

## THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1900

his brother George, nine, up the village and onto the moor, battling through the blizzard dressed probably in little more than short trousers, a jacket and thin shoes. It was three miles and more to the farm where they lived, and their parents Richard and Jane were becoming increasingly anxious about them.

Not long after the boys left, the Rector, the Rev Edwin Spencer Gough, made his way across the green to the school to tell Mr Thomas that he feared pupils from Newsham and Greta Bridge would be unable to get home unless they were allowed to leave at once, and that those from across the moor should stay in the village until things improved.

He was much perturbed to be told the Alderson boys had already left, and sent a man on horseback after them, ordered to accompany them to Hope or bring them back to Barningham. The man got no further than Bragg House before collapsing there, completely exhausted by the effort of travelling less than a mile.

When he failed to return the rector got really worried. He sent two more mounted men off to search for them, and when they too disappeared he led a larger search party into the storm.

There was no sign of the boys, but as they scoured the moor they came upon Mark Alderson, uncle of the missing boys, completely lost as he tried to make his way to Park House. By now night had fallen and it was nearing eight o'clock before they reached Bragg House and found all three men taking refuge there.

Mr Thomas, meanwhile, hadn't been idle. He and 18-year-old Ronald Gough, up from London to visit the rector, began to wonder whether it had been wise to send the Greta Bridge pupils

off through the storm. There were two of them, 11-year-old Edith Raw and her brother Thomas, nine, the children of Rokeby estate stonemason Thomas Raw and his wife Mary.

Mr Thomas and young Ronald decided to set after them on foot. It was a dreadful journey. "We had to take to the fields frequently as the snow on the roads had drifted several feet thick in places," Mr Thomas reported later. "The snow, driven by the wind, was almost blinding. There has never been so severe a storm since the oldest inhabitant can remember."

It took them nearly four hours to get to the Raws' cottage at Greta Bridge, where they were delighted to find the children safe and well. Then they walked back to Barningham.

It was nine o'clock before they got there, arriving just as the other rescue party returned from Bragg House. "They were utterly worn out," Mr Thomas wrote in his school logbook next day. He had plenty of time to bring his diary up to date: there was no school that day. "The roads are all blocked," he said. "No news of the Hope boys."

The village remained cut off over the weekend. "The snow plough was tried on Saturday but it was useless," recorded Mr Thomas on the following Monday. "The road to Barnard Castle is still closed up." But by then it was apparently possible to get across the moor, and he added hopefully: "As no one has been after the Hope boys from their homes we have concluded they arrived there safely."

They had.

● *This account is based on a brief excerpt from Mr Thomas's logbook which was referred to in the Barningham parish magazine 30 years ago this month. If anyone knows where the logbook is now, we'd love to see it.*



**The Archive is a regular record of the activities of Barningham Local History Group, including members' research and updates on information in its publications such as the guide to churchyard memorials.**

**Copies are available to group members and non-members for an annual subscription of £10. Back issues can be purchased for £2 each.**

**Contact Jon Smith, Tel: 01833 621374, email [history@smithj90.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:history@smithj90.fsnet.co.uk)**

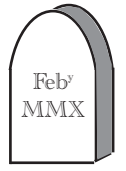
**See our website [www.barninghamvillage.co.uk](http://www.barninghamvillage.co.uk) for more information**



# Archive 4

ANNALS OF THE BARNINGHAM LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

[www.barninghamvillage.co.uk](http://www.barninghamvillage.co.uk)



## INSIDE: THE SHAME OF CHEESEMONGER TODD – Page 3



**Barningham Rectory in around 1900 and walking round the corner from his church is the rector, Edwin Gough (inset), who led the searchers. See below**

## Lost in the snow, 110 years ago

IT started on Saturday February 10th 1900, the worst storm in living memory, a fearful blizzard that left Barningham deep in snow.

It continued falling next day, with fierce winds creating drifts feet thick in places, and on the Monday morning 41-year-old village schoolmaster William Thomas trekked from his home in South View to the school (now the village hall) to find many empty desks.

Only those pupils who lived in the village (34 of them, including his daughters Mary and Florence and son Harry) had managed to make it. The rest, who lived further afield in Newsham, Hope, Scargill and Greta Bridge, had been delighted to be told when they woke up that they could stay at home, and no doubt made the most of the day playing in the snow

### THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1900

while their Barningham classmates shivered over spellings and sums.

It was a shortlived break. Although the snow remained, over the next couple of days the roads were cleared enough to allow the missing children to return to school, and by the Thursday Mr Thomas had a full house again.

Then the snow returned with a vengeance. It came down all morning, driven by heavy winds, and by midday the drifts were so deep that Mr Thomas told the two Alderson pupils from Hope to leave early and go home before the weather got even worse.

They set off on foot, ten-year-old John and

● *Continued on back page*

**NEXT HISTORY GROUP MEETING: TUESDAY MARCH 2nd, 6pm**

# New booklet, old recipes and a very healthy bank balance

MINUTES of the meeting held in Barningham Village Hall on January 26th 2010:

**Present:** Jon Smith, Eric Duggan, Kay Duggan, Neil Turner, Phil Hunt, Ann Hutchinson, Tony Orton, Ted Andrews, Janet Wrigley, Elaine McDermott, Ann Orton, Robin Brooks, Bev Peach.

**Apologies:** Louise Ferrari, Sheila Catton, Mike Peach, Diane Metcalf, Greta Carter.

**Minutes** of the previous meeting were agreed. Matters arising were covered on agenda.

**Treasurer's Report:** See panel below. Our bank account was up and running. Agreed that signatures of any two of the three officials would be needed on cheques.

**House Histories:** Neil gave us lots of information about Hilltop and Hillside; features on these would appear in the next *Archive*.

**Publications:** The Vestry Minutes from 1869 to 1894 had been transcribed and produced a booklet available for £4 (£2 to members). They include some interesting entries. The Vestry Meetings were superseded by Parish Meetings and Jon hopes to start transcribing these next.

