The Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society

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All enquiries regarding Society membership should be addressed to the
Honorary Secretary at Rendham Barnes, Rendham, Saxmundham, IP17 2AB
telephone 01728 663467

For back issues of the journal, correspondence for publication, and proposals for articles,
contact the Editor, 43 College Road, Framlingham, IP13 9ER
telephone 01728 724324
mobile 07930 494888
bobrob2100@hotmail.co.uk

Framlingham History Website: www.framlinghamarchive.org.uk

Heir of Antiquity! - fair castle Town,
Rare spot of beauty, grandeur, and renown,
Seat of East-Anglian kings! - proud child of fame,
Hallowed by time, illustrious Framlinghame!

From: *Framlingham: a Narrative of the Castle,*
by James Bird (1831)

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The picture on our journal's front cover is from the late John Western's Suffolk Calendar 1988 and is reproduced by kind permission of John Western Art.

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6TH Series Number 7
April 2015
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Editor: M. V. Roberts, 43 College Road, Framlingham
bobrob2100@hotmail.co.uk

(Local historian and archaeologist Tony Moore makes an appeal to members of this Society, and others, to ensure the preservation of a key part of the heritage of our ancient town, and its surrounding area.)

Dear Editor,

I would like to make an appeal to any member of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society who has an interest in local archaeology/history.

In October 1964 I led a team on an archaeological dig in Birds Meadow in the valley of Mapledale on the outskirts of Framlingham. As a result of deep-ploughing methods by two farming brothers, significant large pieces of carved material had been found in a field in 1962/3. They took this material to Ipswich Museum for analysis. I was then contacted by the Assistant Curator of Archaeology there, and asked if I would like to inspect the site of this discovery. This in turn led me to organise a team to set up a dig on the site in late 1964. We located and excavated the remains of one small section, thirteen foot in length, of the original footings, and uncovered carved medieval remains in the footings of a foundation trench. English Heritage later dated this material soon after the second dig in 2008 as being from approximately 1370 to 1440. This material laid beneath the remains of a small Tudor cottage, whose origins remain a mystery, but is recorded as being demolished in late 1692. (Richard Green, The History, Topography and Antiquities of Framlingham and Saxsted…1834.)

Much of the original material that had been taken by the two brothers to the Ipswich Museum and retained there was unfortunately lost over the years. Part of a hinged piece of a knight's knee duplicated in armour was the only item out of about seven that they could find, tucked away in their storage facilities upon later enquiry. Nothing whatsoever was to be found in any of their written records of the finds being handed in by the two brothers.

The bulk of the remaining finely-carved material both in chain-mail and armour from the two digs is still in storage on my own premises, along with original tiles, crude and roughly-made thin medieval bricks still covered with original white plaster, pottery shards, some pieces from original Bellarmines/Bluebeards or witching bottles, and a fine collection of broken clay pipes in various sizes, bowls (with patterns and mouldings) and stems dating from as early as 1580. I would like to hand all of these in the near future to someone else to act as custodian of this collection from our past local history.

In 2011 English Heritage examined and photographed some of the finds and were keen to display this material in Framlingham Castle in the form of a knight's tomb that they considered was from St Michael's church; it was thought that it was demolished/removed to make room for the Howard tombs. However, this idea was shelved because insufficient material was available to create a complete and engaging public display.

As a result English Heritage suggested that the material might possibly find a home at the Ipswich Museum if no other suitable local place could be found. I felt, however, that this material should be housed in Framlingham, its original home, to be appreciated by local people, rather than being taken to Ipswich and put into storage and hidden away there.

At the moment the town's splendid Lanman Museum at Framlingham Castle has no space to accommodate this material. I ask, therefore, is there a person or people in this Society with secure, dry and covered storage space to keep this material safe until some form of agreement/plan is forthcoming regarding its future? Finally, I would ask anyone with ideas or practical suggestions for housing this valuable local material to contact me or any member of the Historical Society.

For all these years I have only been a temporary custodian of this material, and it would be a great shame if it was lost to the town of Framlingham and, indeed, to future generations.

Tony Moore

* * * *

Apologies are due to our Society Chairman John Lilley for two errors made in his splendid guest Editorial in our October 2014 issue:- the extract from the poem quoted at the conclusion of the Introduction by John Lilley should have read as follows:-

They went with songs to the battle, they were young
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow
They were staunch to the end against odds *uncounted*
They fell with their faces to the foe

For Marshall *read* Marshal

We trust our readers' appreciation of the piece was not impaired by these mistakes.

* * * *

Stone to build London: Portland's legacy, by a member of our Society Gill Hackman was published by Folly Books a few months ago. Your Editor was delighted to be told by Gill that her researches drew heavily on the resources of my own second home for many years, Guildhall Library.

MVR

GOODWYN BARMBY: SUFFOLK'S PIONEER OF COMMUNISM

by Robert Halliday

Framlingham is justly proud of its cemetery in Fore Street. Established in 1855, the year that the Public Cemeteries Act was passed, Framlingham was among the first towns in Suffolk to have such an amenity. This is the burial place of many people who have shaped the town's fortunes: a free leaflet pointing out some of the memorials is available to assist people in exploring this congenial location, yet one of the cemetery's claims to fame has passed the attention of local historians: the gravestone of Goodwyn Barmby, who originated a doctrine that has shaped the destiny of the World, for better or for worse, as he was the first pioneer of Communism.

No comprehensive biographical or critical study of Goodwyn Barmby has been published, but I hope this work will provide greater knowledge of him in the town where he was buried. Goodwyn Barmby, as he is generally known, was born John Goodwin Barmby in 1820 in Yoxford, ten miles from Framlingham. He spent his formative years in the Yoxford region of Suffolk, before travelling elsewhere, to propagate Communism. Retiring to his birthplace, he requested to be buried in Framlingham Cemetery on his death in 1881.

