



Friends of Woodbury Park Cemetery

Issue No. 14

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Newsletter



The white-haired General Middlemore hands over Napoleon's body to the Prince de Joinville for repatriation from St Helena to France. The painting by A. Chédeville portrays a rather neater and greener townscape than is the case.

This might well be called a St Helena Special since it has rather a lot of new material about this speck in the South Atlantic ocean. George Middlemore's memorial and his heroic role in the Battle of Talavera regularly feature in our heritage walks round the cemetery. But as a past Newsletter has noted, much later in his life he spent six years as Governor of St Helena and presided over the return of Napoleon's body to France. Curiosity prompted a visit there, to explore what it must have been like 177 years ago when the Middlemores arrived in what Napoleon in his final exile had called "this damned awful country".

The final section of this newsletter puts together some information gleaned from this visit. And since Frederick Barraud is also a WPC inhabitant, we have slipped into this issue an account on page 3 of a little side investigation into the fate of his navigating mechanism which was in use in St Helena while the Middlemores were there.

Sweet music

We do not lack for soldiers and sailors, let alone their widows and orphans, in Woodbury Park Cemetery. Military and



naval careers were popular among younger sons of the lesser gentry with poor prospects of a wealthy marriage. Which is why we chose Soldiers and Sailors of the Queen as the

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2013

This will take place at the Camden Centre on Friday 24th May at 7.30pm. Nominations are invited for the four Honorary Officers (Chair, Deputy Chair, Treasurer, Secretary) and for up to eight other Committee Members, These should be sent to the Secretary at Bridge House, Culverden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN4 9QX.

The AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk *Children's Pastimes* by Dr. Ian Beavis on the Museum's collection of toys and games.

theme of our Jubilee open air concert last year. Wadhurst Brass Band have agreed to play for us again in July, and we hope to maintain the right flavour by asking them to transport us into Victorian society as seen by Gilbert and Sullivan. Once again St John's Church will harbour us if it pours with rain, but we very much hope we shall once again be able to enjoy the unique *al fresco* version.

Sea Air

Further bracing fresh air is in prospect for this year's summer outing – on 10th August. A guided walk round Margate cemetery, established just seven years after our own, will allow a look at how their Friends do things there (always interesting) and some notable graves. There are many fine monuments to make us a little, but not too, envious, including the magnificent Sanger circus horse.



Also here in less splendour is Emily Tennyson who stayed at one time in Tunbridge Wells and was the fiancée of the unfortunate Arthur Hallam, her brother Alfred's dearest friend and subject of his mourning poem, *In Memoriam*. Arthur also knew Tunbridge Wells, having stayed with his family while they were wintering at Rosehill. The town's main off-season pastime of whist did not find favour with him :

*Damned to a series of most awful dinners
With coteries of ancient Tunbridge sinners
And cards, where all, save I, are always winners.*

Sustained by a quick lunch we shall then move on the short distance to Ramsgate, tracing Edward Hoare's vigorous early ministry in his new-built church, his seaman's mission and his battles with Augustus Pugin (who called him the devil incarnate). Contact David Bushell on 01892 521114 or by email (bushell327@btinternet.com) if you would be interested in coming on this outing.

Meeting by moonlight

If you prefer your WPC outings in the gloaming, our next moth-trapping evening with Keith Palmer is on Friday 19th July. You could encounter some interesting nocturnal creatures ranging from pipistrelle bats to the slightly inebriated gentleman sitting on the memorial slab of celebrated Regency miniaturist John Cox Dillon Engleheart, who assured us this was his uncle's grave.

Keith, one of our invaluable expert advisors, has been building up a record over the past eight years of moths to be found in the cemetery, using a classic light trap. Like butterflies, each type of moth needs a specific plant or tree as food-

stuff for its caterpillars, something we bear in mind in our cemetery gardening. Thus Bird's Wing moth caterpillars feed on Dock while Snout and Small Magpie caterpillars favour Stinging Nettle. Habitats are shrinking as buildings and gardens replace woods and meadows, while weather conditions of the last couple of years have been a severe blow to moth populations everywhere. Like humans they prefer dry warm weather for their romantic forays. Among the interesting moths you may see if you come along on the 19th could be the Small Phoenix, the Festoon, Brimstone Moth, Setaceous Hebrew Character and Grey Dagger, not to mention various Hawk-moths or even carpet moths.



