

WALTON ON THE HILL & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

FOR HEADLEY, KINGSWOOD, TADWORTH & WALTON



Charity Reg. No. 803796 Hon. Secretary Sandie Hunt huntsandie47@gmail.com *Children of Headley, St Mary's in the background*

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP PRESS

Introducing our speaker on 3rd October, Dr Nick Barratt of *Who Do You Think You Are* fame.

Nick is a highly-qualified broadcaster, author and medieval historian. He was born at Hammersmith, London and educated at Hampton School, after which he took a PhD in history from King's College London, before completing his PhD in state finance and fiscal history also from King's College London.

Nick then worked at the Public Record Office, now The National Archives, from 1996 to 2000 before leaving to work as a specialist researcher at the BBC, whilst establishing Sticks Research Agency.

Nick has made numerous TV appearances, and his credits include *House Detectives*, *Invasion*, *Omnibus* and the BAFTA-nominated *Seven Wonders of the Industrial World*. Since 2002, he has moved into presenting, *History Mysteries*, *Hidden House History* and *So You Think You're Royal* on television, and *Tracing Your Roots* for Radio 4.

In 2014 Nick, as resident historian of BBC TV's *House Detectives*, ran the Guardian newspaper's master classes on how to uncover not just the secret history of the home, but of its location, previous occupants and the surrounding communities.

Among Nick's published works we can list -
Tracing the History of Your House (Public Record Office, 2001)
House History Starter Pack (Public Record Office, 2002)
History Trail (BBC, 2002)
Your Family's War History (BBC Learning, 2004)
Who Do You Think You Are?: Trace Your Family Tree Back to the Tudors (with Anton Gill; HarperCollins, 2006)
Genealogy Online for Dummies (Wiley, 2006)
The Family Detective (Ebury, 2006)
Who Do You Think You Are?: Discovering the Heroes and Villains in Your Family (with Dan Waddell; HarperCollins, 2006)
Lost Voices from the Titanic: The Definitive Oral History (Preface, 2009)
Barratt's other works include numerous academic articles, volumes on medieval history. He writes a weekly column for *The Daily Telegraph* and is a regular contributor to various family history magazines.

He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, President of the Federation of Family History Societies and a Trustee of the Society of Genealogists. He is an international lecturer, regularly giving presentations on a wide range of historical topics. We are extremely lucky to have our very own chance to meet and listen to Nick.

**Our next meeting is on
Tuesday 3 Oct 2023
at St Peter's Church
Breech Lane, Walton-on-
the-Hill, KT20 7SD
Doors open at 7.30 pm
Behind the Scenes of
*Who Do You Think
You Are*
with Dr. Nick Barratt**

**The BBC specialist archive
researcher for TV series such
as *House Detectives*. Nick was
also the genealogical
consultant leading the team of
researchers for the first four
series of *Who Do You Think
You Are***



Please check your emails before our meeting in case of last minute changes.

KINGSWOOD OR POMPEII?

By Pia Chamberlain

Sometime last year the members of the Banstead History Research Group were approached, to their great surprise, by no less than the prestigious Getty Museum with a most intriguing query concerning a house in Kingswood. I was brought in on this by our Banstead colleagues in view of my interest in local Kingswood matters and so we embarked on a piece of research which was going to take us to unexpected places.



The Getty Museum had in its possession a wall fragment with a peacock design, which J. Paul Getty had acquired from a London dealer in 1968. This was believed to have come from the House of Siricus, in Pompeii, and was catalogued as dating from AD 1-79. According to Dick Ellis, the former head of Scotland Yard's Art and Antiques Squad, who also happens to be a friend of my husband, this was a time when dealers and auction houses alike *'ignored due diligence and did not ask*

difficult questions as they did not wish to hear difficult answers', quite apart from the fact that *'Pompeii villas have always been out of bounds and anything sold as having come from there should have been examined closely even in the 1960s'*.

Something must have sent alarm bells ringing for the Getty and with the development of ever more sophisticated methods of analysis, they finally decided to test the authenticity of their 'Roman' wall fragment. The following is a summary of their findings.