The Barmby family are recorded as living in Yoxford from the early eighteenth century. Achieving some prosperity, they bought *The Vines*, a house opposite the parish church in Old High Road. John Barmby, a solicitor, married Julia Nunn on 7 January 1820. John Goodwin Barmby was born on 24 October 1820, and baptised in Yoxford parish church on 12 November. John Barmby's sister, Charlotte, had married a William Adolphus Goodwin in 1819, which may explain the choice of middle name. (John and Julia Barmby subsequently had another son, William, who became a chemist in Harwich, and three daughters, Julia, Charlotte and Clara, who spent most of their lives in Yoxford.)

John Goodwin attended Woodbridge Grammar School as a boarder, followed by a school in Great Yarmouth, but he left full-time education after until his father's death in 1834. From then he seems to have had little family guidance, becoming free to do largely as he pleased, educating himself by reading contemporary poets and radical thinkers. Percy Bysshe Shelley was an important role-model: as a young man he dressed and behaved in a style influenced by this poet. He was friendly with James Bird, a Yoxford shopkeeper, a prolific poet who published epic poems with Suffolk settings, including *Framlingham: A Narrative of the Castle*. If largely forgotten now, these enjoyed some success at the time, when James Bird was feted as Robert Bloomfield's successor to the title of 'The Suffolk Poet'. At eighteen Goodwin ran away to London in company with George Hardacre Bird, James's oldest son (who later became a doctor), sleeping in barns and hedges, an escapade which ended with their safe return to Yoxford. John Goodwin wrote a eulogy on James Bird's death, which appeared in the *Ipswich Journal* of 13 April 1839. It includes such lines as:

> Ye sweet valleys of Suffolk! Oh wither your green?
> Let your hills be as dark as when twilight is gloaming …
> … For he who sang sweetly, the *Bird* of your land,
> Like a halcyon has left you for sunnier strand.

As a teenager John Goodwin became involved in radical movements, which were widespread in Britain at the time. He was influenced by Chartism and Owenism. Chartism hoped to revolutionise Britain through political reform. The British electoral system was limited and inefficient; although a Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 had extended voting rights to the wealthier male freehold property owners, roughly 650,000 men, in 1838 some reform minded individuals issued *The People's Charter* which initiated a campaign to extend the right to vote (and be elected a Member of Parliament) to all men aged over twenty one. 'Owenism' was introduced by Robert Owen, who had become one of Britain's leading industrialists. While accumulating a vast personal fortune, he became famous as an 'enlightened employer' paying high wages and providing good housing and amenities for his workforce, initiating programmes to improve their education (and moral character), and running schools for their children. Robert Owen abandoned industry to propagate an early form of 'socialism', disseminating his ideas in a newspaper *The New Moral World*. In Britain at this time there

were experiments in communal living. Egalitarian settlements, since described as *Utopian Communities*, were set up, in which people were expected to own land and property in common, sharing the food they grew and the items they made (or the profits raised from their sales). These usually had ambitious and idealistic aims, but proved impractical. A common feature of British radicalism was a general aversion to violent revolution. (The execution of 'The Cato Street conspirators' and the tragedy of 'The Peterloo Massacre', while recalled with resentment, probably caused many to act with some caution: when one extreme group of Chartists attempted a military takeover of Newport in Gwent in 1839, they were dispersed by a troop of regular soldiers, leaving seventy dead and wounded.) Realistically, no radical group at this date possessed the organisation or military capacity to attempt a violent overthrow of the existing social order, and most leading radicals were aware that to even have suggested this could result in severe legal reprisals, such as transportation to Australia. Instead there was a general belief that the new ideals were so obviously correct, and the old order these sought to overthrow, was so decayed and so obviously wrong, that, once the new agenda had gained sufficient support, a peaceful transition was inevitable.

John Goodwin claimed that he addressed agricultural workers about political emancipation when he was sixteen (exactly what his audience thought of his oratory is not recorded). On 10 March 1839 his poem 'address to the soldiers' appeared in *The Charter*, the Chartist newspaper: broadly patriotic in tone, it appealed to the military to be noble, and not to work against their fellow working man; this was followed by another rousing poem on 5 May 1839, 'the convention for ever'. Henry Hearn, a shopkeeper, set up a Chartist association in Friston, eight miles south of Yoxford (and eleven miles southeast of Framlingham). This attracted several hundred members, including John Goodwin, who argued the cause in *The Suffolk Chronicle* on 17 August 1839 and 1 September 1840. Another letter on his beliefs on 16 November 1839 attracted a vituperative reply in the *Ipswich* Journal of 30 November. He was a prime mover in the formation of the East Suffolk Chartist Council, which linked Chartist groups in towns and villages across the eastern part of the county, and in Great Yarmouth. The East Suffolk Chartist Council unanimously voted him its delegate to represent it at national meetings. His activity, some long speeches he made, and a pledge to uphold the Chartist cause appeared in *The Charter* of 6 and 20 October 1839 and 5 January 1840. He was a signatory to the manifesto of the Manchester Conference of 1840, which launched the *National Charter Convention* that formed the organisation's national basis: evidently he had some charisma, as he could have been no more than twenty at the time. (Thus, even had the Chartists secured their political aims, he would still have been too young to vote!) He found time to publish *The Madhouse*, a lengthy verse epic (openly influenced by another Suffolk poet, George Crabbe). A copy, in the University Library in Cambridge, shows some quality, especially in view of the author's youth.

In 1840 John Goodwin made a trip to Paris. A testimonial from Robert Owen gained an introduction to Etienne Cabet (the first person to promote the idea of 'worker's co-operatives', whose novel, *Travel and Adventures of Lord William Carisdall in Icaria* was one of the earliest portrayals of a truly socialist, egalitarian, communal society). Another person whom he met at the time was Wilhelm Weitling, a radical activist who would influence Karl Marx. In Paris John Goodwin made perhaps his most famous contribution to history, for there was some discussion over appropriate names for the radial ideals of the time, and he was the first person to suggest an all-purpose word: *Communism*. On 1 August and 12 December 1840 Goodwin wrote letters to the *New Moral World*, laying out his ideas for a new social and political organisation, which researchers into the subject agree were the first occasions that the words Communism and Communist appeared in print in the English language.