Snout moth caterpillar on nettle.

Repairing winter ravages



Another important date for your diary is our annual plant sale on St John's Church Green on May 18th. Our partners will again be Pepenbury, where people with learning difficulties share the gardening enthusiasms and skills of FWPC members. Last year's event raised some £600 for memorial repairs. This winter has been hard on some of the monuments. Likewise on the grass paths and some bordering graves where fastidious walkers have been trampling edges into oblivion in an effort to avoid the mud. These need urgent repair. So do come to buy our plants and support our conservation efforts.

Digging in

History research maintains its momentum, and is now extending in its range under a fellow group who have embarked on the immense task of transcribing the thousands of memorials at Hawkenbury, many to relatives of those in WPC. Recording doesn't require any prior expertise, just enthusiasm and knees that bend. Standard forms are provided and all learn on the job. If you would like to help with that transcription work contact Margaret Pettitt (pettitt32@btinternet.com or 01892 822905).

The Barraud time ball — the St Helena connection

Just three months after the Middlemores arrived in James Town in 1836, the East India Company time ball was moved down from an observatory on the towering cliff and installed beside the harbour. This had been supplied by the firm of Frederick Barraud, who founded the Clock Museum at the Guildhall. The time ball's highly visible daily plunge at noon enabled visiting ships to calibrate their navigating equipment, particularly useful in the vast wastes of the South Atlantic. The ball can clearly be seen in this picture of the Queen's Birthday parade in 1866.



David Wakefield's book "Frederick Joseph Barraud, 1785—1859" is presented to St Helena museum.



Note the pile of cannon balls in the foreground and the two gun barrels. The whole of this bay was massively fortified. Arrivals to the island anchored off shore and landed by rowing boat. As today the sole entrance to the town was through the gated archway, just visible under the "review balcony" on the wall.

The time ball has long disappeared, but the adjoining former chronometer office remains identifiable. Just up its steps, inside the door a magnificent Barraud long clock still ticks away the minutes and hours today.



This must surely be one of the "two clocks and transit" recorded in 1836 – the other now being in Plantation House, once the home of the Middlemores and still home of the Governor today.



The Barraud clock in the former chronometer office.

Future friends

Last but not least here are hopefully some future conservation enthusiasts. Sitting on our Jubilee bench, newly inaugurated by Councillor Jane March, are some of the ninety school children who came in successive groups in November to visit the cemetery as part of their school work on Victorian lives in their town.



Dates for your diary

- Sat. 18th May: **Spring plant sale** in partnership with Pepenbury, St John's Church Green, 10am — 2.30pm.
- Fri. 24th May: **Annual General Meeting**, followed by **Children's Pastimes**; the Museum's historic toy and games collection, illustrated talk by Dr Ian Beavis, Camden Centre, 7.30pm.
- Sun. 9th June: **Mini-beast safari**, for children and their adults, led by Dr Ian Beavis, WPC, 2.30pm.
- Sat. 14th July: **Open Air Concert, Gilbert and Sullivan**, by Wadhurst Brass Band, WPC, 2.30pm. (If wet, in St John's Church.)
- Fri. 19th July: **Moth Recording** with Keith Palmer, WPC, 9.30pm.
- Sat. 10th Aug.: **In the steps of the Revd Edward Hoare**: a day visit to Ramsgate and to Margate Cemetery. (Contact David Bushell, bushell327@btinternet.com or 01892 521114)
- Thu. 12th — Sun. 15th Sept.: **Heritage Open Days**, guided walks, details to be announced.

WPC Burials

11. George Middlemore: Life in St Helena 170 years ago

George Middlemore had served in the 48th Foot during the Peninsular campaign, 1809–14. The 48th suffered the worst casualties of any regiment, with most of his fellow officers killed or wounded. Many years later when Governor of St Helena, it must have given him a certain grim satisfaction to police the remote humble grave of the fallen Emperor, author of so much bloodshed and misery.