**Website:** This was now up and running, called [barninghamvillage.co.uk](http://barninghamvillage.co.uk). Jon had set up pages for group minutes, samples of burial records, old photos, publications and details of our current projects.

**Film project:** Sally Ridgeway was not pre-

## INCOME

Balance from "Where Lyeth Ye Bodies".....	103.85
Wine and savouries fundraiser.....	453.50
Meeting subs .....	34.00
Archive subs/Book sales .....	147.00
Total .....	<u>738.35</u>

## EXPENSES

Rent of hall .....	11.00
Wine/drinks .....	87.84
Raffle .....	26.00
Total .....	<u>124.84</u>

**BALANCE** ..... 613.51

## THE MINUTES

sent to update us on the progress of this project. The possibility of buying a small video camera was discussed. It was decided to see what was actually required before a decision was made.

**Recipes:** Sir Anthony had given Kay a recipe book which dates from 1691. It starts out as a recipe book by Mary Milbank but about half way through becomes a ledger for wages. Kay is trying to transcribe it but it is very difficult to read. It was suggested that Guy Howell at the Bowes Museum might help, and that scanning the pages it would be better than photographing them as this would cause less damage. Ann H gave useful advice on its care. It was also agreed that we need old recipes from local families, perhaps an appeal in the next *Flyer* might produce some.

**Oral Histories:** It had been hoped that Neil Diment, our guest speaker, would help us with this but unfortunately he had had to cancel his appearance at the last minute. It was hoped he could appear at a future meeting.

**Cine Film to Digital:** Robin had emailed contact details to Jon, who would pass them to Ann O for further investigation.

**Evacuees:** Phil agreed to research this project.

**Any other business:** Bev brought deeds for The Hollies for Jon to see what he could discover. She has been researching the history of The Boot and Shoe but with little success, any suggestions would be appreciated. She said the website [nationalarchive.co.uk](http://nationalarchive.co.uk) gave details of wills of local people, though there was a charge. There was some discussion about where the village archives are kept; some are at Durham, but there some still at Northallerton. Tony said that he had seen, at The Hall, a list dating from the 1800s giving details of stints on the moor.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday March 2nd, 6pm.

**Speaker:** In Neil Diment's absence, Jon recounted the story of John Todd, featured in this copy of *The Archive* – see opposite.

## HOUSE HISTORIES

### MOOR LEA

BUILT in 1894 by William and Thomas Blumer, two young brothers who owned one of the biggest shipyards in Sunderland.

It was constructed in a one-acre field known as Barker's Garth, occupied in the mid-19th century by a Margaret Barker and owned by London-based William Todd (one of those cheesemongers). He'd given a corner of it to the chapel in 1838 to build a house for the Wesleyan minister – Wesley Cottage, now known as The Nook – and when he died in 1857 the rest of the field passed to his brother Joseph Todd.

He died in 1866, leaving it to his daughter Elizabeth, wife of a Barnard Castle cattle dealer called John Appleby. Within a year she had sold it to a Daniel Appleby, probably her brother-in-law, who used it to raise money to pay off debts (his creditors included a Hartlepool timber merchant and a Marwood bailiff) before selling it for £120 at auction in 1869 to George Alderson, a farmer of East Hope. Devoted history group members will recall George as the cousin of Mary Martin, whose diary *A Child of Hope* we published last year.

George died in 1874 and the land passed to Mary's brother William, another farmer at Hope (the trustees were her other brother Jeffrey, a farrier in Newsham, and a cousin, Christopher, who was a chemist in Barnard Castle).

When William died in 1890 the Blumers stepped in, bought the field for £160, and built Moor Lea next to The Nook. The site was fairly narrow, and although the Blumers would no doubt have preferred a detached house they were forced to abut it to The Nook to allow space for a path on the eastern side (much later, other owners managed to buy a bit more of the land next to Hillside and create a wider access drive). Like The Nook and Heath House, Moor Lea stands on a south-north slope and has two storeys at the front, three at the rear.

At the time of the 1901 census William Blumer, then 38, was living in Moor Lea with his wife Ada and three young children, but it seems that in its early years the house was used mostly as a second home – all of William's five children were born on Wearside between 1888 and 1897. A decade later it was occupied



Moor Lea

by 78-year-old John Blumer and his wife Catherine (?), almost certainly his parents.

The Blumer shipyard did well during the first world war, but went under in the post-war slump and closed in 1926. By then William and Thomas has sold Moor Lea: in 1917 was bought by George Blackburn, manager of a steelworks on Teesside.

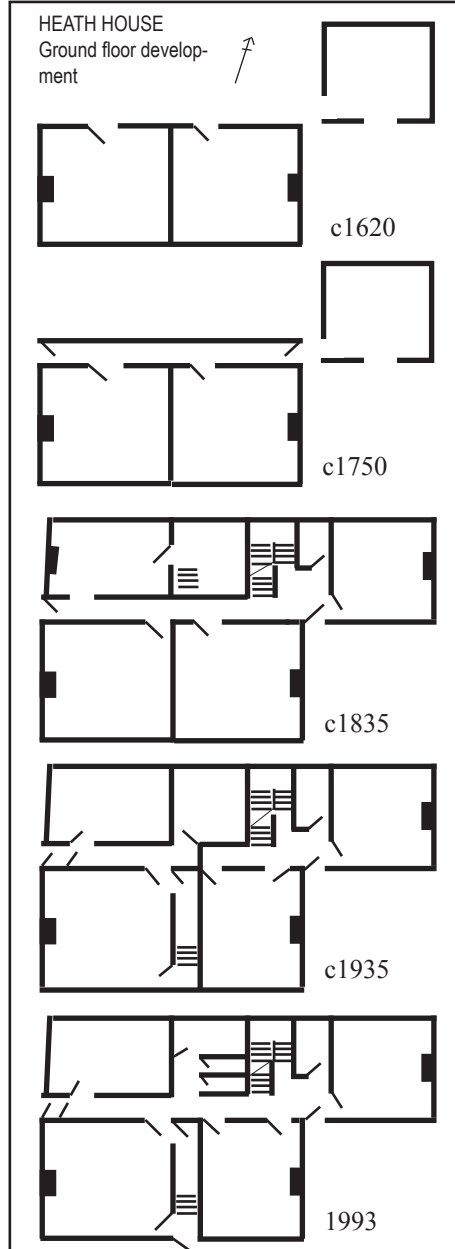
Over the next 20 years it change hands every few years. Owners included Stephen Oxley, a farmer in Yarm (1919-1921), Kenneth Storey, a Sunderland agricultural student from a presumably wealthy family (1921-1923), Capt Thomas Thompson, a master mariner from Sunderland and his wife Elizabeth (1923-1930), Charles Robinson, a Darlington company director (1930-1938), Walter Simpson, South Shields cleansing superintendent, and his wife Sophia (1938-1947), and Olive Firmin Fawcett, from Cotherstone (1947-1957).

