

# Minchinhampton

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The newsletter of Minchinhampton Local History Group

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## Editor's note:

There has not been a newsletter since June, for which apologies. Personally, I have been very busy planning various talks and so forth. Also, it seems very difficult to get adequate material for a monthly publication. Therefore, at the moment I will plan for a newsletter at least every 3 months.

## Membership News

It has been agreed by the committee that as of next year existing members will be able to renew their membership for £10. The price for new members remains the same at £12. Also all members will receive a discount off the ticket price for our events. Regarding events, I am trying to source guest speakers for next year. If you have any subjects that you would like to see talks on, please let me know.

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## Why Local History Matters

By David Wethey

Distinguished English historian GM Trevelyan (1876-1962) summed it up well: 'Once on this familiar spot of ground walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone'.

Trevelyan has himself been gone for many years now. As all of us will go and leave Minchinhampton to other generations. But Holy Trinity will remain, and with it the stones that celebrate in its churchyard the lives of countless souls. The trees on the Common will live on, and the streets and houses of our town. People will carry on gathering in the Market House, the Crown and the Weighbridge. Children will go to school and spread their wings when they leave. Cows will graze in public, like they do in Indian towns, while the townsfolk are busy in private, bringing up their families and making their own history.

Fortunately, local historians are here to preserve the memory of what has passed, and those aspects of the present that will shortly be the past. Nor is preservation the historian's only goal. It was Oscar Wilde who told us to repay our debt to history, by rewriting it from time to time.

Perspective enables us to do that, however irreverent it might seem.

Indeed, there is a chap who lives here (similar name to my own) who on a monthly basis takes liberties with the received wisdom.

History used to be essentially his story; such was the gender bias over many centuries. Increasingly her story is being told as well. We have our very own Princess in Gatcombe, almost exactly 1000 years since Countess Goda (daughter of Ethelred the Unready) lived at Chavenage.

Flora Steel, Jenny Joseph, and more recently Jilly Cooper and Joanna Trollope are famous writers and poets with a local association. The founder of the Playne dynasty, who lived at Longfords and dominated Minchinhampton industry, was the formidable Martha Playne.

However, I don't believe that it is the local historian's role to explain everything, to package history in a file called 'solved', and to kill debate about the past. We all need a degree of mystery in our lives about the past and present, as well as the future which of necessity must remain unknown.

For instance...

The Commons of Minchinhampton and Rodborough are peppered with strange earthworks. Do we truly understand their origin? Why is it that there are millions of crustacean fossils hundreds of feet above sea level on our Commons?

Tom Long's Post is arguably Minch's most famous location, but who was Tom Long? Think you know for sure? This link will almost certainly confuse you:

<https://magpieseven.wordpress.com/mercian-enactment-society/tom-longs-post/>

We all know (don't we?) that William Duke of Normandy and later William I of England, gave the town of Minchinhampton to the nuns of Caen. But why? What was he doing in Minch when he had a whole country to subjugate after his victory at Senlac? [Editor – I think he could have completed the “giveaway” without actually visiting us]

And so, to a mystery from the present day – how significant is it that both the School for dogs and the Surgery for the ailing are now located outside the town on the road to Cirencester?

## The Brews family and the Minchinhampton Golf Club.

### By Maggie Elder

George Belfrage Brews was born in Kingskettle (aka Kettle) in Fife, Scotland on the 6th of August 1867. He moved later to the nearby coastal village of Leven also in Fife.

He became the first employed professional golfer and clubmaker at the first Minchinhampton Golf Club (MGC) from 1902 until his death on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1920, at the age of 56. This was despite according to his record of death [below] that he had problems with his heart from 1908 onwards.

1410	Cyghth September 1920 Minchinhampton RD	George Belfrage Brews	Male	55 years	Golf. Professional and Club Maker	'Myocardial Degeneration approx 12 years Heart failure Certified by Ha Playfair Robertson MB	Sidney F Brews Son Present at death Minchinhampton	Cyghth September 1920	Alfred Simmonds Registrar.
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The Club still recognises his contributions today and particularly the golf clubs he made and patented. A tournament is held in his name every August bank holiday Monday, called “BREWS BRASSIE” which is based around one of his golf irons still in use.



Photos of George with his sons at MGC hang in both club houses at Minchinhampton.

Presumably, George learnt golf at courses in and around Leven. He left Scotland to take up the position of professional golfer at the Royal Blackheath Golf Club, London.

This club has a long and illustrious history tracing back to 1608, which is in the early beginnings of golf in England when the

game was brought there from Scotland.

George met Fanny Mary Moore and married her in Greenwich on the 15th of April 1892. They had two sons, [John George and Sydney Francis] and a daughter [Doris Mary] whilst in London.



The family moved then to The Box and afterwards to Windmill Road, Minchinhampton.

