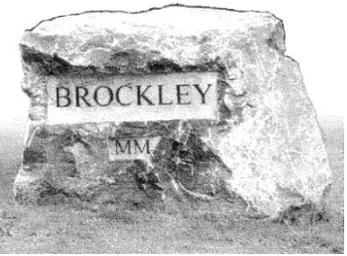
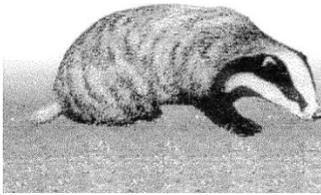


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# Brock's News



## The annual newsletter of Brockley Parish Council

### Annual parish meeting

On Monday 24 March, 23 people heard the **Chair's Report**, summarised here. (Minutes will go on our board by Brockley Stores, or ask us for an email copy.) Grove Farm wind turbine: Julian Ridge said that following noise and bat surveys, the application will be considered again on 10 April. NSC Core Strategy: number of new houses likely to rise from 14000 to 17130 – report due in April. Boundary Commission Review: in 2015 there will be 11 fewer district councillors and we will no longer be with Backwell. See article for action you should take NOW. Local Community Fund: we have again successfully bid for funds – see article. Flooding: There has been some upheaval with a change of Area Officer and Drainage Engineer, but after a recent site meeting, NSC has agreed a series of measures from April. Footpaths: JR reported on annual maintenance, and thanked Wanda Denning for making the new footpath and bridleway possible – see article. Replacement post at Brockley Elm: JR thanked NSC for their work, which included breaking up a large concrete footing. Brockley church facilities: see article. Annual litter pick: see article. Budget constraints have obstructed more frequent clearance. Great War: JR read out the names of men of the parish known to have served. He asked parishioners to share any information – see article. **Budget 2014-14:** the precept would be £3300 for the third year running. **District Councillor's report:** Geoff Coombs said that council tax would be frozen this year. He explained the Core Strategy and the Boundary Review further. He said the Link Road, which would take traffic off the Combe, was on target to open 2016-17. He would keep up pressure on flooding issues, particularly at the Crossroads. **Parishioners' questions** concerned the damaged wall on the A370, fracking, and flooding on the A370. Geoff Hobbs praised NSC's work on potholes in Brockley Lane and the collapsed drain outside Brockley Hall entrance. APM business lasted 30 minutes, followed by archaeologist Dr Neil Rushton's illustrated talk.

### Conserving Somerset's churches

Neil Rushton, Conservation Projects Manager at the Churches Conservation Trust, picked out recent action at local churches in his care. For example, St Paul's Bristol was once mooted for demolition but the CCT raised £1.5M to save it. Circomedia, a circus training enterprise, moved in 12 years ago and have turned it into 'an amazing space'. At Clapton-in-Gordano, removing the external cement and re-rendering in lime dried out the north chapel – just in time to preserve a 16C wall text revealed when the caretaker was picking off

peeling plaster! Neil described how lead-stealing from the roof, which cannot be seen from the ground, may be discovered only when a medieval ceiling collapses, as at Langport. Neil and Mick Aston started the Hidden Somerset Project at Holcombe Church: they trained volunteers in memorial recording, using Reflectance Transformation Imaging to reveal photographed inscriptions. This is now a blueprint for other churches, including Brockley. Neil emphasised the need to make old churches sustainable: communities want to use them, but need the 'holy trinity' of heating, kitchen, and toilets. Bringing a water supply to Brockley church is crucial.

### Ward boundaries for 2015

The choice now is between going with Cleeve into a single-member Wrington Ward or joining Cleeve and seven other parishes in a huge three-member Churchill & Wrington Ward. We believe the latter will reduce the district councillor's effectiveness and **urge you to email your objections by 7 April to [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)** or google the LGBCE.

### More traffic calming in Chelvey

Bristol Airport has given us £378 from the Local Community Fund. We will install horse-and-rider signs and SLOW road markings in Chelvey to warn of the blind bends.

### The way through the woods

The new path from the A370 to the bowling green has been cleared, with new stile and kissing gate. NSC will also be signing the new bridleway from the lay-by at the Crossroads.

### Facilities at Brockley church

Work continues with the Friends of Brockley Church and the CCT to bring in mains water. A good pipe route has been devised, but permission to dig in Brockley Court garden is now delayed while it is up for sale. We are close to seeking estimates. **AR**

### Annual litter pick

On Saturday 29 March, eight parishioners filled a dozen black sacks with litter from local lanes and the A370. (NSC has promised to do the Combe by the end of April: expect stop-and-go traffic controls.) Litter pick co-ordinator Mike Fishwick said this year's finds included a mop and guillotine (not the French kind) in Chelvey Road. The sunshine brought out walkers, horse riders and cyclists, many of whom stopped to chat and make appreciative comments. We thank all the pickers, including other residents who pick up all year round. Did ex-clerk Gill Iles set a record in February, bagging 60 cans in Chelvey Lane? NSC says its upgraded system is working well, so report litter, potholes, broken road signs at [www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/connect) or ring 01934 888802.

