

# *Buckets & Spades*



November 2020

Issue 102

[wsmfhs.org.uk](http://wsmfhs.org.uk)



The Society, founded in 1983, grew out of an Adult Education Class which had been inspired by Brian Austin (now a Life Member) to continue their research. It has grown into an active membership of over 300 who come from all parts of the world as well as those who live locally.

The area covered by the Society includes Weston-super-Mare and Parishes in North Somerset and in the Axbridge Registration District, as shown on the back cover.

Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month, except August and December, at The Vintage Church, Hughenden Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 2UR. The doors open at 7.00pm for refreshments and informal research. Meetings start at 7.30pm. *New members and visitors are always welcome.*

The Society tries to encourage and stimulate interest in family history generally and has a very positive link with Weston-super-Mare Library, which has excellent local history resources and facilities. Each Saturday, volunteers from the membership are in the Library from 2.00pm until 3.30pm to assist anyone who wants to start searching for their ancestors or who has a problem with their research.

Enquiries may be made through our website [www.wsmfhs.org.uk](http://www.wsmfhs.org.uk) – Use the ‘Contact Us’ button towards the top right-hand corner of the home page. Enquiries can also be addressed to the Secretary of the Society: 125, Totterdown Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 4LW, accompanied with a SAE, please.

#### **Honorary Life Members**

Brian Austin, 2001; Mrs Pat Hase, 2005; Paul Tracey, 2014; Brian Airey 2018; Graham Payne 2018

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**Cover picture:  
Where Is This? (Answer – see page 20!)**

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District Family History  
Society**  
**President: Mrs Pat Hase**

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**Issue 102 – November 2020**

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**Please note:** The next issue of ‘Buckets & Spades’ is due for publication towards the end of March, so the deadline for articles and photos is 15 February 2021. Thank you!



Best wishes, everyone! Hope that you will enjoy this issue of 'Buckets & Spades' and that you are continuing to stay well. As always, many thanks for your wonderful contributions. Items, not included this time, are going forward for Issue 103 – March 2021.

Please continue with your ideas/articles/photos and contact me at: [smaguire15@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:smaguire15@yahoo.co.uk) The deadline for our March issue is 15 February 2021 and I look forward to seeing you, eventually - when we are allowed to meet again! I know it's rather early, but best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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### **WSMFHS President**

I am delighted to announce that your Committee has awarded the title of **President** of this Society to **Pat Hase**. This recognition of her continued diligent work for the Society is long overdue and one that is thoroughly deserved.

Many of you will have benefited from her knowledge, both local and national, expert research skills and have enjoyed her many talks to the Society. I hope you will join with me in congratulating Pat when we are next able to meet.

Jenny Towey, Chair

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### **Do You Need Assistance with Your Research?**

Brian Austin, WSMFHS Honorary Life Member and our local historian, is happy to assist members with their research. To contact Brian, please send a SAE and your query to 11 Alma Street, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, BS23 1RB.





## A Few Reminders!

If you have already served refreshments at one of our Members' Evenings – 'Thank you'.

At the moment, our meetings are 'on hold' but, when we are able to return – please sign in at the Welcome Desk, then choose *one date* on the list and add your name.

Also, WSMFHS mugs are still available (£5 each) and we have some copies of the WW1 War Memorial Books (£10 each).

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### Weston-super-Mare & District Family History Society Facebook Group



A great opportunity for history researchers, wishing to learn more about their ancestors! Also, a useful way to attract new members to our Society and encourage attendance at our Saturday Afternoon Help Sessions held in Weston-super-Mare Library, but currently unavailable.

Please join us and share your questions, photographs and memories but remember to use CAPITAL letters for surnames - it makes them easier to spot!

Adminstrators: Pat Hase and Lorna Gibson  
Moderator: Jeanette Carter

**Thoughts from the Chair**  
**Jenny Towey**



First, and foremost, I need to inform you that the **24 November AGM/Members' Meeting will NOT go ahead.** We are still not allowed to meet in Vintage Community Church, but we will be informed immediately they receive Government guidelines regarding meetings. I do not anticipate us being able to meet until at least next spring, therefore, the Committee has decided to postpone our AGM until further notice.

The Committee is now successfully holding monthly on-line meetings via Zoom, so we are keeping up to date. Many thanks to our treasurer, Roy Smith, for organising our meetings.

I would now like you to contact me with your thoughts about using Zoom for Members' Meetings – it's not as complicated as some people might think. This will help us to gauge how many members are likely to participate and listen to speakers.

Have you got Isle of Man ancestry? If so, you're in luck! Their newspaper archive, previously a subscription site, is now permanently free. There are over 150 years of newspapers (from 1792-1960) and freely searchable. Go to <https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers/> They are currently working on digitising from 1960, so more may be added shortly.

This next site <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/gaol-inmates-photos-index> has 46,000 photos - yes, photos! – of prisoners transported to New South Wales, Australia and, with each photo, there is a physical description and numerous other vital bits of information – a family historian's dream come true!

I have a new addition to my family tree (there won't be a test on this later). I have a ten-week-old half great niece and they have given her the middle name of **ROCKER**, which was my mum's maiden name and is my one-name study. How cool is that!

My dining room table is still covered in the makings for greetings cards (I am expecting another delivery of used Christmas cards from a friend's loft). We are still enjoying fruit and vegetables from our garden and I hope you too have found projects of interest in this strange time we're all living in.

Jenny Towey  
01934 248399; [jenny@towey.me.uk](mailto:jenny@towey.me.uk)

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### **A REMINDER**

#### **Society AGM 24 November 2020**

Due to the Covid-19 situation, your Committee has decided to postpone the Society's AGM until it is safe enough to hold it.

Elsewhere in this Journal, you will find the Financial Statement for this year.

I hope you will 'bear with us' in these difficult times and we hope to see you all when circumstances allow.

Keep safe.

Jenny Towey  
Chair

**An Ode for 2020  
by Arlene Pilgrim**



I don't get out much anymore,

In fact, I hardly go beyond the front door.

How much longer will this wretched lockdown last?

And our lovely meetings are a thing of the past.

