

FINDING POLLIE WELLS

Prologue: Miss Hooley or a White Poodle?



For many years we visited 'Pem', Mum's sister, (born Emily Honour, who never answered to 'auntie') at 4 Bridge Terrace, Shawford, near Winchester. After we had our three children the visits were more frequent, even extending to holidays. What was not to like? The riverbank was just outside, our own private beach, the stream our paddling pool. If you went out early enough, and I mean at dawn, you could even get field mushrooms for breakfast and watercress for your tea at a spot where the sparkling stream tumbled over the weir. Though that was in Uncle Tom's Day, twenty odd years before, when a teenage me was lucky enough to occasionally join him, and the spot reminded Pem of walking into the twenty third Psalm.

Before we went home Pem would tell me to call on her neighbour Miss Hooley who lived in the cottage next door, "As she always looks to see you," Pem claimed.

Miss Hooley resembled a white poodle. This is fact, established by a photo in a 'Jackie' magazine which Celia, our second child, happened to be reading. She maintains that she, in an Archimedean moment, spotted the likeness, and crucially, uttered it "out loud". Kevin, a year younger, equally adamant, insists he said it first. They were about seven and eight at the time. I don't think there were actual fisticuffs, but it certainly made waves

and even to this day, nearly 50 years later, the dispute rages, who spoke the words first, Molotov Cocktails at dawn.

On this one time when I went in to see her, Miss Hooley was going through ancient letters which she was tearing up with happy abandon. She hurled the shreds into the fire, which spat and hissed as they encountered the damp paper. Then the flames took hold and consigned the words forever to the ash of oblivion.

I was a keen convert to Family History, an endeavour in which I received fervent encouragement from Pem, whose own tales, as I would later discover, were somewhat economical with the truth, but that's another story. Now, in Miss Hooley's house, to witness such mindless destruction before my eyes, made my bones rattle.

Unfortunately, I was too late to stop most of the carnage, but all was not lost. On the table, I spotted a small plump envelope with an address written in obvious Victorian script.

"Oh, can I have a look?" I grabbed at it.

Not surprisingly, Miss Hooley was taken aback. She pondered awhile before answering, and obviously doubtful, said, "Well, I suppose so, if you must...." and then, "Why? It's just an old letter. I was going to burn it. I don't see why it should interest you," adding sharply, "or anybody else!" Then, slightly more mellow, said "They weren't famous or anything. Anyway, all the people in it are dead."

That this was probably the point was lost on her. Though I tried to explain the concept of family history, the resurrection of the common person who lived and died mostly unnoticed, she just didn't see it at all. The upshot was a tussle of two opposing minds, until finally, I wore her down. She remained reluctant, but eventually agreed I could take the envelope and read its contents at my convenience. It didn't matter that much to her, she said.

She changed the subject abruptly, much more concerned to criticise the original oil painting, a pastoral scene which flourished in a curly gilt Baroque frame on her sitting room wall. She knew I admired it and repeated her usual mantra inviting me to disagree. She would say crossly

“The perspective is all wrong.” We had expressed our opinions a few times already. And I thought “If you hate it so much, why don’t you give me that as well?” I rather entertained the possibility that she might leave it to me in her will, but of course she never did.



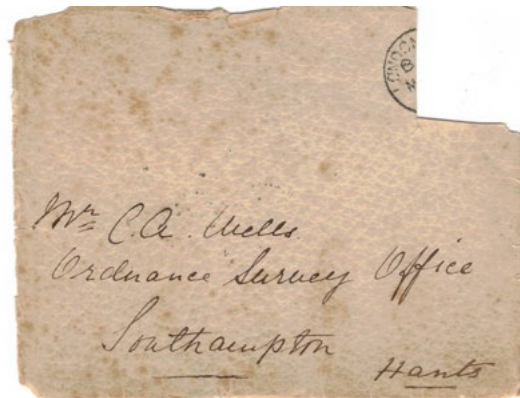
‘Miss Hooley’s cottage’ is in the middle of the terrace with ‘Pem’s’ next door, right.

Chapter 1: The Letter

*“Unknown to anybody,
I have been his wife since last September”*

In the dark evenings of the next winter, I transcribed the hard won ‘Miss Hooley’s letter’. Not very interesting? Ha! It was box office dynamite. Pure Gothic, like the first draft of a novel by a lesser Bronte: the death of a beloved mother, a family rift, first love ending in a disappointment, and finally an elopement with a mysterious A.N. Other.