The painting, consisting of 11 fragments, had been reassembled and backed with a fine cement-like bedding material, set in a modern frame. X-radiography showed chicken wire within its bedding material. X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy revealed that the major pigments used for painting the peacock were ultramarine blue and chrome green on the breast, and iron oxide for the lower body and tail. Iron oxide was also confirmed on the balustrade, shield and perimeter band. Examination using ultra-violet radiation showed a fluorescent coating which, when sampled, was identified as a modern drying oil alkyd.

Now, chrome green was not introduced as a pigment until about 1862, ultramarine blue, a synthetic pigment, was first used in 1826, chicken wire was invented in 1844 and alkyd coating was not used before the 1950s. The obvious conclusion the experts reached was that the painting was Pompeiian inspired and not a Roman original.

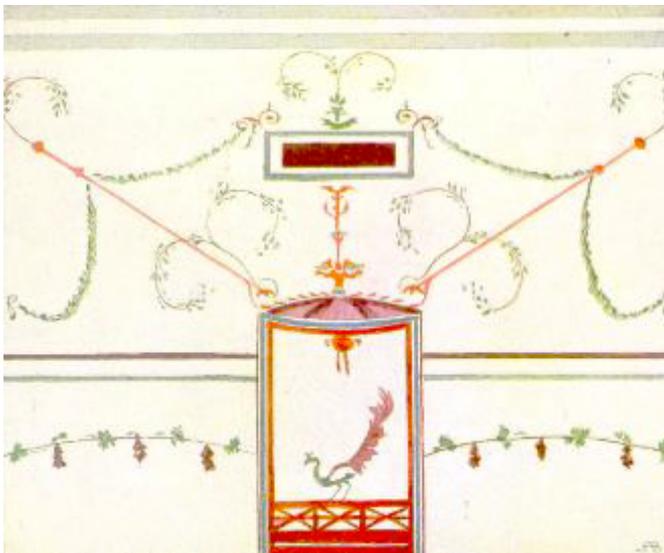
Neo-classical painted interior schemes had become quite fashionable towards the end of the 18th c. These were inspired by the wall paintings excavated from the middle of the 18th c. onwards in Pompeii and Herculaneum. At first the trend in England was restricted to the grand houses of the aristocracy, but by the 1860s it had gradually spread to the design of more modest dwellings.

London-born Robert Alexander Briggs (1858-1916) was an Arts & Craft architect who practiced much of his work in and around the metropolitan suburbs. He joined the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1882 and in 1883 he won the Sloane Medallion, a student

prize offered annually by the Institute, the winner of which received £100 for six months foreign travel. This enabled Briggs to go to Europe the following year, when his journey is likely to have taken him to Pompeii among other places. In 1891, he published *'Bungalows and Country Residences'*, a book of designs and recently executed works, which earned him the nickname of 'Bungalow Briggs'. Then, in 1911, Briggs published another book, *'Pompeian Decorations'*, which had been some years in the making and was intended to serve as a source of inspiration for modern architects and 'decorators'. Right at the beginning of the book, one name in the list of subscribers, that of Lester Bellingham, offers an important clue as to what was about to follow.

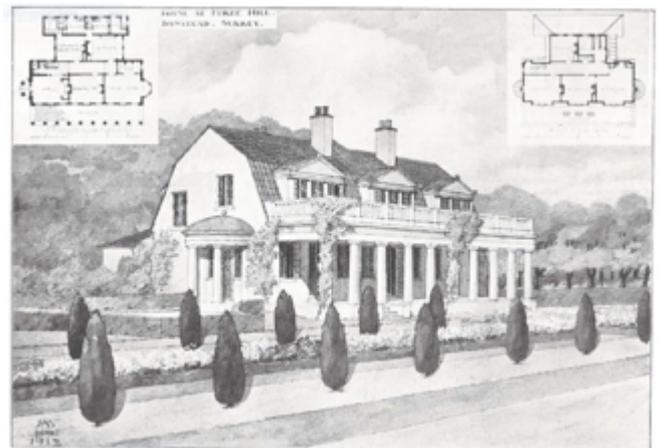


The same house, again described as 'designed in the free Greek style', a style favoured by the architects of the time, subsequently featured in a number of British architectural publications as a completed project. This had come out of an 18-month partnership between R.A. Briggs, and one of his former pupils, Harry Le Cronier Browning. Photographs of that same house also appeared in a book by the French author, Charles Massin, entitled *'Villas Normandes et Anglaises'* (see picture at the end). Interestingly, the drawings submitted by the architects to Epsom Rural District Council together with the building application, although basic, show a 'union jack' staircase of the same design as the balustrade featuring in the peacock fresco.