Lockdown means we can't see our friends,

So, what a joy it is for the Journal to arrive.

It keeps us in touch and glad to be alive.

For then now, we must stay safe, hold fast and remain.

And, as Dame Vera sang, 'We'll meet again'!



With grateful thanks to all who produce and contribute to our Journal!

## **WW2 Aircraft Production in Weston-super-Mare by Bill Caple**

I believe, in the past, over 4000 aircraft (mainly Beaufighters) were built in factories at Banwell and Oldmixon. Also, a number of Ansons were assembled in the hangers at Weston Airfield, but many parts were made at different locations.

Although the Spitfire was not made in Weston, it was paid for by our town!

By the way, there's a very good book, 'Weston-super-Mare and the Aeroplane' (ISBN 978 1 84868 221 4). It has lots of information and photos, which some of you may find of interest.





**VE Day Parade in Weston-super-Mare – Aircraft Workers**



**Drove Road Garage, Weston-super-Mare – Anson Wings Being Re-doped**

## **A Village Child of the Forties** **by Grace Rubery**

My earliest memories come in bits. The Heinkel bomber passed above our home at Langford. Its throbbing roar shook the whole house; I am still uneasy with similar noises today. I was told that Brenda and Cecil, colleagues of my father who had fled the bombing in Bristol to sleep under our table, were terrified. I suppose I sensed their fear, although I was still a baby. A gap and my father carried me outside in the night and showed me the searchlights in the sky over Bristol several miles away. One day, with my mother, I peered over the windowsill to watch a German plane being chased across the sky by one of our own. Then there was the night that my father came into my bedroom to say ‘goodnight’ after he had been out to help the Home Guard setting charges to cause fires up on the hills to make the enemy think that the bombers were flying over Bristol; having already done a day’s work repairing damaged telephone lines in Bristol, my dad must have been exhausted and fell asleep on my bed still wearing his big boots.

For some years I was the only child amongst my friends who had a father around, as many men from the village were serving in the Armed Forces. One day the girl who lived next door said, ‘Come and see my daddy’. I went out and saw this man in uniform and said, ‘That’s not a daddy, that’s a soldier!’

When it was VE Day and I sat in the kiddie carrier on the back of my father’s Enfield bicycle. We were off to see my father’s friend, ‘Curly Cox’ and, while my father talked to my mother before we left, I scraped at the pebble-dash on the wall of our house with the little Union Jack I was holding. The big black ‘sit-up-and-beg’ bike was later sent by the Parish to Africa for the missionaries to use.

I went to Churchill School when I was five. The school had three classrooms, one for infants, one for juniors and one with tiered seating for secondary. I cannot remember the Head Teacher who lived in the adjoining schoolhouse and taught the big children, but Miss Palmer taught the juniors.

My teacher was Mrs Atwell. One day a young man in uniform arrived and I remember feeling rather surprised that my teacher could cry. I later found out that it was my teacher's son, home from National Service.

Very soon, because of the raising of the school leaving age, our school became the Secondary School. Two huts were erected in our playground for teaching cooking and woodwork. The infants and juniors were taught in the big hall at Churchill Methodist Church; we were taught back to back, Miss Palmer at one end and Mrs Atwell at the other. I learned to write on a small blackboard with chalk and, when two skeins of knitting wool arrived, we took turns learning to knit. After each girl had knitted a somewhat irregular square, it was un-picked and the wool was passed on to the next child; I well remember being given the grubby ball of pink wool for my effort! After mid-day, we each had to lie on a small coconut-matting rug for our rest. We also used these mats for our PE exercises.

I am sure that some of you remember the individual bottles of milk which had to be thawed on the heating pipes if they arrived in winter. At times when the water was frozen, we used to slide on the ice-covered dew ponds in the fields on our way home.



Grace

On some summer days, my mother pushed my little brother in the pram and we walked to Cowslip Green, where I played in the big trees. Then, we had a picnic whilst we waited for my father to come from Bristol in the Post Office van. He was a linesman, installing the first telephones on the Mendips. During the War, he had to cycle to Bristol to repair essential telephone lines which were damaged by the bombing. By the time I could remember, he was doing office work.

Christmas was a wonderful time! We took our ration coupons to ‘Browning and Watts’ and I was overwhelmed by the smells. I watched as butter and cheese were cut from the slabs; dried fruit and sugar were weighed out into cones of dark blue paper. When it came to making the Christmas cake and puddings, my mother did wonderful things with grated carrot and dried apple. As there was no icing sugar, the ancient decorations were glued to cardboard to be placed over the cake. Mum ironed wrapping paper from previous years and cut it into strips to make paper chains. The glue we used was made from flour and water; this was also used to paste wallpaper! All my presents were hand-made - a teddy bear was previously an old coat and a doll’s cradle was crafted from scrap wood.

Monday was not good because it was washing day! If it rained, the sheets were dried on a clothes horse around the cast iron range, which was carefully polished by my mother every morning. Dinner on Monday was always ‘bubble-and-squeak’ and cold meat from whatever had been our Sunday roast - sometimes that was rabbit, provided by my uncles, but I did not like picking out the lead shot. On a happier note, when not in use for the washing, we covered the clothes horse in an old Army blanket - it then became a tent or a fort!

In spite of many shortages, my life as a country child was idyllic.

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**Dade Parish Registers**  
**by Jenny Towey**

Not all members of this Society have local ancestry, me included, so I thought I might write the occasional article about what goes on/went on outside our area.

The Reverend William Dade, 1740 – 1790, was Curate, Vicar and Rector of five parishes in the city of York and two in the East Riding of Yorkshire. He devised a scheme of entering much more information in the Parish Registers, especially for baptisms, to assist with genealogical clarification.