They sold it to Alan and Doreen Railton. Alan, a captain in the Merchant Navy, died in 2005; Doreen lives there still and kindly provided us with the bulk of this information. Much of it was collected by her late husband, an enthusiastic local historian who would have greatly approved of our history group's creation.

● *One of William Blumer's daughters, born in 1888, was christened Graeme – his wife's middle name.*

● *One of his aunts married a George Booth and emigrated to New Zealand in 1859. Was it a descendent of hers who visited Mill Lea sometime in the last century and pencilled the inscription 'R. H. Hall Christchurch New Zealand' inside the porch roof?*

## HOUSE HISTORIES



house sloped before the retaining wall to the east was built in the 1830s. It may be that the former barn had a groundfloor entrance to the south: there is a suggestion of a lintel at ground level to the right of the current front door.

The semi-circular shape of the front garden wall is repeated in flagstones at the gateway and the front step.

Early ownership is unknown, though it is believed it might have belonged to the Todd family in the early years 19th century.

The hearth tax returns for 1840 show it being owned by a Thomas Bulmer and occupied by Thomas Charles. Some time after this Francis McCulloch moved in (as owner or tenant we don't know), and the 1871 census shows him living there with his wife and two daughters. He was fairly wealthy, London-born and related to an iron manufacturing company with a branch at Middlesbrough. His brother Edward was an ironmaster there and moved next-door to Wesley Cottage (now The Nook) in the 1880s.

The house passed into the ownership of the Milbanks some time prior to 1918, when it was included in the will of Sir Powlett Milbank.

The burials register records an Ann Dodds Hallam living at Heath House at the time of her death in 1944 (a Fred Hallam – her husband? – died in 1955) and an Ernest Holmes, chauffeur at Barningham Park, was living in the basement part of the house with his wife Gertrude in the 1960s. Holmes had come to the village from Wales with the Milbanks in 1919 after being Sir Frederick's batman during the first world war. Gertrude, who worked as a cook at The Hall, died in 1966, Ernest two years later, after which the eastern half of the house, including the basement, was tenanted by Robert and Greta Brass.

Sheila Catton moved into the western half in 1978 after it had stood empty for some time. She bought it from the Milbanks in 1982 and three years the Brasses bought their half. In 1993 they sold it to Sheila and Jon Smith, who converted it back into one dwelling.

● *The house was surveyed in 1993 by Merryne Watson and the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group (they were the ones baffled by the quoins). Jon and Sheila have a copy of their extensive report if anyone would like to see it.*

## Why cheesemonger John Todd fled from Barningham

JOHN Todd arrived in Barningham in the late 1860s, barely 40 years old but already retired after what he claimed had been a successful career as a cheesemonger in London.

A decade later he fled the village in disgrace after a scandal that involved forged documents, illegal tax-gathering, emergency parish meetings and a child of possibly uncertain parentage.

John was born in Brignall in around 1829. Who his parents were is uncertain but they were almost certainly one of the Todd families who had farmed in the area for generations. Where he spent his youth is also a mystery – he wasn't listed in either the 1841 or 1851 censuses – but we do know that he married a 19-year-old Gainford farmer's daughter called Margaret Ellen Appleby in Barnard Castle in December 1859.

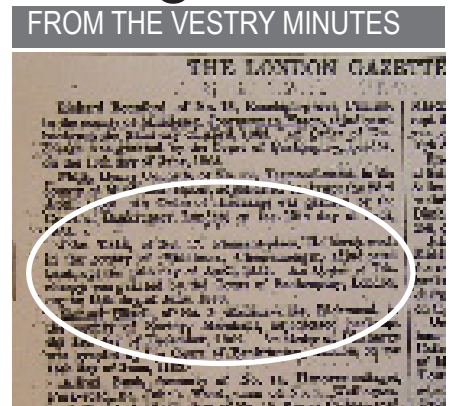
Her father, James Thompson Appleby, had previously run a butcher's shop in the town and it could be that the wedding took place hastily under the shadow of a threatening meat cleaver, as the couple moved immediately to London where their first child, Mary Ann, was born shortly afterwards in a lodging house at 17 Pleasant Place, Holloway Road.

He wasn't the first Teesdale Todd to live in the capital. Several from the Brignall area had built up flourishing cheese-mongering businesses there in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and young John took full advantage of the family connection, distant though it probably was. He became a cheesemonger himself, but he clearly didn't have his relatives' business flair. Within two years, as Margaret prepared to give birth to their second daughter, Laura, he went bankrupt.

He spent much of 1862 being grilled about his affairs. The London Gazette recorded summonses for him to appear before Thomas Winslow, Registrar of the Court of Bankruptcy, in April that year, and to face Edward Goulburn, Serjeant-at-Law and Bankruptcy Commissioner, the following June.

Somehow he managed to pay off his debts – helped by one of the other Todds? – and his bankruptcy was discharged in June 1863.

He'd clearly learnt some heavy financial les-



**Todd's bankruptcy discharge notice in *The London Gazette*, 1863**

sons, because within a couple of years he had bounced back and made enough money to return to Teesdale as a 'retired cheesemonger' living on his own means. He set up home in Barnard Castle, where his first son, a boy named John after his father, was born in 1866, closely followed by another daughter, Eleanor.