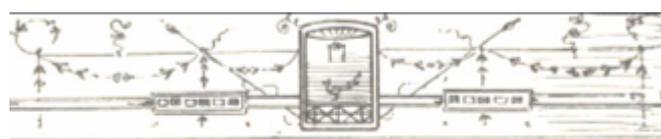


A frieze design from 'Pompeian Decorations'

'Bungalows and Country Residences' contained a couple of plates showing 'a Bungalow in a free Greek style giving, in an economical way, an individuality to a cheap class of building. The walls would be faced with stone, and the roof covered with patent pantiles. The cost of this bungalow would be £900'.



House at Furze Hill, Banstead, Surrey, R. A. BRIGGS AND BROWNING, Architects.



The other plate showed a room decorated with a Pompeian style fresco. This, when viewed close up, shows the stylized outline of a peacock bearing more than a passing resemblance to our 'Roman' fresco.

The building application was made in May 1911 on behalf of Lester Bellingham, a stockbroker, of Mortimer Mansions, Mortimer Street, London, the same Lester Bellingham who, in 1911, was one of the subscribers to Brigg's *'Pompeian Decorations'*. In the summer of 1912, Lester Bellingham, by then aged 43, married Gladys Selby, who was some 20 years his junior. The following

summer, the couple sailed from Southampton to Genoa to spend a holiday in Italy. The Bellinghams don't appear to have lived in the newly completed Doric House for any length of time, finding it perhaps too small or too modest for their needs. By 1921, the census shows that the house had been taken over by the nearby St Monica's School and housed a French teacher and 16 pupils, as well as a housekeeper and her daughter. In 1927, Gladys Bellingham filed a petition for divorce. Lester Bellingham died in 1940, aged 72.

Although the firm had experienced some debt problems earlier in 1911, according to an item in the London Gazette, the task of building Doric House was entrusted to Midmer Ltd, of Tadworth. James Midmer had started his building career working for his father's firm, C. Midmer & Sons. Cornelius Midmer and his sons James and Albert originally came from Hastings. According to one of their descendants, their business model consisted in buying land, building a house for the family and then building a street alongside, selling up and repeating the same operation elsewhere. James is believed to have built a property, called 'The Pines', in the Hoppety, in Tadworth, where he lived for a while with his wife and two sons, Cyril James and Leslie Walter. By 1917 he had moved to Thornton Heath and later to Norbury, where he died in 1948.



*James and Lydia Midmer
on their wedding day in 1908*

Robert Alexander Briggs died of a 'seizure' in May 1916 at the age of 60. In one of a number of obituaries, he is described as not only an excellent draughtsman, but also as a skilled musician and a good singer, who had composed several songs. He was survived by his wife, but the couple had no children.

As for Doric House, it continued to be used by St Monica's School until it closed at the outbreak of the war in 1939, when it was taken over by the Legal & General Assurance Society. It was again used by Legal & General to house some of its staff and sometime in the 1950s, it was converted into two apartments.

By the late 1960s, it had fallen into a bad state of disrepair and the site was sold on to a developer. After having been further damaged by a fire that broke out in mysterious circumstances, the house was finally pulled down in 1972 and replaced by a new close of houses, named Doric Drive, as a last reminder of the house that had once stood there.

As for our peacock fresco, it is no longer on public display and has been re-catalogued by the Getty as a '*wall fragment with a peacock, about 1911, after Robert Alexander Briggs (British 1858-1916). Research into the origin of this work, its composition and manufacture is ongoing*'.



We would be delighted to hear from anybody who has more information on how this wall fragment came to be preserved in such a fashion. Was it a deliberate attempt to deceive or was it just a way of trying to salvage a piece of Kingswood heritage?

**REV. GRANVILLE WILLIAM
BORLASE MA
1876-1952**

**RECTOR OF ST PETER'S
CHURCH, WALTON-ON- HILL
from 1921-1936
By Robert Ruddell**

Granville William Borlase was born at Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset in 1876, the son of Charles Augustus Moyle Borlase and Ann Reeve Rogers. With the help of Crockford's Clerical Directory, we are able to piece together Granville's early life.