In 1770, in the Parish Register of St Helen's, York, Reverend Dade wrote: *'This scheme, if properly put into execution, will afford much clearer intelligence to the researches of posterity than the imperfect method hitherto generally pursued.'*

Here is what you would expect to find in an ordinary Parish Register of the time:  
Baptised 17<sup>th</sup> September 1783: Thomas, son of Thomas and Elizabeth SIDDLE

This is an example of an entry under Dade's new system:

Baptised 17<sup>th</sup> September 1783, born 12<sup>th</sup> September: Thomas SIDDLE, second son of Thomas and Elizabeth of Selby, ship carpenter. (Thomas is the son of Adam SIDDLE of Hurst, Birkin Parish, farmer and Elizabeth, daughter of Richard HUDSON of Collingham, farmer, by Margaret his wife, the daughter of John WADDY of Collingham, farmer)

In 1777, the Archbishop of York (William Markham) decided to adopt Dade's scheme throughout his Diocese. The idea soon spread, albeit haphazardly, but, when it came to re-writing all the information to send to their Bishops, ie Transcripts, the clergymen realised the extra work involved. The scheme began to be dropped, especially when they realised that the Archbishop was not going to apply penalties for non-compliance.

Sporadically, the scheme was in operation between 1778 and 1812. Bishop Barrington of Durham introduced a similar scheme, but it was not as comprehensive an idea as Dade's.

A few Parishes in other counties adopted this method, eg Cheshire, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Nottinghamshire and Surrey.

To see the full list of Parishes which complied with the scheme, please go to: <http://englishancestors.byu.edu/Pages/dade-registers>

## **Clifford Bedford Smith - Far East Prisoner of War by Peter Follett**



Cliff was born on 21 February 1911 in Kingswood, Bristol, the son of William Albert and Millie Curry Smith. William was a pawnbroker's salesman, born in Merthyr Tydfil, and Millie was a milliner, born in Plymouth.

At some point in the early 1920s, the family moved to Barry, South Wales. Cliff attended Barry Grammar School and, on leaving school, he joined the Sun Life Insurance Co in Cardiff. In 1938, Cliff married Marjorie Griffiths from Barry Island and, after their marriage, they lived in Cardiff. Marjorie was a younger sister of my mother.

On 25 June 1940, Cliff enlisted in the RAF and, after training, he sailed from England on 'Convoy WS14' on 6 December 1941. In those days, troops were not told where they were going - in this case, it was to Durban, South Africa. On arrival in Durban, those that were to be sent on to Singapore and Java sailed onboard the 'SS City of Canterbury'.

On 12 January 1942, the men started to board the ship and found their accommodation was covered in coal dust and infested with bugs. They returned ashore and refused to board the ship.

An attempt was made to clean the ship overnight. The following day, the majority of the airmen boarded, the ship sailed but 160 airmen and 28 soldiers refused to board. They were court-martialled, sentenced to 1 year's hard labour but, because of the shortage of airmen, sentences were suspended. They were put on the next ship to India and their time was much easier than that experienced by the 'SS City of Canterbury' men.

The ship arrived in Singapore on 6 February 1942. Singapore was under attack and the ship took on board several hundred evacuees and sailed for Batavia (now Jakarta), Java. In Batavia, over 1000 RAF airmen were landed. Java was already under air attack and the Japanese landed there on the 28 February 1942. Cliff became a Far East Prisoner of War (FEPOW) when he was captured on 8 March 1942 at Tasik Malaja, Java.

Meanwhile at home, Marjorie initially had no idea where Cliff was or whether he was alive or dead. She went to London and worked for the Red Cross in the hope that she could get advance information about Cliff. It was 2 years before she had confirmation that he was alive and a prisoner.

Over the next two and a half years, Cliff was held in six different prison camps in Java. In July 1944, he sailed for Singapore and then on to Sumatra.

The Japanese occupied Sumatra and were worried that the Allies would attack on the west coast, so they needed to move troops and supplies quickly from the east to the west coast. They also needed to move coal from the west to east coast for shipping to Japan.

Consequently, a railway was required. Railway track was needed between Pakanbaru and Muaro in the west, a distance of 140 miles. The route would run through dense jungle, swamp and mountainous terrain and, at the halfway point, it would cross the Equator.

To achieve this, they needed manpower - 5000 FEPOWS (the majority were Dutch) were moved to Sumatra from Indonesia and 100,000 romusha (romusha is Indonesian for a forced labourer).

The FEPOWS were malnourished and had been starved, beaten, tortured and subjected to hard labour for over 2 years when they started to build the railway. Over 2000 FEPOWS were drowned whilst being shipped to Sumatra - their ships were torpedoed by Allied submarines.

During construction of the railway, the men worked from dawn to dusk with very little food. Dysentery, malaria, beriberi and tropical ulcers were rife. The Japanese supplied no medicines or drugs. Cliff once told me that, when he was too ill to work on the railway, he had to stay in the camp and dig graves.

The railway was completed on 15 August 1945, the day the War ended. It was used to bring the surviving FEPOWS and romusha back to the east coast.

What happened to the railway? The Japanese no longer needed it, the Dutch colonisers had no interest in it, the Indonesians ignored it (they just wanted to get rid of the Dutch) and the Allies just wanted to get home. Within weeks, the jungle reclaimed it.

To construct this railway, 700 FEPOWS (British, Dutch, Australian, American and New Zealanders) and about 80,000 romusha died. That is nearly 600 deaths per mile of track.

Cliff was one of the survivors. On his release in September 1945, he was flown to Singapore, then travelled by ship to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) to recuperate before being sent home.

On arriving home, all RAF POWs were sent for medical assessment to RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton, where there was a large hospital to give treatment if needed.

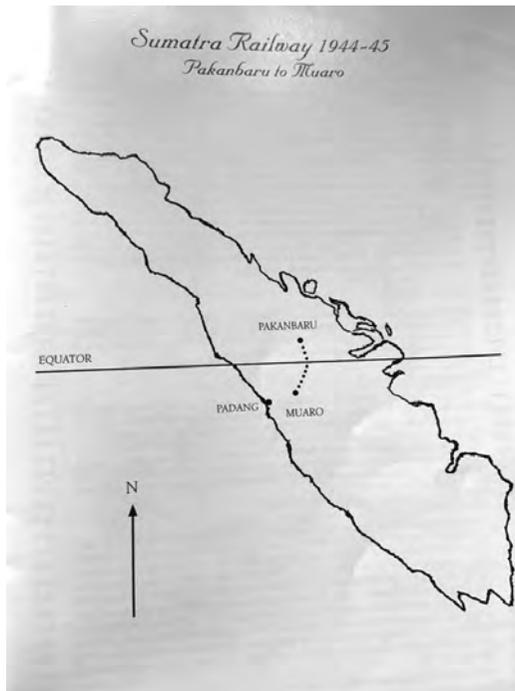
Marjorie was told Cliff was at Cosford, so she immediately went there to find him. She later told the story that, when she arrived, she saw a man on the other side of the road walking towards her and she thought, 'That is what Cliff will look like when he is an old man'. Suddenly, she realised it was Cliff!