### Brockley in the Great War

In 1914 our parish was small and deeply rural. Just over 100 people made up 36 households (a third of today's size), with farming the main economic activity. How did the war touch their lives? Were local horses requisitioned and food production regulated? Did Chelvey folk see the mule trains pass through on their way from Avonmouth? Here is what we've found.

**John Priddle** (19) of Manor Cottage was a groom when he enlisted in September 1914. He went into the Royal Field Artillery as a Driver, then married Matilda Maud Laurence in May 1915, just before going to France. His company, 24 Division Ammunition Column, saw action in most of the key battles of the Western Front. In December 1916 John developed a fever and on Christmas Day was transferred to 5 General Hospital, Rouen, thence by Hospital Ship *Aberdonian* to the UK. By May 1917 he was back in France for the duration, with admission to a field hospital on 1 December 1917 at the time of the Cambrai offensive. Ironically, on the way back from his medical prior to demobilisation in 1919 'his horse shied at some powerful headlights of a motor car and threw him', causing some head injuries. *British War and Victory medals with 1914-15 Star.*

**Philip Priddle**, John's younger brother at Manor Cottage, was a (farm?) labourer. He was 19 in January 1917 when he went to Taunton and was enlisted as a Private in the Hampshire Regiment (though he had asked for the Army Service Corps). He was classified for home garrison but transferred to the Labour Corps. By April 1917 Philip was in hospital in Boulogne, thence by Hospital Ship *Brighton* back to England. In July 1919 he was posted to 30 Labour Co. and was with the Rhine Army in Cologne. He demobbed in March 1920 with no disability due to military service. *British War and Victory Medals.*

**William Edward Tutcher** was a gardener/caretaker living in the household of Donald Cox at Brockley Cottage. His father John Hugh lived at Brockley Hall Gardens. In December 1915, William (28) went to Bristol and enlisted in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, transferring to the Lincolnshire Regiment in 1916. He was wounded in action in France in August and September 1916. Back in England, and with a wounded eye, he served as a Lance Corporal in the Corps of Military Foot Police. His discharge papers of March 1920 include a pension for his wounds. *British War and Victory Medals.*

**Herbert Cecil Hawkins**, surveyor, also farmed and grew fruit at The Elms, Brockley. In June 1916, age 33, he was enlisted in Clevedon as a Private in the Somerset Light Infantry, though

he had requested the Royal Garrison Artillery. He went to France three months later, transferring to 5 Battalion Dorset Regiment for the duration. Despite several field hospital treatments, his final medical reported no disability due to military service and he was demobbed from Tournai in 1919. *British War and Victory Medals.*

**Bernard Cecil Smyth-Pigott**, middle son of Brockley's squire, was an officer in the Durham Light Infantry, and in 1911 living with his wife in Woolwich. He developed expertise in small arms and in 1914 was sent to the USA as a senior weapons inspector. A Major by 1916, he died after surgery for a perforated appendix and lies in St Lawrence Cemetery, Connecticut.



**Joseph Ruscombe Smyth-Pigott**, youngest son, was in the Royal Navy before the War, but transferred to the Royal Naval Air

Service in 1914. He crashed in training and badly damaged his legs, but his mother Mary Agnes nursed him back to health in a London hospital. Despite needing hoisting into his plane (both legs in irons), he continued to fly. A night bombing attack on the railway bridge at Kuleli Burgas (a four-hour flight) won him the DSO in November 1915. As a Flight Commander he was mentioned in despatches in June 1916 for leading a raid on Constantinople (a flight of 300 miles). By February 1918 he had earned the Croix de Guerre and a bar to his DSO. He went on to have a distinguished career, inheriting the Brockley estates in 1941 and living in Brockley Cottage. He was buried in the 'Catholic' enclosure by Brockley churchyard.



**Harry Gosling** was 21 in 1914, cycling each day from Plunder Street in Cleeve to work at Manor Farm. At some point he enlisted in the Royal Field Artillery, but was gassed. He came back and worked at the farm for many years, living in one of the new council houses in Chelvey, where he remained with his wife Ethel

until the late 1960s. He was passionate about horses and won prizes at local shows. Julian Ridge remembers him as 'a gentle giant' and Rupert Ridge for pulling pints at The Star.

**Elsie Gibson** ('Bargee' because of her large hands) came from Wrington Warren at 18 to live and work at Manor Farm so she could learn farming and 'do her bit for the war effort. Julian Ridge recalls 'she was not a typical land girl, but stayed for the rest of her life and became a much loved member of the family, hand milking cows, picking apples or anything that needed doing. She also kept turkeys and supplied many a local Christmas dinner.'

Other local families lost kin elsewhere. At Chelvey Court, John Cottle would have known **Richard Hartley Williams**, the son of John Cottle Williams of 'Chelvey', Dacres Rd, Forest Hill. Richard was a Company Sergeant Major in 20 Battalion the King's Royal Rifle Corps. He died on Christmas Eve 1918 at Boulogne and lies at Terlincthun. We know also that parishioners responded in October 1914 to the appeal from the Prince of Wales 'Fund for Soldiers' and Sailors' Families affected by the War'. In 1915 the gift of a national flag to Brockley church was draped over the reredos for the duration.