Granville William Borlase

He attended Exeter College, Oxford and in 1898 obtained a BA and in 1901 an MA. He then went to The Wells Theological College in 1899 and was Ordained as a Deacon in 1900.

Prior to joining St Peter's Church in 1921 he travelled widely. In 1901, he became a Priest in Wakefield and was the Curate of the Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin in Elland, West Yorkshire from 1900 to 1903. He then went to Canada as the Vicar of Fairview and the Priest-in-charge of the district in New Westminster from 1903 to 1904.

On his return from Canada in 1904 and until 1907 he was the Domestic Chaplain to the Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane. Borlase then became the Rector of St Paul's Kinross from 1907 to 1910, the Rector of St Mary's, Aldborough from 1910 to 1913, and the Vicar of the Parish Church of St. Thomas

Market Rasen from 1913 to 1918; while in 1915 he was the Chaplain of the Church Lads' Brigade of the Market Rasen Company. Finally, in 1918 until 1921, he was the Rector and Vicar of St. Peter's Church Brocklesby with Limber Magna, Lincolnshire which is on the Brocklesby Estate belonging to Lord Yarborough. He was the Chaplain to the Earl of Yarborough in 1918.



ST. PETER'S, WALTON-ON-THE-HILL.

Borlase became the Rector of St Peter's Church when he succeeded the Rev Edward Percy Greenhill in 1921. Greenhill was the Rector from 1906-1921 and had lived at Carew, formerly The Rectory and now Heath House, in Heath Drive. Borlase also took up residence at the same property.

Granville married Marjorie Bryant Railton the daughter of Egerton Railton and Jessie Unwin Mulliner in 1929 and they had a daughter Mary Moyle Grenfell Borlase who was born in 1930. She married Philip Victor Mallet in 1953 and they had three sons.

When Borlase was at Market Rasen he was a member of Woodhall Spa Golf Club and he featured in a match for them against Louth Golf Club at Authorpe. He was a member of Walton Heath Golf Club in 1929-30 and he remained so in 1937-38 when he had moved to Salisbury.

Nearly 90 years ago a letter appeared in the September 1929 Walton Parish Magazine.

RECTOR MARRIES SCOUTMASTER

My Dear Friends and Parishioners, August 18th 1929

May I thank you for the great kindness with which you have received the news of my engagement.

We are both more grateful than we can say. It is perhaps not very usual for the Rector to marry the Scoutmaster, but it is not among the prohibited degrees in the table of affinity and we feel that the arrangement has much to commend it.

Your friend and Rector,

G.W. Borlase

Scoutmaster Miss Railton married the Rector on 5th November 1929.

The introduction in 1920 of a bus route S6, later 406, between Redhill, Reigate, Kingswood, Tadworth and Epsom, followed by route 80A between Charing Cross and Walton in January 1922 presented a much bigger range of shopping opportunities.

The Rector, the Rev. Granville Borlase, gave a warning in the January 1922 issue of St Peter's, Walton Parish Magazine: "*Since the omnibuses have been running, it has become the custom for some parents to take their children to some neighbouring towns during school time. This tends to upset the work of the class, to say nothing of the fact that the child is losing the day or half-day's lessons. We appeal to those parents who have acted in this way lately, to try and make other arrangements.*"

In 1929, Borlase was the author of a book, "*The History of Walton and Walton Heath*" in which he reflected on some of the events he witnessed during his early period as the Rector of St Peter's.

The story was told in 4 chapters

- I. The Ancient History of Walton- on- the-Hill
- II. The Church
- III. Modern Walton
- IV. Walton and Walton Heath

