

ARCHIVAL NEWS 2016

For the 2014 and 2015 Journals, I felt that it was very important to air documents from the archives which recorded and commemorated the actions of Frodsham men and women during WW1 and WW2.

However, over this time I have answered 69 specific enquiries from the public and so a very busy service continues. From the many enquiries, I report only some of the more interesting and curious.

For example, it was most unusual to receive a telephone enquiry on a Sunday morning from Broadstairs in Kent but the following conversation and later emails from Mike Ellis, proved very interesting.

.Mike is an enthusiastic browser and collector of -

"... all sorts of postcards from the 1910 /1936 period, and where they have been sent somewhere interesting, as in this case, I like to write them up in as much detail as I can.

So, my queries to you are; in 1911 was Norley Hall a large country house / farmhouse ? Does it still exist, and if not, what has taken its place?

Can you tell me about C. Bell Esq - was he the owner, or tenant - landed gentry or working man? "



The internet provided basic information about Norley Hall but it was a chance remark amongst friends which proved so useful. Coincidence played its part when having mentioned that I had seen the Hall close to for the first time, I was later given the 2014 Issue of the Norley News Magazine with its leading article about the Norley Hall Estate and Charles Bell Esq!

Once I had tracked down the author, retired farmer Mr. David Gadd of Norley, I found that he was very knowledgeable about the history of the estate and keen to chat at length about Mike's mysterious, C. Bell Esq..

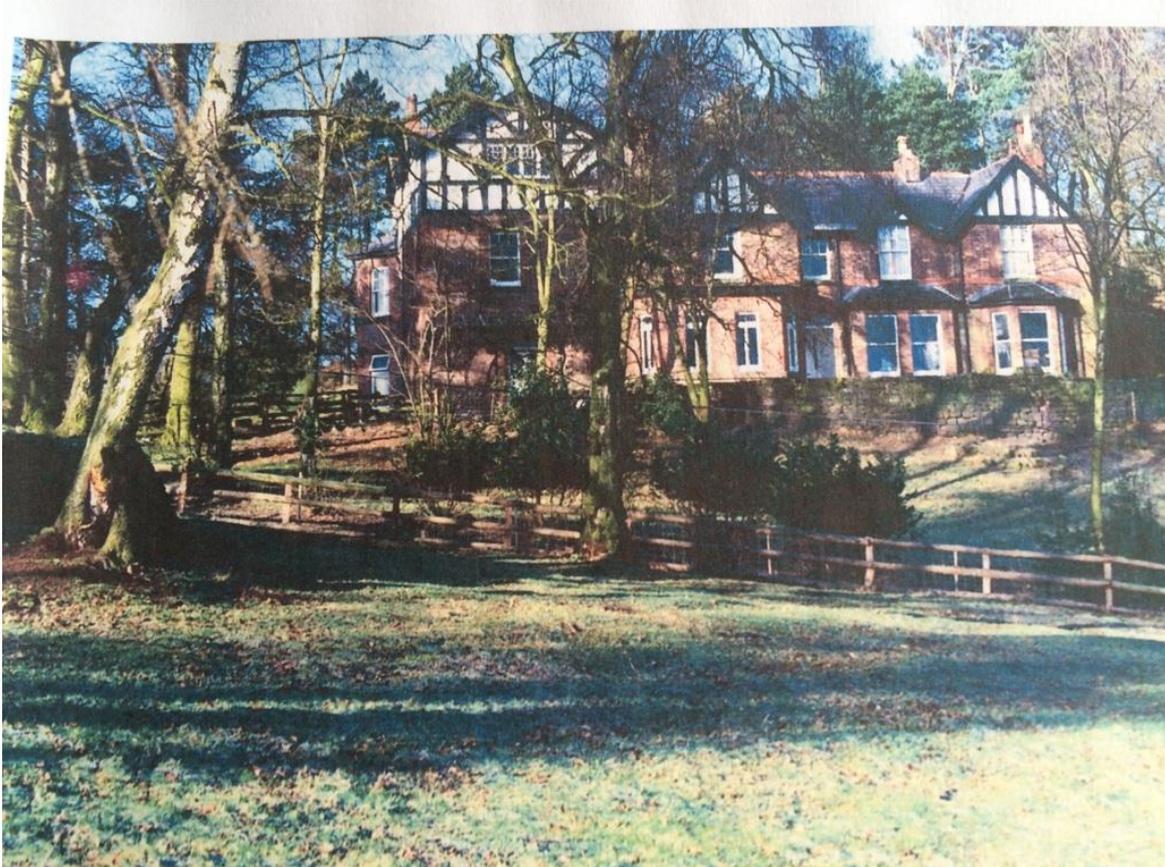
Rather than summarise his article about Norley Hall and Charles Bell, I gained his permission to reproduce the article (as written by David) for our Journal and which you will find in **From the Archives 2016**

The information was finally emailed to a delighted Mike Ellis

The magazine, now in the archives, has four pages of beautiful old photographs illustrating the extensive estate of Norley Hall.