On his return home, Cliff resumed his work with the Sun Life Insurance Co in Cardiff. Marjorie related that he went to work, came home, had his evening meal, then went straight to bed. Each weekend, he stayed in bed, getting up only for his meals. He was weak and had no stamina. It was 2 years later that he regained his strength and resumed a normal life.

About this time, Cliff bought a car, but soon gave up driving. Sadly, due to malnutrition, he lost vision in the centre of his eyes, also had repeated bouts of malaria for the rest of his life.

If you had a meal with Cliff, you did not leave any food on the plate or admit to owning anything made in Japan.

When Cliff retired, he and Marjorie moved to Bournemouth, where he died aged 78, in 1988.



## **WHAT IS A FEPOW?**

By Queenie Spink

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What is a FEPOW? A FEPOW is one  
Who fought a great battle, without sword or gun,  
Who suffered starvation, torture, disease,  
When captured by the Japanese.

Stripped of his dignity, degraded and hit,  
The FEPOW fought back with courage and grit.  
No longer a fight for King and Country  
But a fight for survival in captivity.

Herded like cattle, worked the day long,  
His body grew weak but his spirit was strong,  
Determined to win the fight to survive,  
To outwit the Japs and to stay alive.

Some couldn't make it; laid to rest there,  
No flowers, no parades, just a tear and a prayer.  
Never forgotten, remembered still  
By their comrades who buried them there on the hill

So - what is a FEPOW? A FEPOW is one  
Unique among men, a hero unsung.

*October 1992*

**A Query ... and the Answer!**  
**by Laura Williams and Pat Hase**

In 'B&S Issue 101 - July 2020, Laura asked for help in identifying the location of the photo on the left. Since then, Pat kindly provided the photo on the right with the following information. Many thanks, both - a successful outcome! **(Editor)**



This property is located in Milton Road, Weston-super-Mare, on the corner of Mansfield Avenue. In 1941, it was Ashton House Post Office, run by Albert S Highmore (Sub-postmaster), but it was run by W J Hazell in 1923.

The photo on the left probably dates from the 1920s (or early 1930s) when it was Hazell & Sons. The Weston-super-Mare Library Directories will, hopefully, provide more information.

As you can see, the property has changed quite a bit, however, it's still recognisable and is currently occupied by Houston Dental Practice.

**One Who ‘Did Not Travel’**  
**by Sylvia Lockett**

My grandfather, Ernest Gee, was born in Birmingham in 1867, the only child of George Gee (Birmingham Post Office) and Ellen Cadman. A small man about 5’3”, with ginger hair, he died when I was only five, so I have few memories. His early schooling is unknown, but he had a good friend, Ted Hardy of Hardy Spicer Co. (Was it this family who decided on their school?) Ernest and Ted were listed on the 1881 Census at Weston School, Bath, Somerset, with 100 or so of the boys. I believe the School had one or more large buildings, known as Prospect House, and Mr Browning was Head. Ernest sent beautiful, very formal letters in copperplate hand to his parents. He spoke about ‘always being cold’ - he was small, so he was probably malnourished. He also wrote that he liked ‘The Boys Own Paper’ and proposed to come home for the summer holidays ‘if agreeable to you’.

At 16 years old, he was apprenticed to Thomas Chase of 151 Broad Street, Birmingham, for four and a half years (lodgings, meals, drink, clothes and washing provided) ‘with the consent of his father’ (cost £100) to learn the trade of Chemist and Druggist. Ernest later gained experience in London, where he often went to the music halls. He knew many songs by heart and here he met his wife-to-be. He married Louisa Jane Surguy (Jenny) in 1893, against family opposition. Sadly, she died in 1900 in Birmingham and perhaps her younger sister, Eleanor, came to nurse her. In June 1900, Ernest married Eleanor from her sister’s home in Bournemouth - at this time, it was still illegal to marry one’s deceased wife’s sister. Eventually, Ernest and Eleanor had two children.

As a qualified chemist, at 76 Lozells Road, Birmingham (now re-developed), Ernest worked long hours (until 11pm). He had 3 days off at Easter and, because of its proximity, holidays were usually taken by train to Weston-super-Mare. A nervous traveller, he chain-smoked until the train arrived and, on one occasion on the station platform, he set his umbrella on fire with a cigarette! Photos taken at the seaside exist, but there are no details and he died in 1944.

Ernest’s main connection was with Birmingham, but he also had associations with Bath, Weston-super-Mare, and diversions to London and elsewhere. So, he was not one ‘who did not travel’!



**(Top photo) Ernest and Eleanor Gee with Daughter (1926), possibly at Madeira Cove, Weston-super-Mare**

## **The Somerset Record Society by Peter Towey**

For some years now I have been a member of the Somerset Record Society and I thought that I should draw members' attention to it. Most, if not all, of the Society's publications, past and present, are available to read in the Local Studies room at Weston Library (or will be, when it is fully open again).

The Record Society has recently revamped its website, at [somersecrecordsociety.org.uk](http://somersecrecordsociety.org.uk). The majority of publications covers the medieval or early modern history of Somerset but the Society's newsletter 'Off the Record', published annually in the summer, is available to read on the website. So far, only Issue 1 - Summer 2019 is available but you can read it there even if you are not a member. Issue 2 - Summer 2020 has recently been posted to members, so that too could well appear before long.

