

*Arcadian
Club*
SCARNING



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Missing Links?

by D.Bunting

AT OUR LAST MEETING in May 2000 I mentioned the gaps in Augustus Jessopp's life unknown to our group. Ron Fiske has plugged one of the 'missing links' in respect of the Library Sale, details of his find are now published in this newsletter.



Rather in hope than in anticipation, I wrote off to the Helston Grammar School in Cornwall and to the Minister of the English Church in Antwerp, Belgium.

Within a week, I had a reply to my Antwerp letter from the Minister of St. Boniface Anglican Church there - the Rev. Canon Dirk W. van Leeuwen who pointed out that I should have directed my enquiry to the English Church at Ostend on the coast!! On consulting my papers I did indeed find this was so, my logistics not being what they should have been!

Father Dirk, as he signed himself, sent me a copy of the history of the English Church in Antwerp which proved his points, but it also proved most interesting.

He also kindly sent me a leaflet briefly giving a resumé of the history of the Ostend Church and promised that if he found out any more information on the Jessopp's family stay in the Ostend area, he would let me know.

Father Dirk pointed out that Augustus Jessopp's elder brother John Jessopp, was Minister at Ostend from 1840 to 1844. He was also, for some time, Honorary Chaplain to King Leopold 1st of Belgium.



At a later date, I received a letter from Mrs. Deidre Dare, author of the 'History of Helston Grammar School', a copy of her book I have since acquired. There are references to the Jessopp's time there from 1855 to 1858, and obviously they were very highly thought of during their fairly short stay at the school.

Mrs. Jessopp's family set up an exhibition or grant for able pupils of the school to advance their education.

Apart from this, there was very little we did not already know, as Mrs. Dare had gleaned most of her information from the 'Dictionary of National Biography', which included the place of Augustus Jessopp's death as being in Norwich which of course is not correct, and which I pointed out in my reply to Mrs. Dare.

It was interesting to note that the author Charles Kingsley was a pupil of the school. A former headmaster on a par with Jessopp and who was there before him was the Rev. Derwent Coleridge, third son of the famous poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He too had certain eccentricities, probably inherited from his father who was one of the 'Lake' poets, a friend of Wordsworth and of the celebrated essayist of the late 18th and early 19th century, Charles Lamb.

Both Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb were two of our finest letter writers of the age, not lost on Augustus Jessopp whose father John Sympson Jessopp actually knew Lamb.

In our modern age of Fax machines and computers, and the World Wide Websites, there is a danger of missing out on the art of letter writing, which of course in the 18th and 19th centuries was the only form of communication apart from the spoken word. For that reason the art was perfected and illustrated further in the writings of our great novelists and writers such as Jessopp whose heritage we are still able to appreciate today.

The Sale of the Rev. Augustus Jessopp's Library

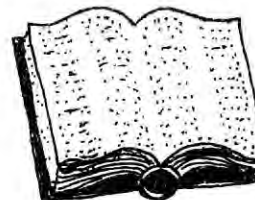
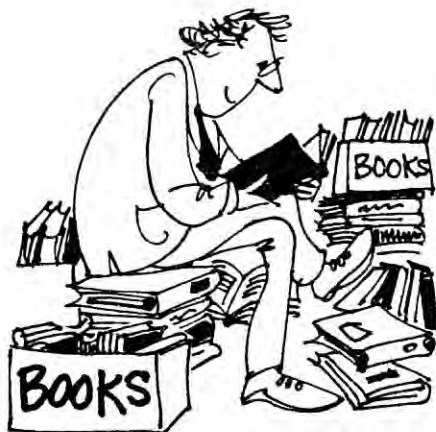
by R.C.Fiske

There recently came up for sale, by auction, the 5th Earl of Orford's copy of the sale catalogue of the Rev. Augustus Jessopp's library. The library was sold by Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge during the first two days of a three day sale at Wellington Street, The Strand, London, 4th - 6th December 1911. Tipped into the catalogue are letters from Jessopp, his friend the local historian Walter Rye, and the auctioneers.