Yet another enquiry, similar in nature to Mike Ellis's, was most intriguing.

Brian Breckie emailed to ask about **Heathercliff House Hotel**, Manley Road, Frodsham, where he had spent an “enchanted” holiday many years ago, and about a Queen who had once lived there. This is a well known local story but just how true is it?



Coincidence played its part once again.
photo taken about 1982

Heathercliff, is a Victorian country house, once owned by a Liverpool business man named Smith, who extended the house, developed the gardens and 10 acres of woodland between 1905 and 1908

Some time after 1920 it was bought by a Liverpool stock broker, Major Matthew Steele.

By the 1950s it was owned by Richard (Dick) Roberts, described as a delightful man, who bought several houses in the area including the neglected Heathercliff, which he split into two and rented out half.

In 1982 his son, Dr John Roberts, inherited the house and who -

“spent considerable time, effort and money restoring it from a near wreck with an overgrown garden to what it had been but adding the ponds to encourage wild life. The grassland was controlled by sheep and the woods restored .”

In 1989 the house was sold once more and became a Country House Hotel under the ownership of Mike and Sheila Cooksley, hosting amongst others, celebrities and film makers. In 1991 the grounds became the settings for the film “Robin Hood” with Patrick Bergin. The interior of St. Laurence Church was filmed and Frodsham High School was used as a costume and makeup station.

By 2014/15 it was again under new ownership and in the hands of contractors who were restoring it to its original splendour. I was able to wander inside and saw rooms emerging much as the Queen would have seen them. Only a beautiful chandelier remained and an old publicity press cutting about two former residents, Queen Alexandra and the American multimillionaire, John Paul Getty Snr.

So, what of the Queen? What had Frodsham to offer her?

Queen Alexandra of Yugoslavia, a Princess of Greece and Denmark, born on the 25th March 1921, was the widow of King Peter of Yugoslavia. They had married in 1944 but after WW2 the Monarchy was abolished and their penniless, chaotic life style led to her attempted suicide and finally divorce in 1953. King Peter died in 1970 in Denver, USA and was later re-interred in the Royal Cemetery in Serbia.

My next step was to trace anyone who had had contact with the Queen..

Phone calls to friends in Frodsham who were able to help, led to contacts in Oxford and finally to London.

The Oxford contact, by coincidence, was Ann Moncrieff, whom I had helped with research two years earlier. Her brother, who lived in London, was Dr J. R. L. Roberts - ~~the~~ Dr John Roberts of Frodsham, who had inherited Heathercliff in 1982 and who proved to be the key to the enquiry. She very kindly put me in touch with him.

John who had lived in the other half of Heathercliff gave me a brief, if somewhat guarded, outline of Queen Alexandra's residency and sent me photographs of the house, grounds and members of



staff covering this time.

The two people who 'oversaw' the Queen's stay were John van Eerde, the project manager and Maxi Spanoudis, his assistant. They were assisted by Jill Roberts, in charge of finances, and Robin Ashworth (well known locally) in charge of Alexandra's supplies.

During her stay, John van Eerde drove the Queen around the Cheshire countryside, which she clearly enjoyed.

Dr. John Roberts writes -

"I can make no comment other than to confirm that Her Majesty, stayed at Heathercliff for a short while in 1985. I have spoken to the sub manager at that time who asked me to say that Her Majesty, who beamed when addressed as such, was a very nice lady and enjoyed her short stay in the Cheshire countryside. HM came to Heathercliff because of the need for a tranquil environment and appeared very unhappy to leave"

Queen Alexandra of Yugoslavia, died in Burgess Hill, West Sussex on the 30th of January 1993 and was re-interred first of all in Tartoi, Greece and finally in the Royal cemetery in Serbia.

My grateful thanks to Dr John Roberts, Nick Smith, Chris Bushell and Ann Moncrieff for all their invaluable information. A delighted Brian Brockie sent his appreciation for answers to his enquiry.

Moving on!

For those members who do not have a computer to browse the Archive Website, and to refresh members' memories about the [Flower Cottage Coat Discovery](#), I include the full article with updates and photographs in the **From The Archives** section in the Journal.

A Mystery.

Last year, a doctor's leather medical case, found in the loft of a 1929 built house in Sandiway near Chester, was passed to the archives by Kathryn Shingler, a family member. The case had to be dried, shaped and polished being in very poor condition.