In 1841 John Goodwin was selected as a prospective Parliamentary candidate for Ipswich by the Chartist movement, although he probably stood no realistic chance of being elected. But, at this point he severed his links with Chartism to pursue his personal Communist agenda. Soon afterwards, on 4 October, he married Catherine Isabella Watkyns in the Marylebone registry office in London. The wedding may have showed a mild desire to flout convention, since it took place twenty days before Goodwyn's twenty-first birthday, when he would have legally come of age. It marked a change in the image he cultivated, for he signed the marriage certificate 'Goodwyn Barmby'. From then on he generally ceased to use his forename, and spelt Goodwyn with a Y instead of the original I. He may have wished to promote the image of an unconventional, romantic persona, recalling the Anglo-Saxon dynasty and a historical heritage. (It could also have been a nod to his wife's unusual spelling of her surname, or an attempt to differentiate himself from Shelley's brother-in-law,

the political activist, William Goodwin.) Catherine's exact date of birth is uncertain, but she was about three years older than Goodwyn (as we must call him from now on) and was well read and educated, having written letters and poems for New Moral World.

Two weeks after their marriage Goodwyn and Catherine formed *The Central Communist Propaganda Society*, the first organisation in history to call itself Communist. On 3 November they announced their intention to set up five centres of their Society, in London (understandably, as the nation's capital), Ipswich (the nearest town to Goodwyn's home), Merthyr Tydfil (perhaps the largest town in Wales at the time), Strabane in Ireland, and Cheltenham (home of Henry Fry, one of the Barmbys' supporters). He announced:

> The reign of the critic is over. The rule of the poet commences. All messiahs will be acknowledged. Goodwyn set out his programme in his *Outlines of Communism, Associality And Communisation*: We now and in future shall apostolise for communisation, deeming it imperious that some communitarian arrangement should be adopted to meet the demands of the present progressive society.

Following a trend that had been set by the French Revolution, Goodwyn declared 1841 to be the year one. He began writing and speaking about himself as 'We' rather than 'I'.

It is impossible to write about Communism without being influenced by the memories of Soviet or Chinese Communism, or the activities of twentieth century Communist parties, but Goodwyn's ideology was considerably different, suggesting an idealised society living a largely egalitarian lifestyle, where people shared goods and property in common, farming the land and manufacturing essential goods for the general benefit of all. The atheism which became an important part of twentieth century Communism would have horrified John Goodwin Barmby, who, throughout his life, regarded himself as a Christian, often quoting the Bible in support of his beliefs, envisioning a national Communist Church to replace the Church of England. Goodwyn's early publications included a personal address to the Archbishop of Canterbury arguing that the church's wealth should be evenly distributed throughout the land, and that the Archbishop should assume a simple lifestyle in the manner of Jesus.

From Cheltenham Goodwyn's associate Henry Fry published a monthly journal, *The Educational Circular and Communist Apostle*, which ambitiously hoped to achieve a regular circulation of 1,000 copies. Much of the magazine was written by Goodwyn himself, under his own name, or thinly disguised pseudonyms. He outlined a theory of history, saying that social organisation originally took the form of 'Parodisation' when man lived off the land, then 'Barbarisation' as feudalism and industrialism progressed, which had developed into the contemporary age of 'Civilisation', which was both good and positive ('Association') or bad and negative ('Monopolism'), from which the ideal 'Communisation' would eventually emerge. (This may sound like a precursor of Karl Marx's theory of history, from primitive communism, to slave society, then feudalism, followed by capitalism, which would evolve into an ideal communism!)

One of the most interesting contributions was Catherine's essay, *The Demand for the Emancipation of Women, Politically and Socially*. Catherine argued that women could only achieve true freedom if they were allowed political equality with men, with the right to vote and stand for parliament. A 'Woman's Society' should be formed in every city, town or village, where women could socialise and work to improve their position. The way women had to dress only served to repress them, so they should seek new forms of clothing,

> uniting freedom and delicacy, utility and grace. The emancipation of woman from her garb of her slavery will be the outward sign of her liberty.

With remarkable prescience, Catherine argued that women should be allowed to become ministers of religion! At the time female suffrage was considered a dangerously extreme idea (as well as ridiculously impractical) most Chartists only argued for male suffrage (thinking that any espousal of female suffrage would lose support at all levels). Thus Goodwyn and Catherine's Central Communist Propaganda Society was the first organisation to publicly campaign for women to be allowed to vote.

The Educational Circular and Communist Apostle probably only gained a limited circulation, and folded after a few issues. By 1842 Goodwyn was addressing audiences at a Communist 'Temple' in London's Marylebone, advocating a communal lifestyle, in which people pursued a vegetarian diet. Alcoholic drinks would be banned (although the consumption of wine, made from fruit grown in Communitoriums would be allowed). Interestingly, in view of modern dietary studies, he opposed consumption of sugar, saying that honey should be the only permissible sweetening agent. He propounded some of his ideas in another short-lived periodical, *The Promethean or Communitarian Apostle* (a title inspired by the works of Shelley).

Goodwyn and Catherine put their ideals into practice by forming the Moreville Communitorium at Hanwell in West London, a name inspired by Thomas More, author of *Utopia*. A theocracy, led by Goodwyn and Catherine as 'archon' and 'archoness', it emphasised education and vegetarianism. The experiment was complemented by another newspaper, *The Communist Chronicle*. Goodwyn hinted that the Moreville Communitorium's success was limited, with most of its followers seeking to live at his own expense, rather than pursuing a truly Communist lifestyle. Goodwyn and Catherine abandoned the Communitorium after the birth of their first child, a boy whom they named Moreville. He became rather adventurous: travelling to China, he died of a tropical disease in Shanghai aged only 23. (Two years later they had a daughter, Julia, who lived to old age in England.)

