial and would save her from a pauper's grave.

In telling you this story I feel I have done little justice to the way that Dr. Jessopp relates it. It is evident that over the years, a kind of friendship developed between the two of them which bound them closer together as the years passed by. In Dr. Jessopp she found a friend who was able to record the story of her life for posterity.

Read it for yourself and you will find yourself emotionally involved!

*Fred Hoskins*

**NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL-ICON DATABASE**

Information regarding the Arcadian Club may be viewed on <http://icon.norfolk.gov.uk/>

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## *In Memory of a Country Parson*

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**WE ARE INDEBTED TO** Mrs. Ruby Wright (who is a member) for the photograph shown below.

It is a photograph of the unveiling of the tablet in memory of Dr. Augustus Jessopp and was published in the Eastern Daily Press 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1951. The tablet may be seen in the North wall in the Chancel near the Vestry door.

This was 37 years after the death of Augustus Jessopp and shows the love and respect in which he was held.



*The Bishop of Norwich on Sunday unveiled a tablet in Scarning Parish Church, in memory of Dr. Augustus Jessopp, scholar, author and former Rector of the parish. In the picture the Bishop is examining the tablet, with the Rev. F. G. Rogers and the churchwardens, Mr. S. Steward (left) and Mr. A. F. Wright.*



## Scarning Church Sanctus Bell

IN THE JULY 1904 PARISH MAGAZINE, Jessopp writes about Scarning Church Sanctus bell which he says was cast not earlier than the sixteenth century by the Rev. John Echard who was Rector at that time. The Church of Scarning was stripped bare during the great pillage in the last years of the reign of King Edward VI.

The pillage was carried out under the pretence of religion, the pretence being that bells, organs and sacred vessels were mischievous and harmful. But Edward VI died in July, 1553 and was succeeded by his sister Queen Mary who immediately set to work to bring back the old state of religion with the old ritual.

The Rev. John Echard did his best to bring about a thorough restoration and one of the first things he did was to set up a new *Sanctus Bell* in place of the old one which had been torn down.

Writing in 1904, Dr. Jessopp says, "It is a very remarkable fact in the history of this bell of ours that it continued to be rung in Scarning Church every Sunday till about 80 years ago, when the Rev. St. John Priest, who was Curate of the Parish under Mr. Aufreere, the Rector, put a stop to the ringing of the bell about the year 1815. After this it was tossed into the Rood loft and found there at the time of repairing the Church in 1860. It was set up in its present position by Mr. Carson, the then Rector of the Parish."

It is hoped to include more about the Sanctus Bell in our next Newsletter.

Fred Hoskins