In 1868 he decided to move to the country, and came to Barningham. Exactly where he lived is uncertain, but all the signs are that he took over Manor Farm, a prestigious enough property for him to describe himself as a 'landowner' in the 1871 census.

His choice of the village was probably influenced by the fact that there were already plenty of other Todd households here. There was James Todd, a 67-year-old retired cheesemonger who had built Fairview. There were his sons, one also called James who was farming in the village, the other another retired cheesemonger. There were two William Todds, one farming at Bragg House, the other on the road to Scargill. There was an Elizabeth Todd, unmarried and living with her widowed sister Jane Bainbridge (formerly the village postmistress) and their unmarried brother Edward, another retired cheesemonger. The place was crawling with them, and no doubt

## CHEESEMONGER TODD

they all welcomed another Todd into the community, confident he would be a useful citizen and a credit to the place.

They must have wondered fairly soon whether they were right, because one of the first things he did after moving into the village was chop down a tree in the Bull Acre, which lay next to his land. The village elders were incensed. At a meeting of the Vestry (the Victorian equivalent of the parish meeting) on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1870 they told John Todd that unless he apologised within three days they would take him to law.

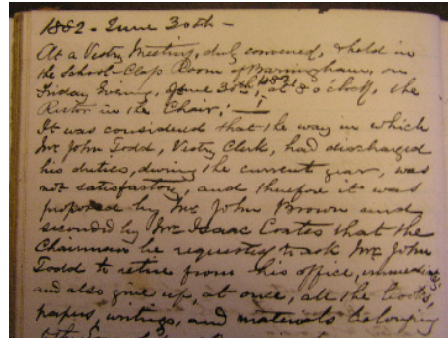
He came clean, replying: 'I hereby regret having given instructions to Hodgson Lee to fell the Tree in the Bull Acre, but I would not have done so but was informed that the tree belonged to myself. Yours respectfully, John Todd'.

He went quiet after that for the best part of a decade, during which more children arrived: Elizabeth, Emily, Edith, William, Henry and the last, Margaret, in 1881 (at least, we think it was his last – see later on).

It was a large family and it made heavy demands on the purse of a retired cheesemonger with only the interest from his savings and the rent from his fields to live on. Eventually it all became too much for him, and he decided the only way out of his financial troubles was to take to crime.

In March 1879 he'd been elected Vestry Clerk. It was hardly an arduous job, involving little more than taking the minutes at the twice-a-year Vestry meetings and writing the odd letter, but it paid £5 a year.

His appointment caused some controversy. The previous clerk, John Spencely, hadn't been at the meeting and was clearly unhappy about being replaced, immediately demanding that the decision should be rescinded and he get his old job back. Members met again next month and unanimously voted to turn him down; Mr Spencely stomped off and never attended another meeting. There was another little problem at the time, something to do with the water in John Todd's well. Members agreed to hold another meeting the following week to investigate, but for some reason the meeting was never called. Perhaps the new Clerk, struggling to come to grips with his new duties, simply forgot about it.



### Todd denounced: the Vestry Minute of June 30th 1882

He was re-elected Clerk the next three years, during which he took a growing role in parish affairs, on several occasions proposing motions for the nomination of churchwardens. Then it all went wrong.

On the evening of Friday June 30<sup>th</sup> 1882, an emergency meeting of the Vestry was convened in the village school class-room, chaired by the Rector, the Rev George Hales, and 15 parishioners – far more than normally turned up at such meetings. John Todd was not among them: he knew what was coming.

The gathering agreed unanimously, according to the minutes (taken by the Rector), that "the way in which Mr John Todd, Vestry Clerk, had discharged his duties, during the current year, was not satisfactory, and therefore it was proposed by Mr John Brown and seconded by Mr Isaac Coates that the Chairman be requested to ask Mr John Todd to retire from his office, immediately, and also give up, at once, all the books, papers, writings, and materials belonging to the Township of Barningham." If he did this, they agreed in a further motion, he would be allowed to keep half his salary for the year.

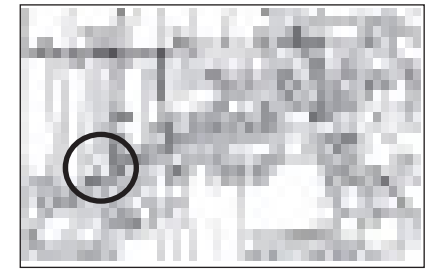
What the minutes didn't say was just what John Todd had been up to. It was quite simple. Three years earlier – immediately after being elected Vestry Clerk – he'd gone into Watson's solicitors in Barnard Castle and asked them to draw up a document which he then got signed by a couple of local magistrates. It stated that he'd been appointed an Assistant Overseer, with all the rights and duties that entailed, and one of them was collecting income tax from the people of Barningham. For the next three years

## HOUSE HISTORIES

## Ironmasters and shipbuilders

ONE of the group projects is to create a data base of all the houses in Barningham, with details of their history and who has lived in them over the years.

Buildings we've discussed in recent meetings include Heath House and Moor Lea, which we look at in more detail below. If you have more information or amendments, please let us know.



### HEATH HOUSE

BELIEVED to have been built around 1620 as two single-storey cottages with external doors to the north. Evidence of the original 5ft-high rear walls can still be seen inside.

It was later (1700s?) merged into one house and enlarged, with the addition of a second storey, an east-west rear passageway with external doors at each end, and probably a staircase.

In the 1830s it was extensively re-designed and extended. The external walls were raised some 5ft (see contrast in stone-walling on the north and east walls), additional rooms were added at ground, first and basement levels, and part of the east wall was removed to create a hall linked to the adjoining building (believed to have been until then a cattle store and hayloft similar to the barn north of Fairview) to create a living room with basement below.

In the early 20th century the main basement room became a kitchen with an iron range still to be seen (there's a wooden-seated Victorian WC down there that still works, and the original hand-pull flushing mechanism can be seen).