If you do have Somerset ancestry, however, I can recommend joining. Annual membership costs £10 and you receive, free, the annual volume chosen for publication. Because of Covid-19, the publication timetable has been disrupted, but there are currently two volumes at the printers: Volume 99: Somerset Recipes and Remedies in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, edited by Andrew F Butcher, which is based on manuscript medicinal and culinary recipes from the Somerset Archives. The other Volume is 100: Somerset Records: Past, Present and Future, edited by Andrew F Butcher and Robert W Dunning. This is a celebration of the first 100 volumes and includes new transcriptions and editions of manuscripts.

There is quite a long list of new volumes in the pipeline too.

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### **Some Items Received for Future Publication in 'Buckets & Spades'**

- A Grand Day Out (Grace Rubery)
- Dr James Richardson Spensley (Roderick Crocker and John Hinchliffe)
- From Fine Fabrics to Fur and Feathers (Peter de Dulin)
- My Ancestor Did Hairdressing (Jenny Towey)
- Shopping in Weston 1868 (Pat Hase)
- The Bear Party – Hewish and Puxton Harvest Home 1866 (Kate Osmond)
- War Time Memories (Pat Hase)
- Weston Youth Orchestra Goes to Germany 1960 (Philip Clark)
- WW2 Memories (Pam Airey) ... and more!

## **Why Bognor? by Laura Williams**

My mother was born Joan Radford in Backwell on 13 June 1922. She was the youngest of five children and, when she was only 14, her mother, Julia, died tragically while ‘taking the waters’ at the Royal Mineral Hospital in Bath. Her father had already died so at that early age she was an orphan. Her two sisters looked after ‘young Joanie’, but they were older and had their own lives to lead.

Her older brother, Maurice, married and wanted the family home, so Joan went into service and worked for some time on Birnbeck Pier looking after a young disabled boy. During this time, she remembered the practising of flying bombs along the coast. (For more information, please see my earlier article in ‘Buckets and Spades Issue 75 - November 2011’.)

In reality, Joan was homeless - as the War had started, she decided to join up and entered the Wrens. She was stationed on ‘HMS Hornet’ in Gosport/Portsmouth, Hampshire, where she was a cook for all the sailors. During that time, she remembered the constant stream of ambulances going to Haslar, the Naval hospital next to where she worked. She said that it was a 24-hour procession. The ambulances just never stopped coming.



At this time, her favourite brother, Ronald James, was killed on ‘HMS Galatea’. It was sunk off Egypt in December 1941. His name is on the War Memorial outside the church in Backwell and on a brass plaque inside St. Andrew’s Church. Years later, while my parents were on holiday in the Plymouth area, by chance, they found his name on the big Memorial on the sea front. My brother, Jim, was named after him.

While on ‘HMS Hornet’ my mother met her prospective husband, Able Seaman Jack Williams, my father. His parents had also died young so neither had a family home to go back to.



After their marriage on 28 May 1945 in Tipton, Staffordshire (my father's birthplace), they moved to Bognor Regis.



Both my parents have long gone and while doing my family history, I often wonder why they were in Bognor. Neither of them, as far as I can find, had any connection with this seaside town or area. Why didn't they stay in Portsmouth after the War or return to Staffordshire or Somerset, where they still had relatives?

Over the years, I have concentrated on the Williams' family tree and it was some years, after my mother's death, that I looked through all her paperwork. I have been hooked on her family history ever since!

My brother and I were both born in Bognor Regis and I am a proud Bognorian, but the question still remains - why Bognor?

**PROJECT 2020**  
**by Trevor Bowen**

Last December, Nailsea & District Local History Society launched PROJECT 2020 to mark its 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; the start of a new decade; the time when Britain was leaving the EU; and an opportunity for all its members to get involved in research. It was also approaching fifty years since the central part of ‘old Nailsea’ was obliterated by the construction of the Shopping Precinct as the village became a dormitory town for Bristol.

Whereas those of us who are fascinated by books and articles about everyday life and industry in our area during the 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, very little has been recorded since the 1950s despite the transition from village to town. There are a few postcards from the ‘50s and ‘60s but little more in our archives. It was not until the formation of N&DLHS, in 1975, that a photographic survey of significant buildings was started.

This poses two questions. Who is writing about life since the ‘60s, about today and in living memory? With digital photography mostly of a transient nature, will there be any local images for future generations to study?

The objective of PROJECT 2020 is to collect as much information as possible about Backwell, Nailsea, Tickenham and Wraxall – including photographs and ephemera. At the end of the year, this will be gathered, analysed, written up and put onto disk (?) for storage at the Somerset Record Office for the benefit of future local historians.

Information is being gathered under some 35 headings. These include the prices of over 100, mostly branded, supermarket food and drink items; a listing and photograph of every shop in sequence between landmark buildings; community activities; sport; fuel prices; opening hours; council and utility bills; transport and fares; churches; schools; and medical facilities. Photographs are also being taken of significant buildings along with, for example, current cable laying work for the National Grid and social distancing during the pandemic. Newspaper cuttings relevant to our area are also being collected.

Missing due to Covid-19, will be a record of this year’s social and sporting life of Nailsea which normally boasts a lively community, despite an ageing and declining population – soon to be rectified by large-scale housing development. By way of explanation, PROJECT 2020 will now include an account of the pandemic, both nationally and at a local level, and its short-term effect on business and leisure.

This building in Nailsea High Street belonged to the Glassworks in the 1850s for the production of cylinder window glass. It later served as a rifle range and then as a garage.



The unused interior in the 1980s



Now converted to executive apartments as the ‘Glassworks Mews’

## **My Wartime Experiences (Part 3)** **by Peter Lamb**

In October 1943, we moved back to Churchill Way. The basement was converted into our living room and the adjacent garage became a kitchen. We slept in the upstairs bedrooms and had to pass through the Smales' territory. My father was still active in the Home Guard – how he managed to do it all, I shall never know. Now 10 years old, I was sent to Hyde Park Junior School which was still running and had escaped the bombing. It was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile away and my mother regularly accompanied me to ensure my safety in crossing the roads.