After this Goodwyn developed a friendship with Thomas Frost, an aspiring author and journalist. A year younger than Goodwyn, Thomas Frost was a Chartist and Owenite, as well as an admirer of Shelley, and they had read widely from the same literature. They revived *The Communist Chronicle*, including the serialisation of Goodwyn's elaborate Utopian novel, *The Book of Platonopolis*. But they quarrelled over the direction their ventures should take (Goodwyn felt that he had invented the concept of 'Communism' and resented Thomas's interpretation of the ideology.) They separated acrimoniously and *The Communist Chronicle* folded.

Photograph of Goodwyn Barmby taken in about 1860 from the Westgate Unitarian Chapel in Wakefield (supplied by Kate Taylor)

Goodwyn continued to speak for Communism on the Isle of Wight (perhaps thinking that this would be a delineated base for his ideals) and Warwickshire (probably selected as the most central English county): he claimed to gain appreciative audiences, but it is uncertain how many of these joined his movement. He helped to keep himself in funds as a writer for *Howitt's Journal*, a magazine with radical sympathies, for which he reported on the 1848 revolutionary outbreak in Paris. This was a watershed year in European politics: several revolutions broke out across the Continent, but they nearly all collapsed. This was also the last year that the Chartist movement pursued an active policy, but it went into a rapid decline after its best efforts failed to convince more than a handful of M.P.s even to consider demands for reform. Perhaps Goodwyn and Catherine became disillusioned or disenchanted with their efforts to propagate Communism, and they had abandoned it by the end of 1848. Perhaps they sensed a change in the world view. Ironically this was the year that Karl Marx penned his *Communist Manifesto*, which inspired the movement's future.

Photograph of Goodwyn Barmby in later life, taken from Robert Parr's Yoxford Yesterday in the Ipswich Branch of the Suffolk Record Office. Reproduced by permission of the Suffolk Record Office

Abandoning Communism, Goodwyn became a minister in the Unitarian church. He took his first post in Southampton, followed by Topsham in Devon. (It is possible that he was introduced to this by William Johnson Fox, a fellow native of Suffolk who had espoused radical politics before becoming a Unitarian minister and an M.P.) He wrote two volumes of verse with some religious and autobiographical undertones, *The Poetry of Childhood* (1852) and *The Poetry of Home* (1853). *Catherine's* death in 1853 probably caused him to move to the North of England, first to Lancaster, then to Wakefield in 1858, where he became minister of the Westgate Chapel (so named at it stands in a street of that name).

Goodwyn spent twenty years in Wakefield, becoming the Secretary of the West Riding Unitarian Mission, working with congregations as far afield as Carlisle. He was a leading member of the local Liberal Party; in 1867 he organised a rally in support of political reform. He worked to assist Polish, Italian and Hungarian

freedom movements, and some of the early organisations that worked to give women the vote. He re-married Ada Shepherd, the daughter of the governor of Wakefield Gaol (they had a daughter, Mabel). Her family were Unitarians, Ada's sister, Catherine Shepherd, married the Unitarian industrialist, Henry Currer Briggs, who introduced the first profit-sharing scheme for the workers in his coal mines. Goodwyn wrote a further volume of verse, *The Return of the Swallow* (1864), and *Aids to Devotion* (1865) a collection of prose writings for the Christian year. Goodwyn's later writings were broadly Christian in tone: reasonably good examples of the religious literature of the time, appealing to the Christian conscience and view of things, stating an appeal to a conventional piety and morality, while avoiding any obvious creed, dogma or political stance, they could, at least, be read without offending any sensibilities, even a reader with no religious belief would find little to disagree with in them. Goodwyn sometimes took an unconventional stance on local matters: in 1866 there was a cattle plague. Several people suggested 'a day of humiliation' to avert God's wrath, Goodwyn argued that the cattle plague was not a punishment from God, but the result of human failure to take proper care of livestock.

In 1879 Goodwyn's health deteriorated; co-incidentally, his mother died, and this caused him to retire to the Vines at Yoxford. The 1881 census showed described him as a 'retired Unitarian minister', living with his wife, his two daughters and a servant girl; his sisters, Julia, Charlotte and Clara lived nearby in 'Belle Vue'. As a young man Robert Parr, the local historian of Yoxford met Goodwyn, describing him as:

> A little man with an iron grey beard and overcoat to match, who seemed to spend most of his time pottering about Park Place, within two hundred yards of his house, and often inside the churchyard. He had a kindly face and the general air of a Nonconformist minister, without priggishness or aggressiveness. Not a dozen people in the parish could tell anything of his career except that he was a native, brother of three gossiping old ladies (one of whom tippled) and a person of queer opinions, perhaps a little touched in the head.

Robert's father was the vicar of Yoxford, his Anglican parents, aware of Goodwyn's Unitarian background, discouraged them from becoming too friendly. (At the time Robert was unaware that Goodwyn had invented the word Communism.) Goodwyn died on 18th October 1881, a week before his 61st birthday. His Unitarian faith precluded Goodwyn from burial in Yoxford churchyard, near that of many members of his family. Instead he chose to be buried in the cemetery at Framlingham, where a large area was allocated for Nonconformists. The funeral service was held in Framlingham Unitarian Chapel. The *Ipswich Journal* of 25 October 1881 records:

> On Saturday afternoon last, the mortal remains of the Rev. Goodwyn Barmby of Yoxford were interred according to the wish of the deceased, in the Framlingham Cemetery, near to his departed friend the Rev. T. Cooper. The widow, daughter and sisters attended the funeral ceremonies, which were conducted by the Rev. Blasby of Rotherham, who also gave a very impressive address in the chapel.