Now we need you to dig out your family stories. We will print what we can next year. **GR, JR and AR, with thanks to Rupert Ridge**

#### *Chelvey waters*

With all the hold ups we've been experiencing lately as Bristol Water replace pipes, you may be interested to know something about when these pipes were first laid and about our local pumping station.

After a very dry summer in 1864, the Bristol Waterworks Company decided it needed to increase its water supplies. Acts of parliament in 1865 and 1882 empowered it to take water from the Chelvey and Midgell springs and from the river Kenn. To appease local landowners they included clauses to prevent taking water unless at least 3M gallons a day were passing over a 'parliamentary' gauge to be fixed in the river. Plans marked the pumping station on land near Midgell Farm, but the consulting engineer, believing a major water supply could be got from underground, advised relocation. The present site was bought in 1865, needing an aqueduct to lead the water from the springs. Pipes were delivered to Nailsea railway station, with the Bristol & Exeter Railway Company supplying a crane for the unloading. The engineer recorded 'Large quantities of pipes are lying scattered about...we have great difficulty.' On site, buildings went up, boreholes went down, and steam plant was installed. Pipes were first laid in 1866 through Backwell and Flax Bourton, up to Barrow. Before 1867 the water table 'was slightly higher than it is now. Several farms would have been deprived of water...but the water company agreed to supply them with piped water.'<sup>1</sup> Another main in 1876 enabled water to be pumped to the city via Long Ashton. By 1889, three pairs of pumping engines and three auxiliary engines served a complex of four deep wells and boreholes. 'Repair work was often very difficult, sometimes requiring a diver.'<sup>2</sup> There were workshops, stores, offices, mess rooms and

company cottages. From 1912-40 the company supplied free water to the George V memorial trough and drinking fountain (junction Chelvey Rd and A370) 'up to 50,000 gals during the summer, any further quantity to be paid for at one shilling per 1,000 gals.'<sup>3</sup> From 1932 the new Somerset Rivers Catchment Board argued that the 1865 restriction applied also to the underground water, until a 1939 Act gave the company full rights provided the daily flow over the gauge was at least 1M gallons. The pumps were run by steam until 1956, when the present electric pumping station was installed. Then a softening plant was added in 1969 to bring Chelvey water into line with 'Bristol hardness'.

Today there are four well pumps, each rated at 8.2 megalitres a day. The water is treated by passing through a membrane plant before being chlorinated: it is no longer softened. The plant is fully automated and, should any failure occur, shuts down on a failsafe basis, an alarm being transmitted to the operations room in Bristol. This does not affect supply as the system is linked to the major treatment works at Barrow Gurney. **LL and GR, with thanks to Bristol Water.** (1) F. Smith (2003) *Just Passing Through* (2) P. Skinner (1979) *Pumping Bristol's water*, Bristol Industrial Archaeology Soc., Vol.12 (3) Parish Meeting Minutes

#### *Local grants*

Grants totalling £1,255 helped two local young people go to summer camp in Wales and another two to do projects in Cambodia and Nepal. They also helped 14 local families have a better Christmas. Both the Backwell Foundation and Educational Foundation now need to increase their endowments. **DP**

#### *Diary notes*

A full house heard Prof. Tim Bliss give the 7<sup>th</sup> Brockley Lecture on 'The mechanics of memory'. He opened a window on a complex area, but was cautious about the use of memory enhancing drugs. **Upcoming events:- Organ recital, 9 May** by Charles Matthews: 01275 462179 for tickets inc. wine. **'The Pigotts of Brockley, 1650-1947' on 7 June:** Jasper Allen and Dr Bryan Smith will tell this colourful story, using recently discovered material. 01275 463738 for tickets inc. buffet/wine. **8<sup>th</sup> Brockley Lecture, 13 Sept:** Susanna Blackshaw will speak on 'The needlework of Mary, Queen of Scots'. 01275 462179 for tickets inc. buffet/wine. All at Brockley church. **Chelvey church Open Day, 17 May** 2-5 pm, inc. refreshments: all welcome.

#### *Plus ça change*

From the diary of Robert Templeton Ridge, Manor Farm, winter 1912-13:- **'27-31 Dec** Rain. **1 Jan** Rain. Spring burst again in Warren, water by church and Rectory Field. **2-4 Jan** Rain in torrents, unable to go on with any work. 10 Acres a running river. Everywhere under water. Lower part of 14 Acres under water. Floods up everywhere. **12 Jan** Fields in very swampy state, some of the lower being covered in water. **17-20 Jan** Wet again all day. Everywhere terribly flooded. **1 Feb** More rain. All the fields almost under water. Work at an absolute standstill. Such a half year not remembered by anybody. All the moors a huge sheet of water and roads impassable. No improvement likely to set in. Glass 29.5.' **JR**