Around 1932 the building was divided into two houses, known as 1 Heath House (west) and 2 Heath House (east), and in the mid-1960s the division between the two houses was reorganised and for a time the basement area was used as a separate dwelling, with three families living in the building at one time.

In 1982 a staircase was built leading to the western attics, where two additional rooms were created. A decade later the two sides were reunited to form one

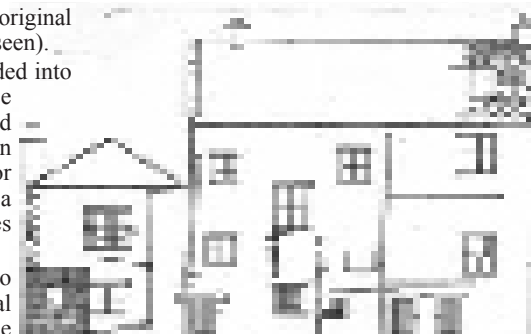


dwelling again, which it remains today.

There are two lines of quoin stones halfway up the rear wall (see the illustration below) which defy explanation.

The stone stairs leading from the ground floor to the basement are heavily worn and may well have been external steps in use before the former barn was incorporated into the house.

It is uncertain how the land to the front of the



Heath House: rear elevation



**History group chairman Jon Smith and village hall chairman David Heslop share a toast at the group's fundraising lunch at Braeside while Margaret Heslop, Wilf Wrigley and Corinne Andrews debate more serious matters**

## LETTERS & EMAILS continued

### Wartime memories

I was fascinated to read your book of Barningham burial records dating back to 1500 – a splendid labour of love.

My family has links to the village through assorted Armstrongs, Lees, Macdonalds, etc and as a child I regularly stayed in the village with my great-aunt Sarah Armstrong, who lived just down from what used to be the post office, and was for some years organist at the parish church.

I have vivid memories of manhandling buckets of water down to her cottage from the public pump and of convoys of wartime tanks trundling up to the army training grounds on Barningham Moor.

Postie Lee, seen with his donkey on the front page of *Archive 2*, was one of my lot!

Best wishes,

TONY ARMSTRONG  
Beaminster, Dorset

### Hind sightings

THANK you for the copy of the Barningham burials booklet from which I was able to find several ancestors (the Hind family).

Please send me a copy of the diary of Mary Martin, who was born at West Hope in 1847, the same year as my great-great-grandfather, Robert

Hind, was born in Newsham.

I'm still struggling to confirm whether Robert's father Ralph Hind was married to a Margaret Batty, the name which appears on Robert's birth certificate (and also the middle name of several subsequent generations including my grandfather) or a Margaret Bradley which appears in several other family trees I've come across, so anything you may stumble across which might throw further light on their marriage would be welcomed. Most of the Hinds were blacksmiths with similar forenames and it can be difficult to work out who is who at times.

The information you have been producing at the Barningham history group is fascinating and has helped immensely with my research. Well done to everyone involved.

Best wishes,

STEVE WARREN  
Broompark, Durham

### Merryne typescript

I HAVE a typescript of an article entitled 'Woden Croft Lodge Academy' written by J. Merryne Watson (probably written in the 1970s). Does anyone know if it was ever published?

BILL HEYES  
Teesdale Record Society

## CHEESEMONGER TODD

that's just what he did, pocketing the money and telling nobody. How much he stole is unknown, but it may well have been about £50 over the three years he was at it – about £2,500 today.

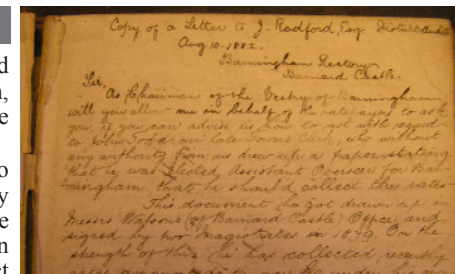
"He has collected recently rates amounted to over £10 under his own signature without any authority whatsoever from the overseers, and he cannot refund the money," wrote the Rector in a plaintive letter to J. Radford Esq, the District Auditor, after the truth came out. "The document was a forgery, as he never was elected Assistant Overseer." The result, said the Rector despairingly, was that it was "impossible for us to get our books into the order desired."

Three weeks later, on July 21st, another meeting was called. Village shopkeeper Benjamin Morrell successfully proposed that they sue John Todd for money he owed them, specifically money he had collected from the Poor Rates the previous May.

The proposal was "carried unanimously with one exception", but the minutes (taken by William Gray, village schoolmaster, who had been quickly roped in to take over as Clerk) don't tell us which of the eight parishioners present – Richard Westmarland, George Sowerby, Benjamin Morrell, Ralph Goldsborough, Edward Brown, Robson Coates, James Alderson or John Brown – stuck by their erstwhile colleague. Or it might have been the Rector, who must have guessed that litigation would be throwing good money after bad.

John Todd didn't pay up. The following November another special Vestry meeting was summoned to discuss what could be done, and members agreed, though not unanimously, to tell him that if he paid up the missing money he could keep £2/15/- in owed salary.

They also decided that to make sure no Vestry Clerk would ever again claim the right to collect taxes. They did this by simply abolishing the role of Vestry Clerk. Mr Gray's appointment was rescinded, and he was instead elected as an Assistant Overseer (same salary, £5 a year) "to perform all such duties as appertain to and are incident to the office of an overseer of the poor, except in so far that nothing in this resolution shall empower the said William Gray to collect, or disburse any rate, rates, or money for, or on



**"A forgery": the Rector's letter to the District Auditor**

behalf of the Overseers of the Poor, or the Township." For the next decade the Vestry Minutes were recorded by the Rector.

There is no evidence that John Todd ever paid anything back. The affair seems to have been quietly dropped, and in April 1883 the Vestry Meeting audited and passed the parish accounts as if nothing had happened.

By that time the Todds had long fled from Barningham. They went to live in a terraced house in Gladstone Street, Darlington, where John died in early 1892, aged 63. His widow stayed there for some time, at least until 1901, with some of the children (including Edith, only 28 but already a widow with two young sons).