It would be interesting to know what Goodwyn thought of the later developments of the Communist ideology. It is not known if he read the writings of Karl Marx. Early in the twentieth century Robert Parr visited Wakefield to see if Goodwyn Barmby was still remembered there. A generation of the faithful and several ministers had passed through the town's Unitarian congregation, and while he appeared on a list of ministers, and his photograph hung in a side room in the church, he was only vaguely remembered. Goodwyn's gravestone stands beside the brook in the 'Lower Cemetery', east of the Tetley family plot.

When I first came to Framlingham to look for this in the summer of 2001 I was fortunate that my visit co-incided with an afternoon when the cemetery caretaker was on duty: even he had not heard of Goodwyn Barmby, but he was able to locate it for me from the cemetery register. The epitaph reads:

> In memory of Goodwyn Barmby, preacher and poet, and true worker for God and his fellow men.

No editor or critic has championed, promoted, or republished Goodwyn's verse or journalism, which was at least competent by the standards of the time. It is an irony of history that while Karl Marx's grave in London's Highgate Cemetery is world famous, the grave of the man who invented the word Communism stands unknown in the public cemetery in Framlingham.

Goodwyn Barmby's gravestone in Framlingham Cemetery

Acknowledgements and References

I would like to thank Dr. John Ridgard of Dennington for first introducing me to Goodwyn Barmby in a local history course. Without Dr. Ridgard's example I would never have been prompted to study Goodwyn Barmby. Kate Taylor, secretary of Wakefield Westgate Chapel, and a local historian, provided information on Goodwyn Barmby in Wakefield.

A study of Goodwyn (and Catherine), with a list of their publications, appears in *The Dictionary Of Labour Biography*, edited by Joyce M. Bellamy and John Saville, volume six (1972) pages 10-16.

Thomas Frost produced reminiscences of their association, possibly coloured by their falling out, in his *Forty Years Recollections: Literary And Political* (1880).

A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia* (1952) and W. H. G. Armytage *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments In England 1560-1960* (1961) review Goodwyn's radical activities in their nineteenth century context.

W. H. G. Armytage, 'The journalistic activities of J. Goodwin Barmby between 1841 and 1848', *Notes And Queries* April 1956, 166-169, is a witty and succinct study.

Arthur F. J. Brown, *Chartism In Essex And Suffolk* (1982) provides information on Goodwyn's involvement with Suffolk Chartism.

Some details of his activities in Wakefield can be found in Kate Taylor, *Worthies Of Wakefield* (2004) and *The Making Of Wakefield, 1801-1900* (2008).

Among online resources, *Nineteenth Century British Library Newspapers* and *Gale News Vault* can be searched for references to Goodwyn Barmby: these are available via the online reference services of the Suffolk Libraries website, www.suffolklibraries.co.uk (or 'Suffolk Libraries Direct).

Volume eight of Robert Parr's *Yoxford Yesterday*, a detailed, typescript history of the village in the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk Record Office (reference Q.S.Yoxford.9), contains a detailed account of Goodwyn Barmby, including quotes from his poetry and personal recollections derived from the author's acquaintanceship with Goodwyn and his relations.

"YOU'LL MAKE A LOVELY SERGEANT"

The WW1 experience of Flora Sandes
by Janette Robinson

War brings about change in many different ways. The global map alters, technology leaps forward, life changes in a myriad of ways and we hear of the incredible stories of individuals. This is the story of Flora Sandes. Initially she was involved in nursing but was also adept at fundraising and organisation on a very large scale. However, her real claim to fame was as the *only* Western woman to enlist, *and* serve, in a fighting army.

Strangely she is virtually unknown, and yet the story of her life is packed full of incidents. I don't understand why she isn't a national hero and particularly why she hasn't been promoted much for the cause of women's liberation. The time in history that she made her mark, during and following WW1, coincides with the Suffragette Movement, but Flora does not appear to have been interested in politics at all - she only lived for excitement.

I came across her story when I worked at the Wickham Market Archives Centre, and intrigued, began further research. Flora kept a diary and wrote two autobiographies. Several books and many articles have also been written so her life is fairly well documented.

Her father, Samuel, an Anglo-Irish Vicar, served his ministry in Cork, Ireland. After being targeted by the Irish fight for independence, he moved his family to England. Four years later, in 1876, Flora was born, the youngest of eight children. The family moved throughout England, including spending one year at Monewden in 1881, but finally settled at Marlesford in 1885 when Samuel became its Rector.

Flora enjoyed a privileged lifestyle but she was the ultimate tomboy – with her brothers she learnt, and excelled, at hunting, riding & shooting. Every night she prayed that she would wake up in the morning, as a *boy*. She & her sisters were taught at home by governesses and then sent to a Swiss Finishing School, where she learnt to speak French & German fluently. In 1894 Samuel retired to Thornton Heath, a London suburb, taking Flora and her sister Fanny, with him. Life was totally different from Marlesford. They were close to London which offered many different entertainments and opportunities. Flora chose to do a secretarial course and after graduating, began to work in London, then Egypt and finally in the United States.

Her brother Sam had emigrated to Canada, where his wife died in 1904. Unable to look after his five year old son, he wanted Flora to take the child back to his English family. But, no-one knew where she was! She was finally located by Pinkerton's detective agency, but with little money to reach Canada, she travelled much of the way by railway goods van. Taking charge of her young nephew she took a circuitous route home, down

Flora at the wheel of her car, circa 1910

the west coast, into Mexico and central America, then back up the east coast to New York, and finally to England.

After inheriting a legacy Flora bought a car, it was a Sizaire-Naudin racing car, which she often took to Brooklands, and entered races. She used the car to explore England, taking a friend and camping gear with her.