Two more sons were born there [George Belfrage Jr and Douglas Edgar]

All four sons became well-known professional golfers.

The Eldest son was called John but named "Jack" in the picture to the left, and afterwards "Jock."

In the 1911 census he was shown as assisting his father at the Club. However, before George Senior's death in 1920, Jock had moved to Durban, South Africa. By this time, he had married at Minchinhampton, Gladys Elsie Aldridge on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1919.

Here he pursued an extremely successful golfing career, winning several international titles including the South African Open four times.

Jock's younger brother, Sydney [Sid], became the golfing professional at MGC after his father's death, but eventually emigrated to South Africa to join his brother. Sid also had a remarkable golfing career and won the South African Open eight times! Like Jock, he also won a number of international tournaments.

The two brothers became known as the "Brews Boys", took golf to a whole new level in South Africa and were considered unbeatable at their peak.

Sid's son, Roger Brews followed in his father's footsteps and became a successful professional golfer.



George's only daughter, Doris married [also in Minchinhampton] William Stuart Nash, a Corporal in the Australian Flying Corps on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November 1918. Their children included Stuart E Nash born c.1920 and Jose J born in 1921 at the family home in Glenroy, Windmill Road.

It appears they all accompanied Fanny Mary Brews to South Africa around 1924, after her husband George's death.

Thanks to Church historian, Martyn Beaufort, I recently discovered George Brews was buried in Minchinhampton Church Cemetery in 1920, and his gravestone still exists.



The gravestone reads "In memory of Dad and Mum" with death dates for both George and Fanny. It's understood Fanny was repatriated after her death in Pretoria, South Africa to be buried with George. [Editor -the burial books have no record of this burial so it is possible that this is a commemoration].

Something else George was well known for was his singing of old Scottish songs!

My relationship to George Brews (Sr) is cousin, twice removed. My paternal grandmother, Margaret Beath Brews was his first cousin.

If anyone has any connection or contact with any George Brews' descendants here in the UK or South Africa, I would be very interested to know.

Maggie Elder

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The day after this was written, Maggie, as a living relative of George Brews got to present the Brews Brassie Trophy to the team captain. She has kindly sent me pictures of the trophy – a genuine club made by George Brews himself, and the presentation itself. Please find these below. Thanks, Maggie!!



## The Presentation





## Grave of the month

By Martyn Beaufort



This is the grave of Daniel and Ellen Bingle. There are many graves in the churchyard to “ordinary” people. However, it was ordinary people who helped make our town the place it is today.

The censuses are clear that Daniel was a carpenter, and the 1911 census [by which time Ellen was dead, and Daniel was a widower] show that they had a prolific family and 13 children. It seems most unlikely that Daniel and Ellen have no descendants today.

However, with such a brood of children unfortunately there was more chance of a “bad apple” amongst them, and this bad apple was their son, Henry.

He went through a spree of minor crimes in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century and one of these crimes occurred in 1904 and involved the father: -

“FATHER AND SON. Henry Bingle, labourer, Minchinhampton, was summoned by his father, Daniel Bingle, Minchinhampton. for committing damage to the extent of 6s. to his garden produce. Richard Bingle. another son, stated that he saw defendant go into the pigsty and drive the pigs into the garden. Defendant was sentenced to two months' hard labour, there being several previous convictions against him”

At some point, I will write a history of the transgressions of Henry Bingle who society labelled an “incorrigible rogue”

This was a title given to consistent offenders – especially those with no fixed abode by The Vagrancy Act 1824 which was an “act for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons, and rogues and vagabonds”. In fact this rather invidious title only left our statute books in 2013!

However, in order to give a “taster” of Henry Bingle's crimes I will below include the one of most interest which dates to 1903: -

“Henry Bingle and Arthur Hyde, labourers, Minchinhampton, were summoned for having on October 30th, committed wilful damage to the extent of about £4 to certain property at Minchinhampton, and belonging to Mr A T Playne.

Mr Lawrence T Steele appeared on behalf of the defendants. He asked for an adjournment on the ground that he knew very little about the case, and his brother, for whom he had appeared had instructed counsel, who owing to a misunderstanding of dates, was that day defending a case at Gloucester.

Mr Langley Smith prosecuting on behalf of Mr A T Playne, objected to an adjournment; and the bench being of the opinion that Mr Steele had not given sufficient reason to uphold his application, allowed the case to proceed.

Mr Langley Smith said that some 30 years ago Mr Playne purchased the strip of land on the Common from the Court Leet, and the purchase money had been used by the Commons Committee for the purchase of other land for addition of the Common. Until October 8th Mr Playne had enjoyed the right of his purchase without any interference, but on that date these two men, having been refused liquor at the Old Lodge on account of drunkenness, went outside and commenced to pull down a wall separating the piece of land, which is part of the Old Lodge property from the Common. Even had they honestly believed the enclosed ground to be part of the Common they had no right to pull down the wall as neither was a ratepayer.