Jessopp's library was divided into 596 diverse lots. They included some rare 16th and 17th century printed books, some interesting sets and volumes of classical, historical and antiquarian interest, a few relating to natural history, and most of his local collections. Surprisingly, the lots which attracted most public interest were a series of recent autographed letters from the poet and author, George Meredith (1828-1909). Jessopp had taught Meredith's son at the Norwich School and the two were on friendly terms and often met one another.

Jessopp's local collections were dispersed throughout the catalogue which, as was then customary, was arranged by the size of the books rather than their content.

Not only that, but the local books were admixed with others so, as the Eastern Daily Press reported, 'prices being uniformly low.'



Some of Jessopp's own publications were enhanced by additional material.

His edition of Husenbeth's *Emblem of Saints* (lot 193) was interleaved with numerous manuscript additions and corrections and even contained a letter from Cardinal Newman. The same treatment was given to his *Diocesan Histories, Norwich* (lot 197) which was extended to two volumes with numerous additional material and letters.

But it is his own manuscript collections which now, as then, appeal to Norfolk interest. His Miscellaneous Collections of Extracts from unprinted sources of the History of Norfolk (lot 285) were adjudged by the auctioneers to be 'extremely valuable', and his Collectanea Biographica (lot 540) was similarly culled from 'hundreds of volumes'. The last lots in the sale (575-596) included his valuable original manuscripts including (lot 586), his own writings and transcripts arranged in ten cases.

Within the final lots were a few items which prompted the 'tipped in' correspondence in Lord Orford's copy of the catalogue. The first, dated the 27th November 1911, was from Walter Rye to [R.J.W.] Purdy pointing out that lots 588 (Burnham Manor Court Rolls 1307-1327) and 596 (an emblazoned pedigree of the Walpole family) belonged to Lord Orford and lot 589 (Bailiff's accounts for Rougham) belonged to the North family. Whether or not this was realised by Lord Orford is not clear.

He had already, on the 25th November, lodged a few commissions with the auctioneers, including lots 588 and 596. Certainly by the 29th November he was aware of the situation as he again wrote to the auctioneers. There is no copy of this letter with the catalogue but, from Sotheby's reply it is clear that he instructed them to take no action in the matter but to leave his commission standing for what was clearly his own property.

It is equally clear that this attitude was due to Orford's friendship and respect for Jessopp who was now failing in mental health. Indeed, Sothebys took a similar view and stated they would not write to Jessopp on the matter 'as we fear that any worry of the kind might have serious effects on his health'.

At the time Dr. Jessopp had removed from Scarning to the Chantry House in Norwich, taking with him about a hundred books kept back from auction. It was here that he (possibly through a friend) was tactfully advised of the situation by Walter Rye. This, seemingly, was very close to the day of the sale for, on that day, he (or the friend) sent a telegram to the auctioneers instructing them to withdraw the lots and return them to Lord Orford with Jessopp's regrets. The same day, a letter written by the friend, and signed by the Doctor, was sent to Orford expressing 'my regret that my inability to look through my papers thoroughly prevented my discovering them'.

Walter Rye attended the sale on behalf of the Norwich Library Committee and also with a few further commissions from Lord Orford. It is not clear what he bought but it is known that he lost the well-known Mannington Ghost story papers which exceeded his commission of £3. Even so the papers eventually found their way back to the family.

To conclude it will suffice to say that Jessopp's health did not improve. Rye still acted as his unofficial 'supervisor' and he and Lord Orford were among the very few who attended his funeral in February 1914 - 'a very melancholy affair'.

★ The next meeting of the Arcadian Club will be held in Scarning Village Hall on Saturday 7th October at 7.30pm



Before the Great Pillage

In his book 'Before the Great Pillage' Augustus Jessopp presents a series of his essays, the first ones dealing with the history of England and how the Parishes of his time evolved. It makes fascinating reading and we give here extracts from his first essay. We include parts of his preface which reveal his innermost feelings regarding his resignation as Head of Norwich School to become Rector of Scarning.