By now, Europe was heading towards a major conflict. On hearing of the outbreak of war, 38 year old Flora was camping in Sussex. She jumped into her car, and sped back home. As a hobby she had taken up nursing and had gained many certificates. She applied to the Red Cross, but was rejected due to her lack of experience. However, Mabel Grouitch, the American wife of a Serbian diplomat was trying to collect a unit of volunteer nurses, to go to Serbia and a few days later, Flora stood on a platform at Charing Cross.

What do you pack to go to war? Flora took her violin, tea, a rubber bath, hot-water bottle, camp bed, first-aid kit and all the cigarettes she could carry. The journey was tedious but they finally arrived at the Serbian Military Hospital. Conditions were dire, 1200 patients shared 1000 beds, the mattress and pillows were sacks stuffed with straw and there was only one sheet and army blanket per bed. There was *no* running water – that had to be carted from a nearby village. Day one: she was given 140 patients to care for, and remember, she hadn't any practical nursing experience.

Patients arrived continually, their uniforms stiff with congealed blood, foul smelling wounds and the dressings crawling with lice. Shortage of equipment meant wounds were only dressed every eight or nine days and operations, including amputations, were carried out without anaesthetic. Another difficulty was the language;

it took a month to learn to pronounce the name of the nearby village, so they used sign language. The Serbian language is very difficult but Flora, a linguist, set out to learn.

The rapid advance of the Austrian Army caused an urgent evacuation. Flora returned to England and following an appeal in the Daily Mail, raised £2,000. Tons of medical supplies including X-ray equipment were purchased and after only five weeks away, she returned to Serbia.

Soon afterwards Flora contracted typhus. Typhus is highly contagious and with the intense overcrowding in hospitals, in the POW camps with 75,000 captives, and with 500,000 internal refugees crowding into whatever accommodation they could find, it was a serious situation. Flora was bedridden for six weeks, but survived, and was therefore immune. She was sent to a hospital suffering with a typhus epidemic which had only one surviving doctor. With many patients dying of gangrene, Flora soon learnt to amputate fingers and toes. As Spring arrived and the epidemic subsided, typhus had claimed the lives of 200,000.

In October 1915, Serbia was attacked on different fronts by Germany, Austro-Hungary *and* Bulgaria. Flora was working at Prilep in the south, a few miles from the fighting, and soon had to evacuate. Medics could choose to remain at the hospital with patients, or join the refugees. Flora instead joined an ambulance unit. Unable to travel north, west or south, the army was left two options. They could surrender unconditionally or retreat over the frozen mountain passes to Albania and Montenegro. The Serbian Commander ordered a retreat. In order to go with them, Flora applied to enlist as a soldier in the Serbian Army, and was accepted. At that moment, Flora a thirty nine year old Englishwoman became the *only* Western female to enlist in a regular army during the First World War.

In a straight line - freedom was only ninety miles away, but it was November. Several routes were used but all were extremely hazardous with narrow, frozen tracks rising to 5,000 feet. Everyone struggled with a lack of food & shelter, many had injuries and they were also pursued by the Bulgarian Army. Flora contrived a visit to the rearguard and when they moved to take a higher position, she went as well. As they reached the peak, bullets whistled over their heads. She borrowed a rifle and commenced firing, earning their respect in that an English woman was prepared to fight for Serbia, and share their hardships. They called her 'Brother'.

They trudged fourteen hours a day, for five days, arriving on the edge of collapse. Of the 250,000 soldiers who began the retreat, only 100,000 reached safety. In recognition of Flora's efforts to obtain food en-route for the army, she was promoted from Private to Corporal and decorated by the Crown Prince of Serbia.

What do you do with an army of 100,000 war weary soldiers who are unable to return to their occupied country? They were eventually evacuated to Corfu. With her linguistic skills, Flora helped as an interpreter at the quayside in Corfu where there was no common language and consequently much disorganisation. She was promoted again, and a comrade said: 'You'll make a lovely Sergeant'. While in Corfu the Serbian Army was reorganized and then joined the Allies to help retake ground from the Bulgarians.

Warfare in the Balkans differed from the Western Front – there was no '*going over the top'*, here it was '*getting to the top'*, and Flora did struggle with the continuous physical endurance. They gradually regained ground but with great losses – her Regiment alone lost 1500 men which equated to 75%. Finally the last hill, near Monastir remained to be captured and the order was given to fight to the last man.

Unexpectedly the Bulgarians attacked. At that moment, Flora was asleep in the snow behind a rock, rifle in hand. As she moved forward under gunfire, a grenade exploded, hitting the butt of the revolver on her hip. Shrapnel shredded her back and her right side, from shoulder to knee, and her right arm was badly broken. Whilst unconscious, she was rescued under intense gunfire and against orders was taken to stretcher bearers. The 'Hill' was finally taken and close to the spot where Flora had fallen, ten Serbian bodies were found the next morning, laid out in a row – all of their throats cut. The Bulgarians didn't take prisoners!

Meanwhile, it took two hours to *find* the field hospital. She went straight into the operating theatre where much shrapnel was removed, and as was fairly normal – *without anaesthetic.* She had twenty four separate wounds. A week later she was awarded the Karadorde Star, with Swords – it is the highest decoration in

The medal won by Flora

Serbia and our equivalent to the Victoria Cross. She was also promoted to Sergeant Major. She convalesced for four months but insisted on returning to take part in the last great push. As the war began to turn in favour of the Allies, pain led Flora to her nineteenth operation to remove more shrapnel.

It was now 1918. Serbia was being liberated, but Flora felt ill and woke up the following day shivering. She had contracted Spanish Flu. The only medication she received was from a vet, but it worked. In 1919 *and* following an Act of Parliament, she became the *first* woman and *only* foreigner *ever* to be commissioned as an officer in the Serbian Army.