The census returns for that year raise a final little mystery about the family life of our disgraced cheesemonger. Back in 1882, just after the flight to Darlington, another girl, Minnie, was born. She was duly recorded in the 1891 census returns as John's daughter. But after his death she was listed as a grand-daughter, and it could well be that she was the illegitimate child of John's eldest, Mary Ann, 20 at the time of the baby's birth.

If that was the case, he probably feared the social opprobrium of having an unmarried daughter even more than the wrath of Barningham Vestry over missing money. No wonder he fled. ● *Sources include: Barningham Vestry Minutes 1869-1894; Baines directory 1823; Genes reunited.co.uk; Genuki.org.uk; Freebmd .org.uk; Gazettes-online.co.uk; Census returns 1841-1911; Birth records 1837-1911; Death records 1891-1911.*

## So... exactly what were those Vestry meetings?

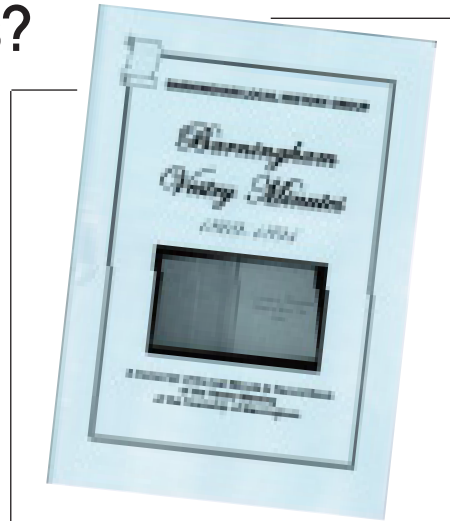
THE first lords of the manor in Barningham as it recovered from being laid waste by a vengeful William the Conqueror exercised almost total power over the village and its inhabitants. So long as they raised enough taxes to keep the king happy and didn't interfere with the Church's control of spiritual affairs, their word was law.

It was at least a couple of centuries before they relaxed a little and decided it was safe to allow a handful of other influential people – the local priest, the schoolmaster, perhaps one or two landowners – to join them in making decisions affecting the secular life of the community.

Gradually more people got involved and eventually it became accepted that every adult male of standing in the parish was entitled to attend meetings and have their say. The only place big enough to hold them all was the church vestry, and thus the gatherings became known as Vestry Meetings.

They had no legal foundation, but bit by bit they were granted powers and given responsibility for a range of local services. Henry VIII gave them the right in 1536 to collect money to help the poor; two years later they began registering births, marriages and burials; in 1555 they took on responsibility for maintaining local highways. In 1601, under the Poor Law Act, they were given the role of collecting the new parish levy from property owners to provide relief for the 'deserving poor'. When field enclosures took place, they took on the management of commons and became responsible for any property owned by the parish, which in Barningham meant the Bull Acre and the bull that went with it.

Parishes were ordered to elect a number of officials, including Constables, Overseers of the Poor, Highways Surveyors (known in Barningham as Waywardens) and a Vestry Clerk to keep the parish registers and whose qualifications had to include "honest competent skill in singing". These offices sometimes involved considerable duties (maintaining walls and roads, for example) which those elected were compelled to carry out even though they were unpaid. They



**The original book containing minutes of Barningham Vestry Meetings from 1869-1894 was brought along to our last history group meeting by Anthony Milbank. Its contents have now been transcribed and are available as a BLHG booklet (£4 incl p&p). If you'd like a copy, contact Jon Smith.**

were supervised by local magistrates, who had the power to order parishes and their officials to discharge their duties properly.

It is not surprising that not every member of the community was enthusiastic about taking on these roles, and most meetings ended up being run by a small number of parishioners, those with enough time, inclination, education and, yes, money: the squire, the parson, the schoolmaster and other village leaders. The rest of the community knew its place and was usually happy to let them get on with it.

The system worked fairly effectively for two hundred years but the industrial revolution and growth of large population centres in the 19th Century made Vestry Meetings less and less capable of running all local affairs efficiently.

Highway maintenance, relief for the poor

## LETTERS & EMAILS

### Distant Marriners and Pinckneys

I HAVE just read an article in the Cleveland Family History Society journal about your graveyard book and I am very interested as my ancestors came from there and were the village blacksmiths for many years.

We have no idea where they originally came from. As you can see from our address we live a few miles away from my roots. We would love to receive the *Archive* newsletter so I'm enclosing a cheque to cover the subscription and also a copy of the book.

TONY MARRINER  
Poole, Dorset

● There were Marriners in Barningham from at least 1646, when one called Thomas, son of Robert, was christened in the village church. Twenty-nine Marriners were buried there between 1674 and 1800, when the last one we know of, Christopher, died aged 58.

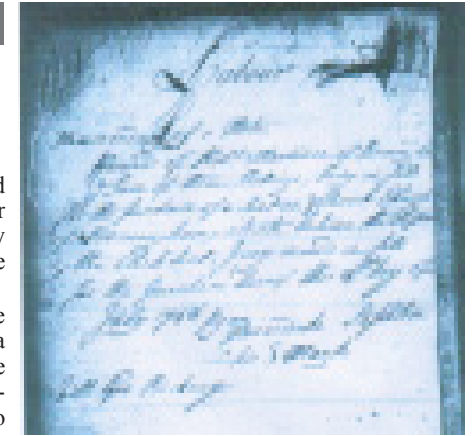
Tony enclosed a photocopy of a receipt for the purchase of a Marriner pew in Barningham church in 1748 – see above right. It reads:

*Labour. Memorandum of a Note. Received of Robert Marriner of Barningham ye Sum of three Shillings, being in full for the Purchase of a Seat in ye Parish Church of Barningham, situate between the Pulpit & the Clerk Seat, duly (?) received in full for the Purchase thereof this 8th Day of July 1748. By me, Marmaduke Stapleton his Mark. (written by) Geo Pinckney.*

The church at the time had about 180 pews, but there was clearly so much demand that parishioners had to buy one (or stand). Three shillings was the equivalent of about £16 today; whether it bought a seat for life or just for the current year we don't know.