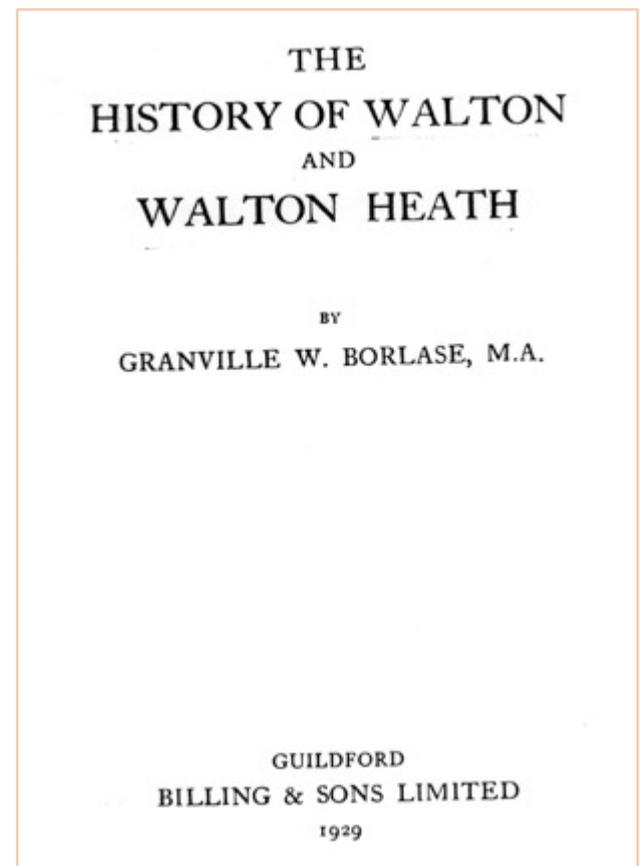
In Chapter 1, Borlase writes,

"The name was variously spelt Walton [eleventh century], Wanton [thirteenth century], and subsequently Waleton, or Walleton".

And

"Petty offences, which now came before the Justices of the Peace, formerly came before the manorial court. The Lord of the Manor in early days had practically sovereign rights over his estates and could punish any offences except a felony. One of the usual punishments for small offences was to be placed in the stocks. The village stocks seem to have stood by the old churchyard gate, some fifteen yards within the present boundary".

"The population at the beginning of the seventeenth century was estimated at 100. In 1801 it was 204, and in 1901 it was 839".



In the 1841 census the population for Walton was 362.

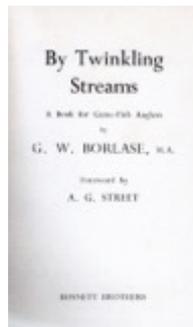
His “Modern Walton” Chapter is fascinating when reading some ninety four years later. Borlase writes, “*What has happened at Walton has, of course, happened all over Surrey and in many parts of the south of England. The advent of golf and the motorcar has entirely changed the nature of the country village. The agricultural labourer has almost entirely disappeared, and his place has been taken by an army of gardeners, chauffeurs, and other menservants. The land has been divided into sites for houses. The labourer’s cottage has too often been converted into a weekend villa, while keenness on games has taken the place of country interests and pursuits*”. He continues, Walton also has one priceless possession in the Heath, which will ever preserve some portion of the old natural beauty of the place. Though the line of houses may enclose it on every side, the genie of the Heath will ever say, “*So far and no farther.*” Thankfully in the 1970’s the M25 motorway was not allowed to destroy its beauty and prevent walkers, golfers, and horse riders from enjoying their leisure activities.

Borlase then predicted, “*The tendency in the future will no doubt be for Walton to become the home of those whose main activity is expended in London, and who return daily to sleep, or in some cases only at week-ends. Golf and the motor-car have wrought great changes in Walton; perhaps the next development will be due to activity in the air.*”

Finally, in Chapter IV, he writes, “*For many years horses have been trained on the Heath. It is a pleasant sight during the winter months to see the steeplechasers doing their trials over the runs and jumps. Ilex and Moifaa, Grand National winners of 1890 and 1904, were trained on the Heath, and we are told that the latter’s form made so little impression on local opinion that no one in the village backed him*”.

When Granville left St Peter’s he became the Rector and Vicar of The Church of St John the Baptist, Bishopstone with Stratford Tony, Wiltshire from 1936 to 1947, and then in 1948 he became a Licensed Preacher at the Diocese of Sarum.

He continued his writing and in 1952 was the author of a book for game-fish anglers, “*By*



Twinkling Streams”. Both Granville and Marjorie Borlase died at Salisbury. Granville in 1952 and Marjorie in 1986 and they are buried just outside the Priests door in the Graveyard of Bishopstone Church.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

GRANVILLE W. BORLASE, M.A. - *THE HISTORY OF WALTON AND WALTON HEATH* 1929 and *BY TWINKLING STREAMS* 1952
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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS. DO YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE FOR OUR NEWSLETTER OR WISH TO CONTACT US? Please email lorrainespindler@hotmail.co.uk

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