In 1921 all 'reserve officers', like her, were demobilized. She could leave the army or apply to join the Frontier Troops. She did the latter and was sent to the Adriatic Coast to help tackle the smuggling trade. The men of her new platoon mostly comprised of White Russians, including many high ranking ex-officers who would be serving as *her* Sergeants. On arrival she was met by an ex-Colonel who introduced himself as Yurie Yudenitch. That night she wrote in her diary: '*Heaven help me if I am going to be held responsible for that sergeant's good behaviour for the next year or so'*.

Yurie was the son of a state advisor. He had been educated at a prestigious military college. Following the Russian Revolution that swept the Bolsheviks into power, he joined the Imperialist White Army. After numerous defeats by the Communist Red Army, they were cornered on the Crimea Peninsula but evacuated just in time by the Allied Army. Yuri arrived in Gallipoli exhausted and traumatized by his experiences. His aristocratic wife and baby daughter had been unable to escape and he probably never knew of their fate.

Flora felt he must have found it humiliating to have to salute a Lieutenant *and* take orders from him, or in this case, from *her*. After eight months the platoon was demobilized and Flora became a civilian for the first time in seven years. What was she to do? Would she have to become an '*ordinary'* woman, again? Should she return home? She had loved the army life and she struggled with civilian life, particularly with friendships. Throughout the war she had enjoyed the freedom to chain smoke and drink like a fish, both activities at which she excelled, but now, she was expected to keep all that in check.

In May 1927, 51 year old Flora Sandes married 38 year old Yurie Yudenitch at a civil ceremony in Paris, where they settled. Flora of course spoke fluent French, and Paris supported the largest White Russian community in the world with 50,000 exiles. She had been made a Reserve Captain but her small pension was

Flora relaxing with fellow officers

inadequate for them to live on. Yurie could only find a job as an unskilled labourer, probably in the Citroen or Renault factories while Flora returned to secretarial work and took on English pupils. After two years they returned to Belgrade to set up its first taxi service.

As the first shots of WW2 were fired, they remained in Belgrade due to Yurie's poor health. Germany invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941 and soon after, Flora & Yurie were arrested by the Gestapo. Conditions in prison were horrendous. 65 year old Flora shared a cell with a group of street walkers. The cell beneath her was used for executions, which she could hear most nights. Daily, she expected to end up in the execution cell herself but was released unexpectedly after eleven days. As she reached home, so did Yurie – he too had been released. It was 4th July, his 53rd birthday, but ten weeks later he died in his sleep. Flora lived the next three and a half years in German occupied Belgrade. Following the D-Day landings the Germans began to withdraw, while Tito and his band of Partisans with their communist beliefs marched into the city. Life became even harder and Flora began to consider her options. Aged 69 she left Belgrade.

Where does a woman with all these extraordinary experiences, finally settle? Returning penniless to England in August 1946 her family set her up close to where she had grown up. Her address was Folly's End, Hacheston – and the name of the cottage was not lost on her! She did return to Yugoslavia in 1954 having been invited to attend a reunion in Belgrade, where people came from far and wide to see her.

After a brief and sudden illness she died at Ipswich Hospital on 24th November 1956, aged 80. A plaque to her memory was erected in Marlesford church.

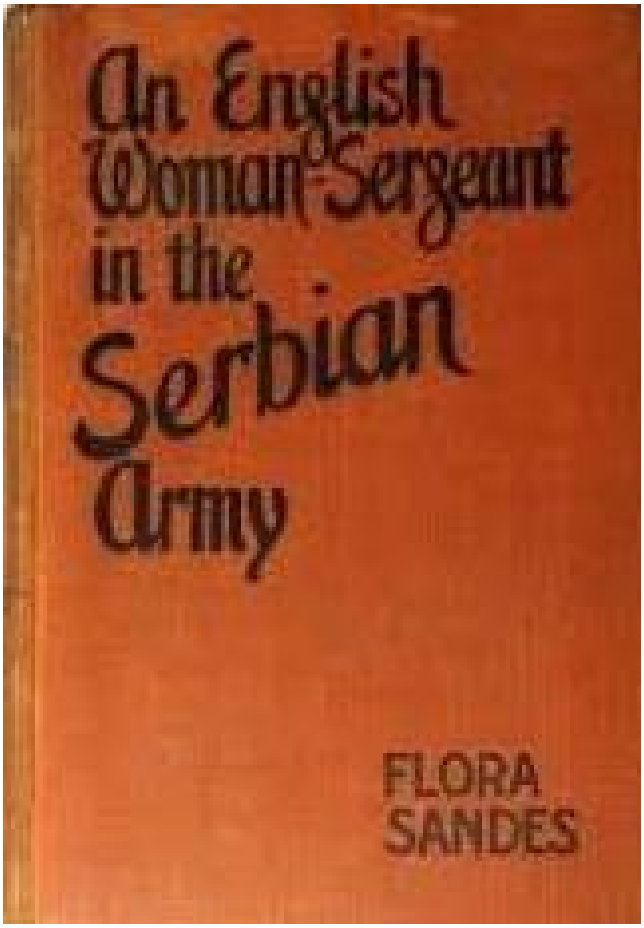
Flora Sandes was an extraordinary woman, she didn't let her gender deter her and lived life as she wanted, continually seeking adventure. At the time she was globally famous and yet is mainly forgotten today – but

not in Serbia. In 1986 a film was released about the infamous retreat over the mountains called, *Where the Lemon Blossoms Bloom.* It featured Flora Sandes and was seen by *every* school child in Serbia.

However, Thornton Heath, where her father retired, remembers her. In 1998, J.D. Weatherspoon opened a new pub and named it The Flora Sandes. I expect she would have laughed heartily.