PREFACE

When, some twenty years ago, the country living which I now hold was offered me by the kind friend to whom the patronage belonged, I accepted it with little hesitation, and I did so with my eyes open and not without counting the cost. I knew that in joining the ranks of the clergy I was burning my ships and that there was no professional future before me. I have never regretted my decision. I have found an abiding joy and pride in doing my best for my people and studying them and their ways in the present, while trying to learn something about their forefathers and *their ways* in the past.

In my first volume entitled '*Arcady, for better for worse*', I gave the world the result of my observations upon men and things as I found them. I believe it was and is a faithful picture; but there was nothing retrospective in it reaching further back than the first half of the eighteenth century.

It happened however, that certain antiquarian tastes, which were born with me, led me into researches here and there which appeared to me to throw some new light upon mediaeval history. The discovery of the immense body of direct evidence which the Manor Court Rolls afford regarding the incidence of the great plague of 1349; the study of the Rougham Charters, which yielded such a minute insight into the life of a village community in the thirteenth century; and the extraordinary



find of a prosperous country parson's annual audit for the year ending Michaelmas, 1306 were instances of the fact that even in History there are still many discoveries to be made and that some men are curiously fortunate in their finds.

PARISH LIFE

When the results of the Great Inquest, commonly known as the *Domesday Book* were handed to William the Conqueror in 1086, this island had in the thousand years preceding that great event suffered three conquests. That is, the land and the people inhabiting it had been passed over to the sway and dominion of three successive masters.

The first conquest was that by the Romans, who held the whole island from the Firth of Forth to the Channel. Their rule lasted, roughly speaking, for four centuries, and they abandoned the province of Britain at the beginning of the fifth century of our era, leaving the luckless people to take care of themselves.

The second conquest was that effected by the Saxons and Angles - the English fold, if you prefer it - whose rule, at its widest, extended over pretty much the same stretch of territory as the Romans had brought under their obedience, with the exception of the Principality of Wales and the north-western district known as Strathclyde. The Saxons took another six centuries to consolidate the kingdoms they had won, and during the last two of those centuries they had hard work to hold their own against the Danes who were trying to supersede them.

Finally the Normans under their great Duke William got their firm footing here; they were the last successful invaders. They won it literally by the sword, held it by the sword, and in less than twenty years the Conqueror proved how thoroughly he had made England into a kingdom under a single master by the carrying out of that magnificent survey to which allusion has been made.



What did the several conquerors - Roman, Saxon, and Norman - find here when they settled among us? and secondly, what did they do for the nation they subdued?

It seems certain that before the coming of the Romans there never had been anything approaching a united England. Thus much, however, may be safely affirmed: that our Roman conquerors did find organised communities, settled in defined areas. It is probable that with the wisdom which characterised their foreign policy, the Romans did just what our English rulers in India did, i.e. they left the old areas, whether of the "village community" or any other organised social or political unit, as little disturbed as possible; they left the people such self-government as they had attained to.

But it is difficult to believe that the centralising instincts of Rome did not impose upon the subject population some form of coercive administration which, while leaving to the mixed people, passing under the name of Britons, a certain measure of self-government, superadded thereto some machinery for dealing out even justice as between man and man, such as might afford security for the lives and property of all subjects of the Roman Empire.

The *vil* was of Roman origin and in the main identical with what the Saxon folk called the *tun*, the town or township and these were presided over by the *reeve*. When the Normans came they substituted for this the government by a *lord* over the inhabitants of the old area, the lord to be responsible to the sovereign for the taxes levied from the community, and the inhabitants of the area being bound to render allegiance, service and tribute to the lord. The *township* of the Saxons had become the *manor* of the Norman rulers.

The lords of the manor were petty kings, exercising authority, exacting homage, and imposing burdens on their '*tenants*' i.e. on the inhabitants of the old townships.



But long before this great revolution had come about, a much greater revolution had taken effect up and down the length of the land. When Rome loosened her hold of Britain, Christianity was the established religion of the empire, and Britain was in some sense or other a Christian land. It was that or nothing. Two centuries later the Saxons had almost as effectually blotted out any organised Christian Church, in the eastern half at least of Britain, as the Moslems, a century later, had blotted it out in North Africa, Asia Minor, and Palestine.