Sometimes after much pleading, my father would take me with him on Sunday morning Home Guard exercises and two occasions stand out. We went to a quarry at Prince Rock for gun practice (Brenn and Sten). I asked if I could 'have a go' and was given a Sten gun. I was able to shoot from the hip into the quarry face - exciting stuff at the tender age of 11! Another time, we went to Tregantle Fort at Whitsands, where there was a firing range - it is still there today. When the practice was over, father and I went down to the beach. It was festooned with barbed wire along the water line and, to my delight, there was a crashed single-seater German fighter plane (Junkers, I believe) with its nose in the cliff face. I was just about to climb into the cockpit when a sergeant, who had followed us down, stopped my little escapade!



I cannot remember much about changing food habits during the War. At some time, my father took on an allotment on the other side of Peverell Park Road and, generally, we were well fed. Occasionally, dripping was acquired - 'toast and dripping' was a popular delicacy in our family. Eggs were usually in short supply but, at times, we had them in larger quantities. With no refrigerator, we had difficulty keeping them, so they were stored in a galvanised bucket with isinglass. My father sometimes obtained a pig's head and boiled it to make brawn. The meat and jelly were pressed in a large saucepan with a heavy weight placed on top.

... to be continued

**Diary of War Memoirs**  
**Chapter 1 – The Territorial Army (Part 3)**  
**by Arthur de Dulin**  
**(and contributed by his son, Peter de Dulin)**

**Brickwall House, Northam**  
*March 1940*

Our seaside holiday was over. We were given our marching orders, but we were not going far. We moved in our transport to Northam, a small village on the border between Kent and Sussex and 259 Battery was billeted in a lovely old house called ‘Brickwall’, set in a large estate. It had been used as a girls' school before the War. They had been evacuated to a safer area, so we took over the building. It was to be a period of intense infantry training because things were happening over the other side of the English Channel - the ‘Phoney War’ was almost at an end.

We formed a patrol group under the leadership of Lieutenant Gormley. I was second-in-command with twelve gunners. We had a marvellous time stalking the deer in the park, not that we ever got close to them. Moreover, we were lucky that the weather was fine and we kept comparatively clean with all our hedge crawling, however, this did not prevent us from enjoying ourselves and leading a life of luxury in our beautiful surroundings. We seemed to be quite remote from the threatening situation in Europe. We worked hard and enjoyed our leisure, even though it was confined to the one or two pubs in Northam.

We even had a sports day in the grounds of the park - it was successful. On another day, we held an open day and invited all the friends and relatives who could come to see us in our country house. They arrived in their droves and, having the advantage of a glorious warm and sunny day, we even provided strawberries and cream as part of the entertainment. We had a swimming pool, which was in constant use, and two games rooms, never lacking participating enthusiasts. We also had the free run of the beautiful grounds, but we were warned that the deer were to be left alone and not to be frightened. Our friends and relatives had a wonderful day and departed, thinking that we were living in the lap of luxury. We thought so, too!

Apart from our immediate surroundings, there were also many delightful walks in the neighbourhood. There were also some typically cosy Kent and Sussex pubs, including the Rother Valley Hotel run by the old Kent and England cricketer, Arthur Fagg, who had a unique record of scoring two double-hundreds in a first-class match. The village of Northam itself boasted at least four pubs and a famous oak tree, which was reputed to have sheltered ‘Good Queen Bess’ on one occasion. In the words of a later Prime Minister, ‘We never had it so good’.

### **Rusper, Near Dorking, Surrey** *May 1940*

Then one day, it all ended. I was sent with an officer and ten gunners to the tiny village of Rusper, which lies under the North Downs near Leith Hill. The Regiment was to be located in three great mansions, now taken over by the Army. It was our job to prepare them for the occupation. A week later, it was a spring-cleaning blitz - the house we were to occupy was dilapidated and filthy and we had to dig slit trenches for all three locations. We not only worked hard, but we achieved quite astonishing results.

Our mansion was not in Rusper itself, but about two and a half miles away from the next village of Newdigate. After the day's work, we all bundled into the lorry and went to Rusper, which boasted two delightful village pubs - I favoured the ‘Star’. Here we spent very pleasant evenings drinking the local brew and eating enormous chunks of home-made bread with delicious Cheddar cheese. It was difficult to imagine that this idyllic rustic village was only about twenty miles from the centre of London. As a wonderful bonus, we also had Denis East. With his violin, he was happy to play us to sleep!

After a week of this glorious freedom, the Regiment arrived - life changed dramatically. No longer were we allowed any transport to take us to Rusper, or anywhere else. Although we were not confined to quarters, not many fellows had the energy or inclination to walk the two and a half miles each way for an evening drink. We also had a 10 pm curfew. This was a further deterrent from going out, so we amused ourselves as much as we were able in our respective houses.

We had no idea how long we were going to be stuck in this unpalatable situation, but any move would have been welcomed. It came after one week when, on a Battery muster parade, Major Cathie told us we would be moving the following day to Norfolk. He also told us that from now on our pleasant lives would change. We could expect many moves in the near future so we would not be stopping in any one place for more than a few days.

This gloomy forecast was occasioned by the situation in Europe - Germany had invaded Denmark and Norway in April and Holland on 10 May 1940. The British Expeditionary Force was fighting in Belgium and France. Then came the tragedy of Dunkirk. The fact that the Germans allowed us to evacuate the majority of our troops to live and fight another day did not alter the fact that they had left all their equipment and guns behind. It was a major disaster; the last troops came out on 2 June 1940.

**Witton Park, Norfolk**  
***June 1940***

The journey to Norfolk was the first time that the Regiment moved by road with its own vehicles, a distance under 150 miles. I was one of the motorcyclists doing convoy duty, keeping the correct distances between vehicles, warning drivers of hazards ahead and acting as a traffic policeman at times. I must have travelled at least twice the actual distance and, although I was tired and very dusty at the end, I enjoyed the unusual experience.

We had no idea of what to expect when we arrived at Witton Park, which was, in fact, a large park about 4 miles to the east of Norwich. We did not arrive until late afternoon and the very first thing to be done was to provide a meal for the hungry travellers. After the meal, I was disconcerted to discover that my kit, which had been on a lorry, failed to turn up. The following day, I had an even bigger surprise - I was informed that I was to attend a physical training course for 3 weeks at Shornecliffe, Kent, and I had to report there that same evening.