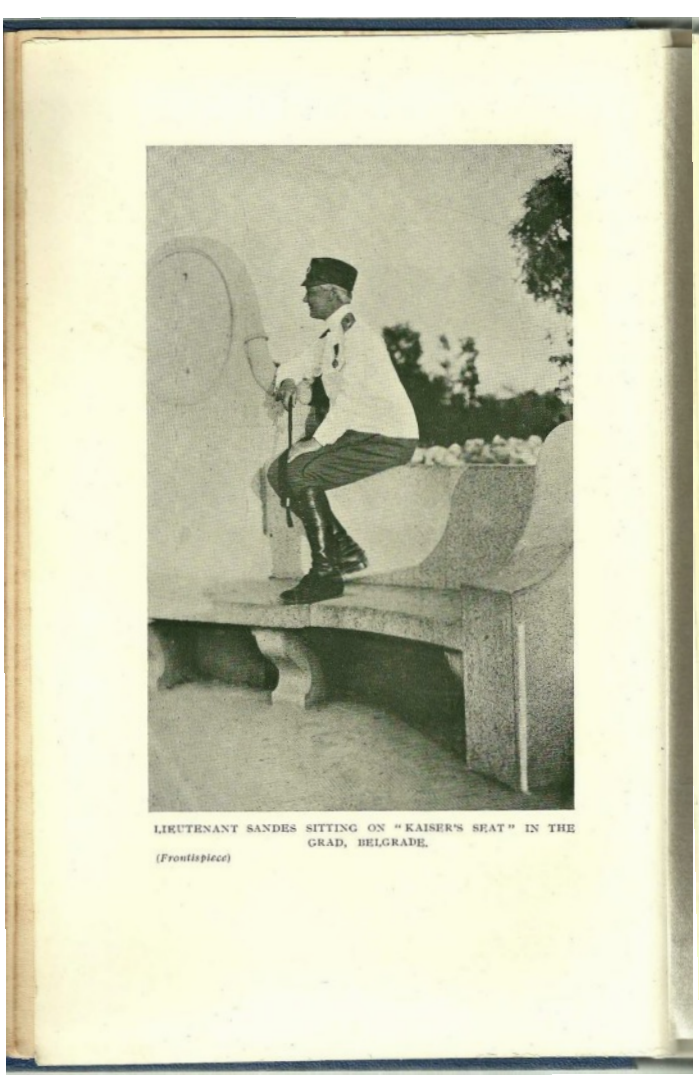
Flora & her first autobiography

written to promote the cause

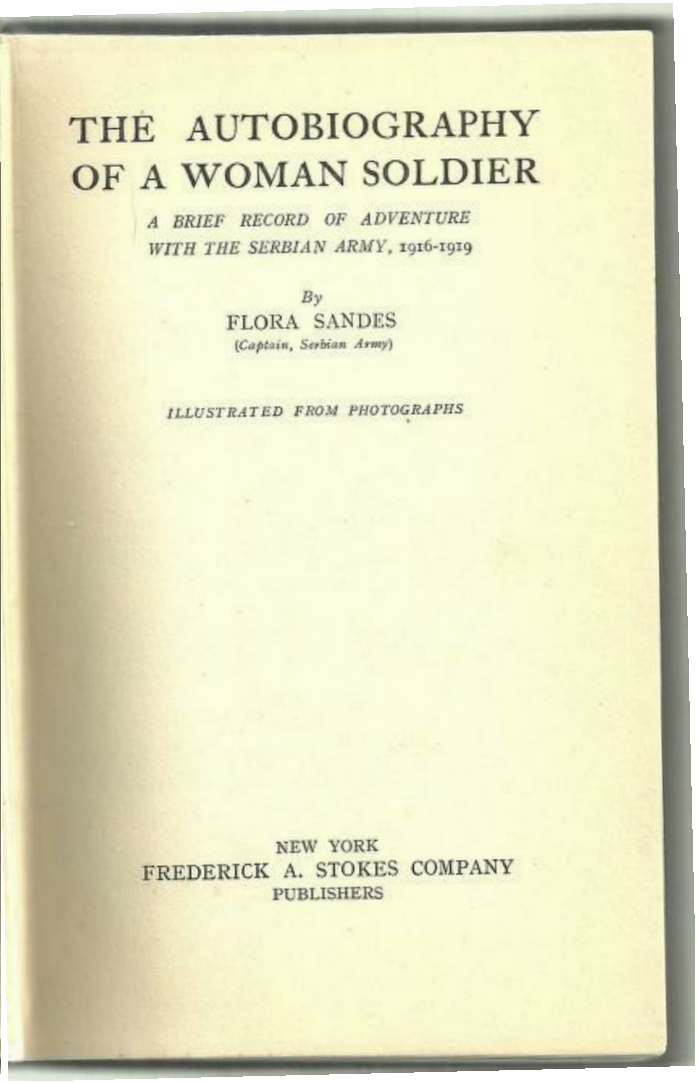


References:

A Fine Brother – The Life of Captain Flora Sandes – Louise Miller
Amazons and Military Maids – Julie Wheelwright
The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier – Flora Sandes
The Lovely Sergeant – Alan Burgess
Various magazine and newspaper articles
Wickham Market Archives Centre



LIEUTENANT SANDES SITTING ON "KAISER'S SEAT" IN THE GRAD, BELGRADE.
(Frontispiece)



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A WOMAN SOLDIER

A BRIEF RECORD OF ADVENTURE WITH THE SERBIAN ARMY, 1916-1919

By
FLORA SANDES
(Captain, Serbian Army)

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

The Autobiography of a Woman Soldier - Flora's other autobiography

Competition

As you may be aware with the next issue of the Journal we will start a new series and with it a new cover. The Committee thought it would be a good idea to involve members in the look of the Journal. To this end we are looking for a photograph to feature on the cover. Do you have a photograph that you think would be suitable? If so please send a JPEG (high resolution if possible) of the image to Alison Pickup via email (alison@pickup.demon.co.uk) by 31st May. Obviously the image will need to pertain to Framlingham and should be portrait to fit the shape of the cover. The pictures will be judged by the Committee and the winner will receive a year's free membership (either joint or single as appropriate).