Edward Boughton, landlord of the Old Lodge, Minchinhampton, stated that Hyde, on the afternoon in question, came into the bar with another man and called for a quart of beer. Witness had his doubts as to Hyde's condition, and said “Oh, a pint will be enough” He then went into the bar parlour, and there saw Bingle; and noticing that he was in a drunken condition he refused to draw any liquor whatsoever. Hyde then said “Come on, chaps” and all three walked off. About ten minutes afterwards he heard the sound of falling stones, and going out saw Hyde and Bingle deliberately pulling down the wall which divided the bowling alley from the common proper. Witness said, “Arthur, you are doing a very foolish thing. Are you in charge of this job? Do you think you will do me any personal injury by so doing?” Bingle came over to him and used very threatening and abusive language. He telephoned to the police.

James Dean, coachman, in the employ of Boughton, Minchinhampton, said that he was present at the Old Lodge at the time of the offence. Bingle was “very drunk, but Hyde was not in such an advanced state of intoxication. When the two men went away, he overheard remarks that they would come again; and about an hour later he again

heard stones rattling and the sound of men's voices. It was dark, but he recognised one voice as that of Hyde.

Capt. Wilson, Burleigh, retired army officer, also spoke to seeing the men pulling down the wall. They were drunk.

P.c. Reubenson stated that in consequence of a complaint he proceeded to the Old Lodge, and saw that a considerable portion of the wall had been pulled down. He then went to the Halfway House and saw Hyde, who said "It was quite right; the wall ought not to have been there. The place was meant for skittle-alley for the working man. We shall pull it down again; the job is not finished yet. Mr. Boughton had no right to summon Thomas Stevens. He ought to have seen Tom and asked him to offer an apology to Mrs. Boughton. We can't get a pint of beer here now for less than 3d, unless it is the taproom where the caddies go. They used to be glad to take 2 1/2 in any part of the house."

He told him that he would be charged with damage to the wall, and he replied "Allright, I know more about that job than you do. I can answer the charge"

He did not then appear to be drunk. He talked quite sensibly and was quiet. In company with P.c. Hayward witness next proceeded to the house where Bingle resided. He was in bed but came downstairs. Bingle denied that he had been near the Old Lodge or seen Mr Boughton that day. Both defendants lived with their mothers, and neither of them was a ratepayer.

John Blick, Robert Rowles, Godfrey Driver, Owen Eley, Thomas King, Henry Bingle, labourers, Minchinhampton, were all summoned for committing to the same wall on October 30th. Thomas Ollerenshaw, golf club maker, Minchinhampton, was summoned for aiding and abetting the destruction of this wall.

Mr. Steele again brought forward the matter of the adjournment. He stated that neither of the defendants, would appear as he had been given to understand by Mr. Langley Smith that he would not oppose his application, and had therefore informed them they need not attend.

Mr Langley Smith denied that he gave his word.

The bench again refused the application, saying that he had plenty of time in which to get his defence up.

P.c. Reubenson stated that on October 30th, at about 11.30am, he in company with P.c. Hayward went to the Old Lodge and saw the defendants breaking up the wall. Bingle and King had a jar of beer and were handing it round to the men who were at work. As soon as the two constables came on the scene Ollerenshaw said "Say chaps, go on, you are quite right" He told them they would report them for damaging the wall, and Ollerenshaw replied " I know a d----- sight better than you do. We are ratepayers, and this is our property" Rowles added "This is Boughton's fault. We can't get any beer here" Witness told Ollerenshaw he should report him for aiding and abetting the others, by urging them on. Witness had heard Ollerenshaw say "Rip it out, Jack".

P.c. Hayward added that whilst Reubenson went to the telephone Blick broke into the workshop near the skittle-alley, with a iron bar.

Mr Boughton corroborated. He estimated the second day's damage at £4 10s 0d or £4 15s 0d.

James Dean also corroborated.

The Chairman said that the Bench had carefully considered the case, and there had been a great question whether they should not send all the defendants, in each case to gaol without the option of a fine. They felt that in the first case Bingle and Hyde acted purely out of malice to the landlord of the Old Lodge. In the second instance the case was particularly bad and almost amounted to conspiracy. If such things were permitted to go on there would be no law or order in the country. In the first case Bingle and Hyde would be fined £1 each, and would have to pay £2 towards the damage. With regard to the other case fines of £3 each would be inflicted, whilst defendants would have to contribute 12/6 each towards the damage.

Henry Bingle, who died in a Gloucester lunatic asylum in 1911, is also buried in the churchyard but in an unmarked grave, and nowhere near his parents!!