**Arthur (me!), Ted Petty, Charlie Webb and ‘Spot’ (Our Battery Mascot)**

... to be continued

**A Reminder**

**Society AGM  
24 November 2020**

Due to the Covid-19 situation, your Committee has decided to postpone the Society's AGM until it is safe enough to hold it.

Elsewhere in this Journal, you will find the Financial Statement for this year.

I hope you will 'bear with us' in these difficult times and we hope to see you all when circumstances allow.

Keep safe.

Jenny Towey  
Chair

***Please continue to check our website or contact me for updates:  
01934 248399; jenny@towey.me.uk***

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**... and Another Reminder**

The contract to publish the 1921 Census has been awarded to Findmypast, in association with the Office for National Statistics, the National Archives recently revealed. It will be published in January 2022.

The 1921 Census consists of 28,000+ bound volumes of original household returns on nearly 38 million people. Images and transcriptions will be provided.

## WSM&amp;DFHS FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR TO 31 JULY 2020

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
Subs	2818.00	3054.00	Commission	52.41	55.75
Sales: Books & CDs	20.00	137.00	Purchases: Books, CDs & Microfiche	127.09	263.56
Meetings: Entrance Fees	297.50	642.00	Meetings: Hall Hire, Speakers & Refreshments	324.39	842.23
Raffles	58.00	47.00	Journals: Printing, Postage & Envelopes	946.47	886.40
Donations	24.00	14.00	Leaflets & Printing	0.00	48.00
Postage Refunds	0.00	3.30	Other Society Fairs: Fees	0.00	36.00
Society Activities	460.00	480.00	Website & Computer Costs	279.95	2917.03
Deposit Account Interest	13.60	12.36	Fees, Charges, Affiliations & Insurance	272.87	242.87
			Admin, Stationery & Postage	10.00	58.42
			Kerry's Publication	324.19	0.00
			Society Activities	460.00	380.00
	<u>3691.10</u>	<u>4389.66</u>	Surplus/Deficit	<u>2797.37</u>	<u>5730.26</u>
				893.73	(1340.60)
			<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
			Current Account	282.78	586.56
			Deposit Account	8059.81	6896.21
			Cash	80.95	47.04
			*Fairs' Cash Float	<u>20.00</u>	<u>20.00</u>
				<u>8443.54</u>	<u>7549.51</u>

**Ghost in the Closet - Part 2**  
**by Philip Clark**  
**Charlottesville, Virginia**

So not long after this discovery, I was in Somerset with my daughter, Rachel, and we decided to see if we could find some clues at the Taunton Public Library. Luckily, they had copies of the ‘Burnham Gazette and Somerset Advertiser’ for the relevant period. Threading through the microfilm, we were astonished to find, in the very first newspaper published after this event, there were two or three long columns devoted to the whole affair. This included a verbatim report of the Inquest and commentary on possible reasons for the depression that led to Gabriel’s death.

***‘February 12, 1910***

***SAD DEATH AT BURNHAM. INQUEST ON MR. GABRIEL POPLER  
FUNERAL ON THURSDAY***

*On Sunday morning the inhabitants of the town were shocked and saddened when it became known that Mr. Gabriel Pople had died under circumstances of tragic sadness. He had been suffering from insomnia, which caused great depression of spirits, and for which he has been under medical treatment for some time. He was so strange on Saturday that he had to be watched. For a brief time, he was left on Sunday morning, when he cut his throat with a small pocket-knife and died almost immediately. He leaves a widow and several children. The eldest son is Mr. Bert Pople, who lives in New Zealand; another son in the Army, (Ewart Pople) and the rest of his children live at home.’*

The Inquest spares no detail about his death, for example, (the daughter here was my grandmother):

*‘The daughter was going up when she heard a choking sound, and it had happened during the brief moment of the son leaving the room and the daughter going up. It could not have been 2 minutes. Witness ran into the room. Deceased was standing in front of the mirror. As deceased was falling, witness caught him.’*

and:

*'As they went into the room, they could see in the mirror the gash in the deceased's throat and the knife was in his hand. Mr. Close snatched the valance off the bed and gave it to the witness, who tried to staunch the blood with it. Deceased did not move afterwards and he died instantly.'*

and:

*'The wound extended right across the front of the throat but had not opened the windpipe. There was no doubt from the face of the deceased that he committed the wound himself.'* (I wondered what that meant!)



**I believe this sad picture of my grandmother, Florence Mabel Pople, was taken as Bert Pople, her brother, was about to return to New Zealand.**

The Newspaper tells us that Gabriel was deeply respected by all. *‘He was in full communion with the Wesleyan Methodist Church and superintendent of the Sunday School at the time of his death. He was re-elected superintendent only on the Wednesday before this event. He was the possessor of a long service Volunteer medal, and a Colour-sergeant of the Territorial Forces, which he left because of the age limit, quite recently. He was a splendid athlete and one of the best swimmers in the district. He could play cricket and hockey well and he was a good walker and cyclist. In earlier years, upon necessity, he had shown remarkable bravery in volunteering to complete the lifeboat crew, and hazard was dear to his heart. He was a true and faithful friend, and his illness had aroused much sympathy in the neighbourhood. He was a member of the first Volunteer Fire Brigade, and only did not join the new Fire Brigade because his age exceeded the limit. In business, he had been for nearly forty years in the employ of Mr. Herbert Tucker, and was a courteous and efficient man. He was for many years an Oddfellow, and a life-long abstainer. In politics he was an ardent Liberal, and the local Liberal Club unitedly expressed their practical sympathy with him in his illness but a few days ago. The fact that he said that he ‘took no interest’ in the recent election was proof to those who knew him best that there was something gravely wrong with him’.*

The Coroner, in reviewing the evidence, said, *‘Deceased had apparently been suffering for about three months from nervous disability but, it was not until Saturday, that the doctor attending deceased decided it was necessary to send him to Wells Asylum. Arrangements were made to remove deceased on Monday and instructions were given to carefully watch him in the meantime.’*

The only conclusion I have reached, without further evidence, is that when a new owner took over the business, Gabriel’s skills as a tailor were no longer needed and he was moved to the shop floor: *‘Mr. Copp (the new owner) .... had already engaged another man for the shop, but he would certainly continue to employ deceased in some part of the business, so that he could earn the same wages as before, if not more.’* Gabriel was a skilled and experienced tailor and the removal of the very basis of his existence might have caused him to become unhinged.