But then in July 1840 new orders came from London. He was to hand over Napoleon's body with imperial honours to the Prince de Joinville for re-interment in Paris. We know from French accounts that he behaved impeccably. But John Lefroy, a young lieutenant stationed on the island saw a different side of this. He wrote that as a Peninsular veteran Middlemore had hated the whole thing, shut himself up at Plantation House pleading illness and left all the negotiations to Col Hamelin Trelawney. He appeared publicly only to



Napoleon's original grave on St Helena.

March on the final two hour trek with the catafalque down to the quay, to the solemn boom of guns firing the imperial 101 salutes at one minute intervals. There he formally handed over the remains of his old enemy to the waiting French prince.

St Helena consists of twin volcanic craters ringed by towering black cliffs. Just ten miles by six, it lies 1100 miles from the nearest mainland. In 1836 it was a three months voyage from Britain. 177 years later it still takes five days to travel from Cape Town to St Helena on the only means of transport, the monthly Royal Mail ship, in order to view at first hand the island where the new Governor had been sent to take somewhat belated formal possession in the name of William IV. The legislation transferring it from the East India Company (EIC) had been passed two years earlier, and his own appointment was already nearly a year old when he arrived.

The island was still a regular port of call for water and fresh produce for ships plying to and from India and South America, but its halcyon days of generous EIC subsidy were now ended. So too was the comfortable berth it had provided for EIC pensioners. George Middlemore's orders were to re-garrison it with 3 companies of the 91st (Argyllshire) Regiment of Foot and to slash the running costs.

Judging from a letter to Lord Glenelg, he arrived in a far from happy frame of mind. He did not want to leave his comfortable previous posting as Lieutenant Governor of Grenada, commanding the West India troops. Now 65 years old, he still had children to provide for, and moving to a tiny barren island was scarcely the most attractive of prospects. Not least since the annual £9,000 stipend enjoyed by his predecessor had been cut to £2,000, and his army pay was now to be stopped as he was no longer directly commanding troops.

The Middlemore family

To add insult to injury, having returned from Grenada, he had been

“hurried away from London at a moment's warning and was under the necessity of embarking in a Transport filled with Troops on a long voyage of 19 weeks and without having time to provide for my Family the slightest Convenience.”

The long-suffering members of his family with him were his wife Phillis Sophia, 20 years his junior and daughter of a naval captain, and their five daughters, Grace, Jemima, Helen, Mary and Catherine. Their 20 year old younger son Ensign Robert Middlemore, was appointed as his father's aide-de-camp and also accompanied them.



Robert Middlemore, c.1850.

St Helena in 1836

Today James Town barracks is a primary school. Attractive pastel houses climb up two steep streets threading up the valley from the town square with its church, court house, prison and compact governors castle. It was rather less pleasant in 1836 after its two years in limbo when the Middlemores were rowed ashore to spend their first night in the town. According to one account it was a place of squalor and filth, with drunkenness rife, church services interfered with, the Police powerless to intervene and *“it was impossible to pass along the main street without being molested by drunkards, half naked prostitutes, and stripped men fighting in the gutter”*. It was pervaded by a loathsome stench from overfull privies, pigsties and slaughterhouses, although



The Roads off James Town with Royal Navy warships at anchor, c. 1841. The town is in the valley with Jacob's Ladder ascending Ladder Hill to the right.



Lower James Town, again with Jacob's Ladder in the background, c. 1857

a flight of 699 steps (Jacobs Ladder is still a test of visitors stamina today) with ingenious counterweighted trucks running up its sides had recently been installed to cart manure to the top of the cliffs for use on fields in the centre of the island.

Next day at the Governor's country residence Plantation House, two miles inland via a steep traverse of crumbling cliffs, further shocks awaited them. The 23 rooms were now semi derelict, their contents missing. The Colonial Office refused an urgent plea for new furnishings saying it was no business of the British Government to replace what the EIC had taken away. A tough though eventually successful battle ensued with the EIC to get some of the furniture returned. Fortunately, an arrangement made in 1835 had allocated an annual Treasury grant to maintain the house structure, and the accounts show that the family did manage over the next few months to get a new kitchen stove, boiler and dresser built and the house made weather-proof.