Marmaduke Stapleton was presumably a church official with the right to collect money on its behalf, even though he couldn't sign his name and had to have his note written for him by Mr Pinckney, possibly the clerk or a curate.

There had been Pinckneys, spelt several different ways from Pykenay to Pinkney, here from



**Buying a pew in 1748: see first letter**

pre-Elizabethan days (the name is believed to come from the French settlement of *Picquigny* on the Somme, suggesting the family came over with the Normans).

Bryanus Pykenay was a lay official for Barningham church in 1554, named in a list of people submitted for approval by the Bishop of Chester following the accession of Mary on the death of Henry VIII. Given her subsequent persecution of Protestants (she burnt at least 275 at the stake) he was probably a Catholic or at least prepared to accept the reintroduction of Papist doctrines and church services.

It was all turned round when Elizabeth took over four years later, and the Pinckneys proved doctrinally flexible enough to survive, serving the church as lay officials on and off for the next three centuries and more.

The first entry in the first known Barningham births register records the christening of Christopher Pinckne in 1581. A James Pinkney was awarded land under the Cow Close enclosure of 1807, and one of the fields between Low Lane and Nor Beck was known as Pinkney Close in 1841. Jabez Pinkney was a schoolmaster at Scargill in the 1880s but after that the family left the area. There remain several dozen Pinkneys elsewhere in Teesdale today.

Marmaduke Stapleton was buried in the churchyard in 1752; Robert Marriner was buried six years later; George Pinkney lived on until 1773. –Ed.

# Cordwainers, the schoolmaster and a fresh-faced young rector

LEAVING the village pubs behind him, our census official turned to a couple of un-named cottages, probably lying behind the Royal Oak (now the Milbank Arms).

Living in the first was 50-year-old bachelor John Pearson. He was recorded as a cordwainer, a fancy name for someone who worked with leather – in other words, a bootmaker. His brother George was in the same line of business further up the village, and they probably shared a workshop. It clearly wasn't very profitable: both had given up the footwear trade by 1851, when they were listed as farmers.

John shared his cottage in 1841 with Mary Wappett, a 20-year-old domestic servant. He never married, and died, a ripe 86, in 1874.

Next-door lived the splendidly-christened Smithson Holmes, no relation to Sherlock but the village schoolmaster, still going strong at the age of 67. He appears to have been a widower, as his only companion was his 32-year-old daughter Elizabeth, born in Wheldrake, south of York, who supplemented their income as the village letter receiver.

Smithson made his way into Barningham churchyard for the last time just before Christmas in 1850. Elizabeth remained single, and lived on alone for only three years more before she joined him.

Next on the census route was the Rectory. The man in charge of Barningham's souls in 1841 was the Rev William Fitzwilliam Wharton, born in Aske, who had taken over the parish only the year before at the tender age of 29. His father was vicar of Gilling West and his mother the daughter of Lord Dundas of Aske Hall, and he was educated at Cambridge.

He arrived in Barningham after a couple of years as a curate in Yarm. He was unmarried, but his domestic needs were looked after by two servants, 38-year-old Elizabeth Hugill and Harriet Richardson, aged 20.

It was 1859 before the rector found himself a wife: Agnes Blunt, the 24-year-old daughter of a clergyman. She was 22 years younger than her husband and it seems she wasn't going to

## THE 1841 CENSUS TRAIL Part 2

*Continuing our journey up the village in the footsteps of the first census form collector*

have any nonsense about doing the housework herself: she installed a housekeeper, a cook, a housemaid, a kitchenmaid, a footman and even a 12-year-old stableboy. She brought the two maids and the footmen with her: all were born in her father's parish, the splendidly-named Nether Wallop with Over and Middle Wallop in Hampshire.

The couple didn't have children, as far as we can tell. Certainly there's no hint of them in any of the records, though that's partly because the census officials failed to get any information from the Rectory when they came to the village in 1871.

That may be because the head of the household spent a lot of his time abroad, according to Merryne Watson. Quite why or where we don't know, but it may be that he was convalescing after suffering some kind of mental breakdown in the mid-1860s (see *Where Lyeth Ye Bodies* for details of his confused burial records).

By 1870 he seems to have given up altogether. He stopped chairing vestry meetings, and visiting ministers took over some of the church services.

It was 1874 before he finally relinquished the rectorship. He and Agnes went off to live in Menton, on the French Riviera, where he died in March 1893. His widow erected a plaque "in dear memory of my husband" in Barningham church.

● *The Rev Wharton was the man behind the Barningham Cow Club, which he helped to found in 1850 as a miniature insurance company whose members could protect themselves against sickness or death among their cattle. It ran for more than a century and a half, finally being wound up in 1956.*

● *Next issue: Wilkinsons, Heslops, and The Academy.*

## THE VESTRY

and sanitation were gradually handed over to other bodies based not on single parishes but on groups of parishes, governed by Guardians. Public Health Acts in the 1870s divided the country into urban and rural sanitary areas and in 1894 the Local Government Act turned these into urban and rural district councils.

At parish level, the Government decided that it was time that everybody was given the right to decide who ran local affairs, and Vestry Meetings were stripped of their municipal functions (though many did continue as purely ecclesiastical bodies to deal with everyday church affairs). In their place were created the parish councils and parish meetings we know today.

Barningham's Vestry Meeting normally met just twice a year, once early in the spring to discuss worldly matters affecting what parishioners called their Township (a description some would like to see revived today), once at Easter to discuss ecclesiastical issues, approve the church accounts and appoint churchwardens. Meetings were held in the evening, usually in the schoolroom of the National School, which lay in a corner of the graveyard and was clearly bigger than the church vestry (where there



**The original Vestry minutes book**

wasn't room to swing a cat, let alone seat a dozen burly parishioners).