The FHS committee requested for as much information about it as possible. At this point I should warn you that the following is not for the faint hearted.

So at my request, Prof. Martin Hewitt of Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, was given the only information I had but by using his own knowledge, medical records and so on, the possible identity and history of the case's contents were meticulously researched. His notes, certificates and photographs of the instruments are now in the archives. The doctor's name was thought to be English and living in Sandiway.

Martin notes -

" If we have the correct Dr. English (of 2) he was born in 1881/2, living in Cheshire and listed as a physician (partner) in 1911 census and is 29. Probably just setting out in general practice. So he would be practising from about 1910 through to 1940 - 1945. It would fit in with some of the instruments seen - such as the GP doing spinal taps, surgical procedures (scalpels) and passing bougies.

The metal instruments known as 'bougies' are of different diameters - dilators to be inserted into the body tubes one after another, dilating them. At the risk of being indelicate - they were for inserting into the male urethra to overcome any stricture or narrowing (often caused by gonorrhoea). I am surmising that morphine could have been applied topically to numb things. All pre-antibiotic era.

Contents of vial listed here are poisonous :-

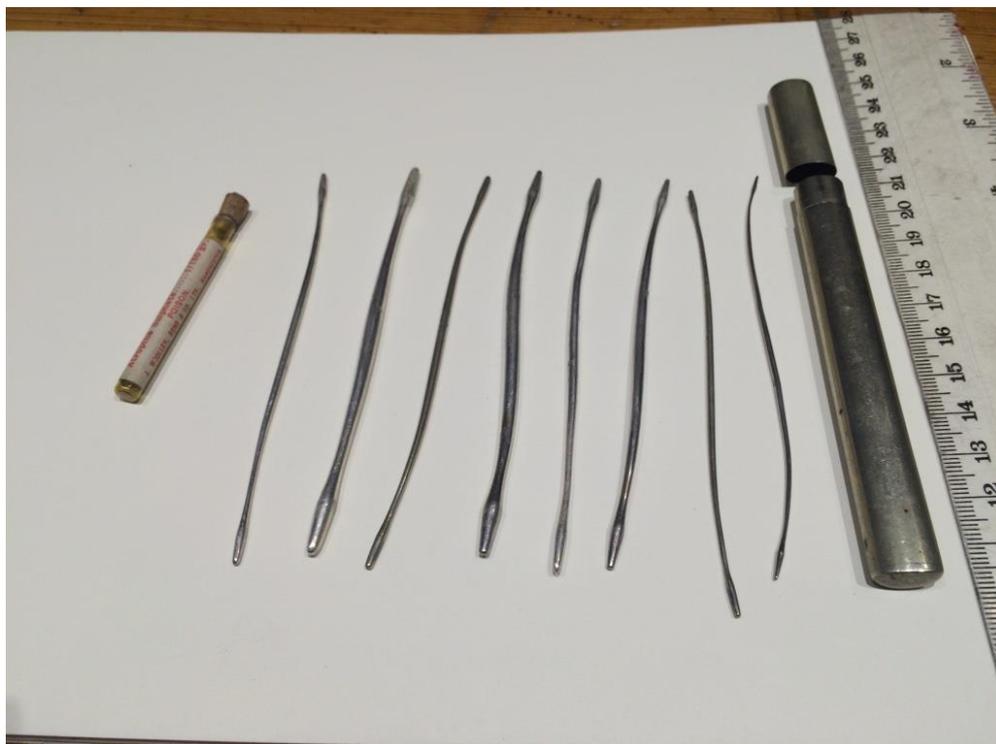
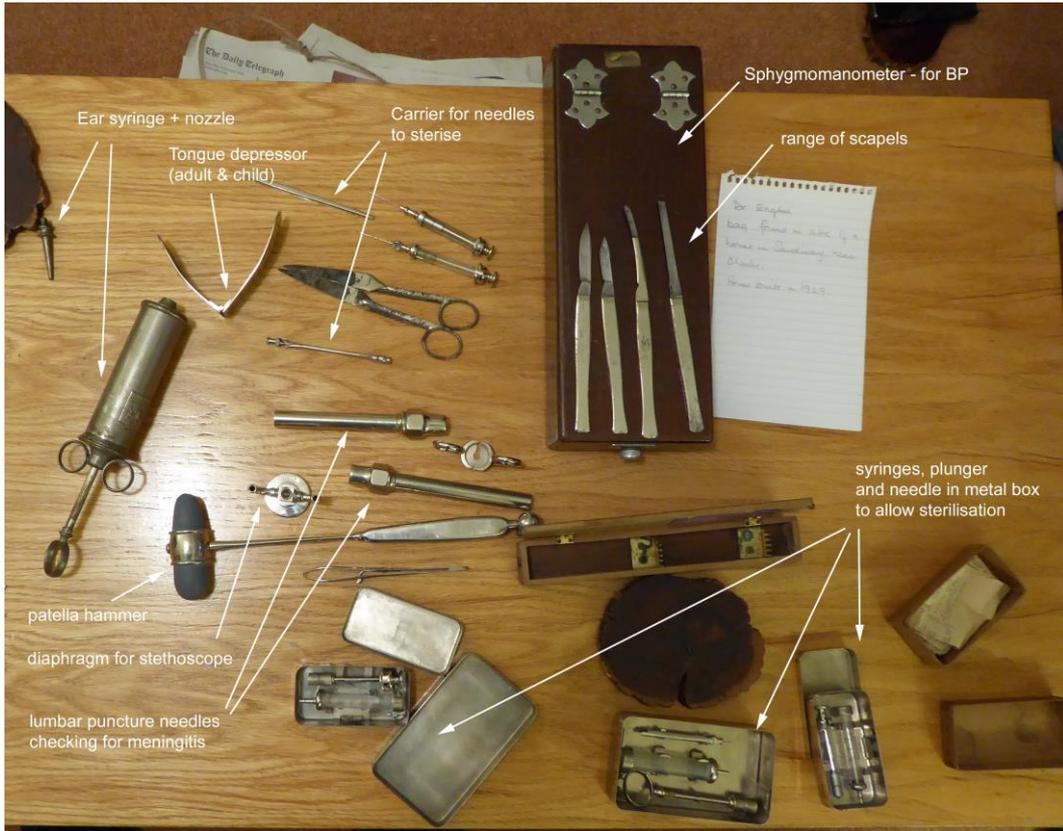
18 tablets of morphine atropine 1/4 grains; Sulphate 1/160 grains; Hypodermic tablets. Morphine S is for pain. Atropine is an 'anticholinergic' drug and has many effects on body - as an eye drop it will dilate the pupil - and was used by women to increase attraction by producing big black eyes - plant extract Belladonna (beautiful woman).