Island life

Domestic setbacks notwithstanding, the new Governor speedily got down to business. To reduce misbehaviour and increase revenue, he applied strict licensing to beerhouses, banning cards, dice and gambling there. New taxes were imposed right left and centre on water supplies, attorneys and auctioneers, commercial bread ovens, tea and coffee shops, billiard tables and small local boats. Traders and farmers made fruitless representations. Brusque in manner, and no great admirer of the EIC from his past service in India, he swiftly became unpopular and – according to a later chronicler was *long remembered for his*

bad manners and his discourtesy' in his thankless task of refusing pleas from former Company servants, removing perks, and sharply raising the cost of living all round.

In fact the letters that passed between him and London show that he did his best within his remit to smooth the changeover. He was reprimanded for being too concessive and spend-thrift in granting funds for the needs of the civilian population with its flotsam of freed slaves and dependants left behind by the departed soldiery.

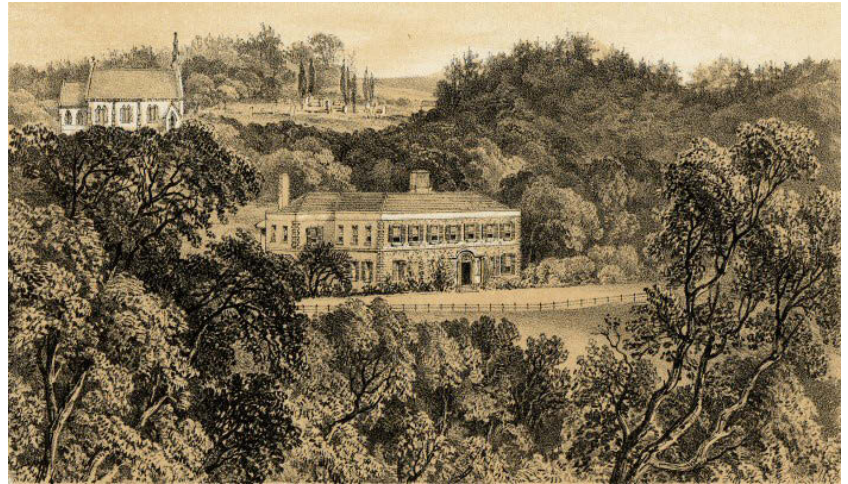
London also took exception to his propensity to act on his own initiative rather than awaiting their instructions. His attempt to dispense with the somewhat token advisory local Council earned a sharp rap on the knuckles from the Colonial Secretary. Since he was accustomed as a military commander to making prompt decisions, even if arbitrary, this difference of viewpoint about the appropriate style of working was scarcely surprising.

In the time-honoured way to keep idle soldiers occupied, a programme of public works was put in hand, the Royal Engineers taking over from St James parish the provision and maintenance of roads, flood prevention, water supply and sewerage as well as continuing to embellish the already bristling military fortifications. His brisk measures to restore order must have worked because four years later when the Prince de Joinville and his entourage arrived to repatriate Napoleon's body they commented:

As in all English colonies, we remarked in this town a propriety and order which left nothing to be desired. The streets and walls by the sea remind us of the paths in our gardens; it is a pleasure to walk in them. James Town is commanded on all sides by lofty mountains covered with fortifications which threaten the town with their artillery.

Phillis Middlemore, long accustomed to following the drum, must have needed all her skills to make do on their tight budget. There was a large estate to manage and no longer a supply of free slave labour. In 1840 when her husband was appointed Vice Admiral on top of his military rank to oversee the new Vice Admiralty Court established in James Town, he may have received some extra income, but it could not have been much. Nonetheless, they managed to entertain and offer gracious company at Plantation House. A letter from a young naval officer to his sister at the time refers to the pleasant cultured evenings he had spent there.