There would be the Rector, the Vestry Clerk, the village shopkeeper, the innkeeper, a handful of local farmers; they put forward their resolutions in the same words as their fathers before them, taking it in turns to propose and to second, agreeing to almost everything unanimously: the

## Pauline's serpishes German car

THE old Vestry minutes book has spent most of the past century buried away at Barningham Hall. But during the 1939-45 war it fell into the hands of a young child called Pauline Jackson, the daughter of Newby Jackson who was farming Wilson House at the time. How she got hold of it is a mystery.

She went through it meticulously commenting on the quality of the clerks' handwriting ("Very good" for Mr Rosser's opening pages, "Bad" for Mr E. Luther Stubbs in the 1880s) and made three brief entries of her own on blank pages at the back. The first reads:

The Great Warr of 1941

On September the 1st 1941 warr was declared between England and Germany. Many small contries were taken by Germany even France. They have also invaded Ruisia. Italy is helping Germany.

Pauline may have been a bit hazy on dates (and her handwriting wasn't much better than

Mr Stubbs') but she clearly wanted to do her bit and kept her eyes open for possible spies operating in the area. Her second contribution reads:

Serpishes Germans

Salter car number Gr 7494

Who was the "serpishes" Mr Salter? Does anyone recall the numberplate? Pauline decided the only thing to do was take charge of the war effort herself, and the third page is headed simply:

*in better than 1941*

She got no further. Probably someone caught her defacing the book and put it back where it belonged. A pity: if you're out there, Pauline, do get in touch.

We'd love to know what you planned to tell the Fuhrer.

## THE VESTRY

routine passing of accounts, elections to minor office, votes of thanks to themselves and the Chairman. (It was, of course, always a Chairman: no woman ever sat in a Vestry Meeting and in the whole 25 years' worth of minutes recorded here there is only one mention of the female sex – when two paupers were excused payment of rates).

Much of what went on was fairly tedious, and reading the minutes isn't going to set your pulse racing. But it does give you a vision of what the meetings must have been like: the Rector in his robes presiding at the schoolmaster's table, vestry clerk hunched at his side with quill and ink and minutes book, oil lamps flickering, stolid villagers in their second-best suits squeezed into children's desks, moustaches brushed and clay pipes to hand.

It's a useful record for anyone trying to sort out who was who in late Victorian Barningham, what they did, where they lived and what they thought.

There's a certain satisfaction, too, in discovering as you go through these records that however much the Rector congratulated his flock on its ability to settle disputes amicably, there were long-standing rivalries between different factions, with the same small groups supporting each other's appointments time after time and trying to keep the rest from holding office and power. Some things never change.

And every so often you come across a gem that makes it all worthwhile: the complaint about the parish bull that couldn't perform, the wrangle over the innkeeper's errant horse, the constant battle against the moles and, almost too good to be true, the great vestry clerk scandal of 1882 which we feature in this issue of *The Archive*.

● *Earlier minutes from the Vestry Meetings are held at Durham County Records Office, where they are available for inspection. The history group hopes to provide transcriptions of some of these in the future.*

## PICTURE GALLERY



## Who's this, then?

**Clue: Pictured at Barningham's Jubilee celebrations, and still with us.**

**Answer next issue (if we haven't been persuaded to keep the identity secret)**



## Top brass at the Hall

**Hoggett's Military Band take up their places for a performance in front of Barningham Hall in August 1910.**

**What was the occasion? Was anybody listening? There's no sign of an audience.**

**The band was led by James Aloysius Hoggett – that's him of the left with the splendid moustache – who was part of a famed musical family from Darlington.**

## Barningham Chapel Sunday School, 1948



**Back row: Mr Bradley, pastor; Muriel Walker; Irene Brass.**

**Second row: Donald Malsbury; Duncan Layfield; Beryl Oliver; Greta Walker; David Powell; Ann Brass; Margaret Powell.**

**Third row: Robert Brass; Ida Powell; Cynthia Maughan; Ruby Brass; Ann Layfield.**

**Front: June Blades; Mrs Bradley; Christine Brass; Kathleen Powell; Pat Malsbury.**

**Picture from Neil Turner's collection**

● **If you can add details about pictures in the Archive, please let us know. And if you have old photographs of Barningham and its people in the past, we'll be happy to feature them. Contact Jon Smith or Kay Duggan. You can view pictures at our website [www.barninghamvillage.co.uk](http://www.barninghamvillage.co.uk)**

## FRAGMENTS

**BINKS:** Wandering round the Internet after Googling 'Binks', we happened upon a website ([www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)) which has comprehensive details of Richmond Quarter Sessions long ago. A Thomas Binks appeared before them on January 13th 1791 to deny being a Papist and to swear allegiance to the Crown. Our Thomas Binks, the famous clockmaker? More about him in the next *Archive*.

**WHICH** leads us to wonder if there's anyone in the history group who would like to track down records of Barningham's Catholic community over the past four hundred years or so?

**GAINFORD** local history group has sent us best wishes and offered advice on guest speakers, which we intend to follow up. Their group is led by Belinda Goyder, descended from one of the Barningham Todd families. Not the infamous vestry clerk, she says.

**WE** published an appeal from Teesdale Record Society in the last *Archive* for a picture of the Rev William Oliver, one of their members 60 years ago. Neil Turner dug into his photo collection and came up with a family wedding picture that included him. We've forwarded it to the TRS.

**THE** Bowes Museum's new local history library, based in its refurbished cupola (the finest views over Teesdale you can imagine), plans to open to the public before long. Masses of documents will become available to the public. We're members of the group organising it all and will keep you posted.

**EVERY** page of every issue of the *Teesdale Mercury* from 1854 to 1954 is being digitally scanned as part of a Lottery-funded heritage project. It is scheduled to become available on-line (free) within the next couple of months. We'll be searching it eagerly for Barningham references.

## RESOURCES

*The history group has access to various books and other sources of information that members can borrow. New this month:*

**THE GENEALOGIST'S INTERNET** by Peter Christian and **FAMILY HISTORY ON THE NET** by Colin Waters – two excellent books offering extensive lists of websites helpful to anyone researching family history.