Morphine and atropine often given together as an anaesthetic- morphine for pain and sleepiness and atropine to dry secretions. So patients would take atropine tablet, then have a morphine injection before surgery.

If there is medication in the vial you may wish to dispose of it"

Richard has already disposed of the tablets and the tiny vial is now safe in the case .

My grateful thanks to Martin for such detailed research in attempting to solve a mystery.



The bougies, case and vial of poison

Documents, letters, books, slides and artifacts continue to be donated and I list but a few of the most recent here.

The daughter of Ted Edmundson brought in a box full of her late father's documents. Mr Edmundson contributed articles to the early Journals and wrote widely and in great detail, about Frodsham and its environs. The box contained correspondence from the 1970s covering local conservation, Runcorn New Town, flora, fauna, badger groups and so on. Eighty of his slides of Frodsham have been scanned are now on the website.

Mr Chris Burrow of Kingsley has donated family papers belonging to the late Miss Margaret Blythe including an album, letters, photographs, Church, Civic and Town Council matters - all very interesting indeed.

David Hawkes of Bedford was researching his Warburton family roots and made good use of archive records. Documents were posted to Arthur Smith about Frodsham clock makers, occupations, trades and Norah Bibby.

Alan Wales has loaned a rare baby's gas mask, issued by the Home Office in 1939 - where the baby is placed completely inside, the flap is folded between the legs and an attached pump keeps the oxygen flowing.

Extraordinary records were kept by the late Derrick Hastings Rowley, aged 18, before his call up into the RAF. Three very detailed note books recording -

1. Air Raid charts arranged in - Daily Columns, Times of Warnings, All Clear, Hours & Minutes. 1940- 1942

2. Barometer Temperatures & Relative Humidity Tables recording Wind Speeds and Graphs 1941 - 1942 1943 1946

3. Day & Night Weather Reports. Records of flying bombs 1944 1945

Post war he owned the Watch Maker & Jewellers in Church St. Frodsham.

Donated by his daughter Elizabeth Rowley.

Apart from travelling around to find half remembered houses and places to find answers for enquiries, I have also exhibited archive items at three more events in the last twelve months and have been booked to speak about the Archives at a meeting of U3A in November.

So many other interesting items have been donated, some absolute gems, and you will find them all listed on **the website and database** and the paper copies in the **pink A4 hardback files** in Frodsham Library and at Reception in Castle Park House where you can browse at your leisure. Should you wish to visit the Archive Room, please contact me.

My thanks to everyone who has helped me with information and made life a little easier.

Kath Hewitt.

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