Certainly St Helena had its own small exclusive social circle, consisting mostly of senior officers of the garrison and attached naval squadrons, a sprinkling of professional families, and a few wealthy local merchants and landowners. Many of the hundreds of ships that called in each year carried interesting and distinguished passengers. One such visiting ship in July 1836 was *HMS Beagle*, returning to Britain from its second voyage (1831-36). Charles Darwin tramped the island from end to end recording its geology, unique vegetation and wildlife, already being drastically altered by the impact of visiting ships and introduced species. He compared the hilly green scenery in the central part of the island to Wales, with its whitewashed stone cottages nestling in valleys. He also noted the extreme poverty of the



Plantation House, c. 1857.



GOVERNMENT Advertisement.

The undermentioned Persons have taken out Licenses to Shoot Game for this Season, agreeably to Ordinance No. 9. of 1838.

- No. 1.—David Thomas.
- 2.—Dr. M Laren.
- 3.—Mr. F. Bagley, Sen.
- 4.—Mr. J. Young.
- 5.—Mr. J. Wright.
- 6.—Ensign Pennington.
- 7.—Lieut. Christie.
- 8.—Capt. Middlemore.
- 9.—Mr. John Doveton.
- 10.—Capt. Doveton.
- 11.—Mr. Thomas Alexander.

Any unlicensed person, who may be reported for Shooting, will be prosecuted according to Law.

BY COMMAND OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR,

W. H. SEALE,
Colonial Secretary.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
ST. HELENA, 2nd MARCH, 1840.

THOMAS SCOTT, PRINTER.

One of Middlemore junior's leisure occupations (he is No8 on the list).. Game was strictly preserved to the great disadvantage of needy islanders.

lower classes, mainly emancipated slaves.

Amusements for island gentry were those of colonial society generally. Besides visiting and churchgoing there was fishing, shooting and enthusiastic horse-racing, drawing and painting, natural history and rock specimen collection, amateur theatricals. As in England, some were occupied with good works setting up friendly societies to provide for sickness, old age and death, religious meetings and ladies benevolent committees.

The final days of slavery

By 1836, Britain had abolished slavery in its colonies. But this did not happen overnight and St Helena certainly was not to the fore. Middlemore issued a proclamation in May that year declaring all slaves free but there was a catch. Only one fifth drawn by lot were to be released each year so as to avoid economic disruption. Moreover, each slave was given a valuation as a business asset for which owners could claim under the Government compensation scheme, but the slave was also expected to contribute to his buying out through his savings and doing bonded work – debts almost impossible for some ever to pay off. The archives show Middlemore overseeing this general scheme.

Then just as it was winding down, there came a new influx of victims released by the Navy from the crammed holds of West African slaver ships. Captured vessels were unloaded on the island, the crews prosecuted and prize money allocated in the new Admiralty Court. The rescued slaves had to be restored from emaciation and isolated for infectious disease, the dead buried, the survivors fed, housed, then shipped out.

Many of today's "Saints" are descended from the former slaves and bond workers – mainly African, Malayan, Tamil, and Chinese. Their past is commemorated in a special section in James Town Museum and the rich mix of cultures that still characterises the island today, including its astonishing range of recipes to cook the staple diet of fish. Another visual reminder of their past is the old slave quarters forming the semi basements of many houses. And the clump of peepul trees referred to in this poster, still stands at the head of Main Street marking where the last slave auction was held.

Dr Barry and the sick poor

One other notable arrival who caused much angst for Middlemore and required all his skills of evasion is worth mentioning. Army medical staff were appointed and funded from the War Office, whereas the army commissariat and all supplies were Treasury business. Local doctors for the sick poor were funded by the parish out of local rates; but responsibility for the management and provisioning of the civil hospital was less clear. When the tempestuous Dr James Barry, a brisk and competent army doctor, arrived in autumn 1836 he immediately inspected the civil as well as the military premises. He found "disgusting circumstances of male attendants on the female patients" and all that led to, venereal and fever patients of both sexes mingled together, and inadequate food and medicines for both civil and military hospitals. Remedying this became a battleground between him and F.E. Knowles of the commissariat. General Middlemore was sympathetic to separate quarters for females and joint provisioning, but ducked and weaved to avoid being dragged into the rancorous and personal disputes that developed. At one stage Dr Barry refused a challenge to a duel, then in exasperation decided to complain direct to London Minis-