... to be continued

### Some Useful Local Addresses

The Editor is always pleased to receive additions or corrections to this list, based on Members' experiences.

Bath Library	Tel: 01225 787400
Bristol Central Library, College Green, Bristol	Tel: 0117 9037200 email: <i>bristol-library-service@bristol.gov.uk</i>
Bristol Family History Centre (LDS), 721 Wells Road, Whitchurch, Bristol, BS14 9HU	Tel: 01275 838326
Bristol Record Office, 'B' Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Bristol, BS1 6XN	Tel: 0117 9224224 email: <i>bro@bristol-city.gov.uk</i>
Clevedon Library, 37 Old Church Road, Clevedon, BS21 1RQ	Tel: 01934 426020 email: <i>clevedon.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Clevedon Story Heritage Centre, Waterloo House, 4 The Beach, Clevedon, BS21 7QU	Tel: 01275 341196
Nailsea Library, Somerset Square, Nailsea, BS48 1RQ	Tel: 01934 426030 email: <i>nailsea.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Weston-super-Mare Museum, Burlington Street, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 1PR	Tel: 01934 621028. Fax 01934 612526 email: <i>museum@wsm-tc.gov.uk</i>
Portishead Library, High Street, Portishead, BS20 6EW	Tel: 01934 426040 email: <i>portishead.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages, Town Hall, Walliscote Road, Weston super Mare, BS23 1UJ	Tel: 01934 427552 email: <i>register.office@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, TA2 6SF	Tel: 01823 278805 email: <i>archives@somerset.gov.uk</i>
Somerset Studies Library, Paul Street, Taunton, TA1 3XZ	Tel: 01823 340300. Fax: 01823 340301 email: <i>somstud@somerset.gov.uk</i>
Weston Library, Town Hall, Walliscote Grove Road, Weston super Mare, BS23 1UJ	For general enquiries: Tel: 01934 426010 email: <i>weston.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i> For local history enquiries: Tel: 01934 888855 email: <i>answers@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Weston Civic Society, The Old Town Quarry, South Road, Weston super Mare	Tel: 01934 412144
Worle Library and Children's Centre, Mendip Avenue, Worle, BS22 6HN	Tel: 01934 462090 email: <i>worle.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>
Yatton Library, 48 High Street, Yatton, BS49 4HJ	Tel: 01934 426100 email: <i>yatton.library@n-somerset.gov.uk</i>

**Officers and Committee**

<b>Position Held</b>		<b>Current Occupier of the Position</b>
Chair	E	Jenny Towey
Secretary, Librarian & Publication	E	Brian Airey
Membership, Transcripts & Web Contact	E	Graham Payne
Treasurer	E	Roy Smith
Journal Editor	E	Sue Maguire
Webmaster	E	Paul Tracey
Vice-Chair & Data Protection	C	Peter de Dulin
Research Consultant & Facebook Admin	C	Pat Hase
Public Relations Officer	C	Sue Dury
Welcome Desk	C	Bill Caple
Exchange Magazines	C	Brian Yandell
General	C	Tony Horry

*E=Elected Position according to Constitution; C=Co-opted Position by the Committee.*

*Please direct enquiries or information to the appropriate Post Holder and remember to enclose a SAE if you require a reply.*

*All Committee Members may be contacted using the Society's website. From any page on the site, go to the top right corner and click on 'Contact Us'. This will bring up a Contact Form for you to complete. Please choose the correct category so that the form is addressed to the correct recipient.*

*Neither the Editor nor the Committee necessarily agrees with the views or opinions expressed by contributors to the Journal. Articles remain the property of the individual author and may not be reproduced without their permission.*

**Map of the Parishes covered by the  
Weston-super-Mare & District FHS**

*On the rear cover is a map of the general area that we cover as a Society, showing the Parishes that are known to have existed in 1832. This basically equates to the same area that forms North Somerset District Council's boundaries plus that covered by the Axbridge Registration District which was set up in 1837:*

1. Easton-in-Gordano	2 Portbury	3 Abbots Leigh
4. Portishead	5. Clapton in Gordano	6. Wraxall
7. Long Ashton	8. Weston in Gordano	9. Tickenham
10. Nailsea	11. Backwell	12. Flax Bourton
13. Barrow Gurney	14. Dundry	15. Walton in Gordano
16. Clevedon	17. Kenn	18. Yatton
19. Brockley	19a. Chelvey	20. Wrington
21. Butcombe	22. Nempnet Thrubwell	23. Winford
24. Kingston Seymour	25. Wick St Lawrence	26. Puxton & Hewish
27. Congresbury	28. Churchill	29. Burrington
30. Blagdon	31. Kewstoke	32. Worle
33. Banwell	34. Weston-super-Mare	35. Hutton
36. Locking	37. Christon	38. Winscombe
39. Uphill	40. Brean	41. Bleadon
42. Loxton	43. Biddisham	44. Compton Bishop
45. Axbridge	46. Shipham	47. Rowberrow
48. Cheddar	49. Charterhouse	50. Ubley
51. Compton Martin	52. Chew Stoke	53. Chew Magna
54. West Harptree	55. East Harptree	56. Berrow
57. Brent Knoll	58. Lympsham	59. East Brent
60. Badgworth	61. Weare	62. Nyland
63. Rodney Stoke	64. Westbury	65. Priddy
66. Burnham on Sea	67. Huntspill	68. Mark
69 Chapel Allerton	70. Wedmore	

*The following Parishes were split as follows:*

*Clevedon into All Saints; Christ Church & St Andrew.*

*Nailsea into Christ Church & Holy Trinity.*

*Weston-super-Mare into All Saints; Christ Church; Emmanuel; Good Shepherd; Holy Trinity; St John; St Paul & St Saviour.*

# Map of Parishes covered by Weston-super-Mare & District FHS