Then came the great awakening and before the seventh century closed, Britain was a Christian land once more. How it was brought about at all, again it may be said, we shall never know. During the Saxon occupation the townships became little territories with a religious personage, to wit, the *priest*.

Gradually it came about that every township became a limited monarchy on a small scale and *also* the home of a community which in religious matters was brought under the rule of an ecclesiastical *Rector* as he was in fact and he got to be called. The vil or the township became the priest's domain and the people living in that area became his *parishioners*.

The word *Parish* indicated originally the geographical area over which the jurisdiction of the *Bishop* extended. It was not till a later time when the area had become divided into smaller areas, each of which was committed to the oversight of a *priest* that the smaller area got to be called the *parish*.

The parish was purely a religious organisation, distinct in its origin, its working, and its aims from the manor, the township, or the tithing, though composed of the same personnel. The community had its own assembly - the parish meeting - which was a deliberative assembly. It had its own officers duly elected with well-defined duties to discharge, and were paid for their services out of funds provided by the parishioners.



The president or chairman of the church council or parish meeting was the rector of the parish or his deputy; but he was by no means a 'lord over God's heritage' and the income raised for parish purposes, which not infrequently was considerable, was not under his control, nor did it pass through his hands.

The trustees for the parish property and the responsible representatives of the parish were the churchwardens, who were rarely less than two in number; and in the case of the larger parishes they had assessors who shared with them the burdens and the responsibilities of duties which were not seldom irksome. The wardens were elected annually. The office was an honorary one and often entailed some risk and expense.

The permanent officials of the parish, beginning at the parish clerk, the grave digger, watchman, keeper of the processional cross, were the paid servants of the parish. They were in no sense the nominees or subordinates of the rector; they were supported by the parishioners, and removable, when removable at all, by the parishioners, who presented the offender to the rural dean, from whom an appeal lay to the archdeacon; and occasionally such an appeal might be carried to the bishop, whose decision was final.

The property belonging to the parishes during the centuries before the great spoliation was enormous, and was always growing. It consisted of houses and lands; of flocks and herds; of precious jewels and costly vessels of silver and gold; of ornaments and church furniture; of bells and candlesticks, crosses and organs, and tapestry and banners; of vestments which were miracles of splendour in their colours and materials and incomparable artistic finish of needlework; not to speak of the fine linen and the veils, the carpets and the hangings; and last, not least, the service books, which were continually needing to be mended, bound or replaced by new copies, and that at a cost which we moderns even now find it difficult to accept as credible.

All this immense accumulation of treasure and wealth was strictly the property of the parish and was held in trust for the community by the churchwardens. In the Record Office there is one most precious manuscript which contains a minute account of the contents of every church in the Archdeaconry of Norwich in the year 1368. It is in fact a return of parish property to be found in the churches of the Archdeaconry for that year.

Now it must be understood that all this enormous amount of property (which if it were in existence now and were brought under the hammer would represent a gross value of several millions of pounds sterling) belonged to the *parishes*. It no more belonged to the clergy, the parsons, the parish priests, than it belonged to the lords of the manors.

This property was, as I have said, always growing and increasing in value. It was rare - very rare - for any man or woman of substance enough to make a will, to forget to leave some sort of legacy to the parish. Very common were the bequests of a poor widow's wedding ring. Never a year passed without the parish accounts showing that articles of dress, brass pots, lamps, candlesticks, honey, wax, were left by the poorest; sheep and cattle and lands, great goblets and occasionally considerable sums of money, being bequeathed by the well-to-do.

At the end of the year the churchwardens were required to hand in a strict account for every pennyworth they had received. They set down what this or that article had been sold for - the rings, the kettles, the brooches, the cups - the rent received for the houses, the lands or for the use of flocks or herds; and per contra they told what expenses they had been put to, and they finished up the account by showing the balance.

It is nonsensical to say that the monastic bodies built the parish churches or that the *squires* built them. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there *were no squires*. The parishes built the churches and in all cases, the parishes kept them in repair.