TO BE SOLD & LET
BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
 On **MONDAY the 18th of MAY, 1829,**
UNDER THE TREES,
FOR SALE,
THE THREE FOLLOWING
SLAVES,

VIZ.
HANNIBAL, about 30 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.
WILLIAM, about 35 Years old, a Labourer.
NANCY, an excellent House Servant and Nurse.
THE MEN belonging to "LEITCH'S" Estate, and the WOMAN to Mrs D. SMIT.

TO BE LET,
On the usual conditions of the Hirer finding them in Food, Clo't in's, and Medical
MALE and FEMALE
SLAVES,

ROBERT BAGLEY, about 20 Years old, a good House Servant.
 WILLIAM BAGLEY, about 16 Years old, a Labourer.
 JOHN AHN, about 16 Years old.
 JOHN ANTONIS, about 30 Years old, a Labourer.
 PHILIP, an Excellent Tailor.
 HARRY, about 27 Years old, a good House Servant.
 LIZZY, a Young Woman of good Character, used to House Work and the Nursery.
 BELLA, an Excellent Washerwoman.
 CLARA, an Excellent Washerwoman.
 BUNNY, about 16 Years old, House Servant.
 SARAH, about 14 Years old, House Servant.

Also for Sale, at Eleven o'Clock,
Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,
Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.
AT ONE O'CLOCK, THAT CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE
BLUCHER,
ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE



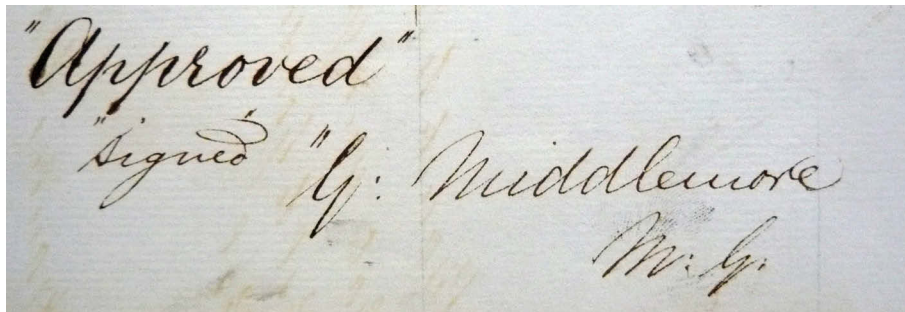
Dr James Barry, c. 1850.

ters. The military closed ranks against the unforgivable treachery of going behind the back of a senior officer and splitting on comrades. A St Helena Court Martial cleared Barry of the charge of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and the new joint provisioning was instituted, but a further court-martial in London some months later after he was sent there by Middlemore under guard, though subsequently dropped, led to his being quietly given a new posting in the West Indies. Barry described the affair as “probably the first case of an officer being brought to trial for doing his duty”.

Life in Tunbridge Wells

So how did the Middlemores look back on those six years of ups and downs, celebrities and slaves, drama and boredom on their remote island, after they eventually washed up on the gentler hills of Tunbridge Wells? Esconced in Rosehill facing the Common, no doubt they fitted comfortably into the social and leisure life of the many military and colonial pensioners living close by, who found Tunbridge Wells and its company so congenial. As a daily reminder of the past, they looked across to St Helena Cottage, perched on its craggy rock. Perhaps, foreshadowing another governor’s wife installed in Plantation House many years later, Phillis Middlemore would simply have said of her one-time home:

There is no doubt that to have lived here is a unique experience with its own charms and difficulties, which when the time for retirement comes, gives savour to life elsewhere.



From an account book on St Helena.



The grave of George Middlemore and his widow in Woodbury Park Cemetery. The later headstone to the left is a memorial to Lt. Col. Donnellan, describing the incident during the battle of Talavera, 1809, when the mortally wounded Colonel handed over command of the 48th Foot to (the then) Major Middlemore for its charge to rescue the Guards Brigade.