The envelope with the precise handwriting is addressed to ‘Mr C.A. Wells, Ordnance Survey Office, Southampton, Hants.’ (A stamp collector must have carefully removed the Penny Black.)



London May 13th 84

My dear Charlie

Janey tells me you would like to hear from me although I daresay she has told you as much as I can, that is that I am married & though not to a wealthy man by any means, to one much better off than myself but to one who loves me. I believe as much as any girl ought to expect & though unknown to anybody, I have been his wife since last September. He is not a Christian neither does he profess to be but after a few I have known I prefer those who profess nothing. I am very sorry to say I have lost all faith in anybody who professes what they do not perform. God knows I tried some months after dear Mama's death to live a Godly life and was only ridiculed by those I love and do love better even than my husband, although Jane does not know it, neither do I wish her to, dear Charlie, she and Richard used to say such things to me, calling me the curate and such like, these were the things that made me indifferent to everything good and my only desire was to get married and away from them. I may perhaps feel too keenly & I do but none of us can help our feelings. I often feel unhappy because I believe I love only as dear Mama did and that was too much & I love you, Richard & Jane as no others on earth. Nor ever shall. Janey's unkindness I mean to repay by being as kind to her now as I can and doing all in my power to help her. I do not mean to tell you I have plenty of money but I have as much as I want. We should have more but my husband lost a lot a little while ago so I have to be careful in fact I have been trying to get some art needlework to do for that is a rare gift I have got & I am always happy when I am doing something, besides being a help. I should be so glad to have a pastime of my own as my husband is away so much, I have not enough to do. Why do you not get out of Southampton,

you would feel much happier Charlie, both you and Richard. The Southampton people are such cads that the very name of Gamblen that horrid woman has got some work of mine there now which cost me more than I could afford to lose and she would not return it to Miss Gordon when I sent for it. Nasty creature, I shan't forget her when she saw me with the ring my husband that is now had given me. She would not let Alfred have me and felt spiteful at me getting anybody else, she said "Mind you send me a piece of cake if ever you get married." She did try to say it sarcastically. These are the things and such a man as Dad which made me desperate and long to get away from everything connected with Southampton but I should never advise Janey to get married. My happiest time will be when I can have you & Richard to see me if you will come. I don't know what I should do without Janey now that the past is all forgiven but at times I think of the way she used to speak and act & then I have been as near broken hearted as it was possible for anybody to be. I ought to have had more sense than to have noticed her perhaps but hadn't so acted as I did. I am glad to say she has got more feeling for me [now] & her disposition has altered. She does not seem very comfortable at (illegible) but will soon get something better. I am looking out for something for her. If my conduct has appeared unkind to either of you I hope you have forgiven me. Please to keep this letter entirely to yourself. Don't let Richard see it, but give him my love. I could write much more, dear Charlie, but have not time now. I sent for Janey last night and she is not very long gone. She is so (? Illegible word) well.

With love, your sister Pollie.

London May 13th 1881

My dear Charlie

Jancy tells me you would like to hear from me although I dare say she has told you as much as I can, that is, that I am married & although not to a wealthy man by any means to one much better off than myself, but to one who loves me. The less as much as any girl ought to expect & although unknown to

The first page of the letter

Even with the limited research facilities available in the late 1970s, I hoped to find a marriage of a Mary Wells, or a Pollie/Polly, its pet form, at an appropriate date but was disappointed, though there were plenty of brides who did not tally; and London, the only address given, is a very big place to search for needles in haystacks. I thought I might find out more when the 1881 census became available which was anticipated in 1982. When it arrived the Wells family were easy enough to trace. In 1881 they lived at 1 Belvoir Mount Terrace, in the South Stoneham area of Southampton.

The father, Charles Wells, aged 60, was a baker, born at Sherborne, Dorset. He was married to Mary, also 60, originally from Norwich. Their children, all unmarried, had been born in Hampshire, and listed as mentioned in the letter: Charles ('C.A.') aged 23, a 'draughtsman, artisan', Mary, ('Pollie'), 22, a dressmaker, Richard, 18, a brass finisher and finally, Jane, aged 16, a staymaker. (This was a surprise. I did not expect to find them 'in trade'. I had imagined them as gentlefolk, or at least a slight cut above. Pollie was well educated. Miss Hooley was very ladylike.)

Mary Wells senior, 'Mama' of the letter, died in the March quarter of 1882, a year after the census was taken. She had formerly been Mary Elizabeth Boatwright who married Charles Wells in Southampton in 1856.

I combed their previous lives for clues, but none took me anywhere near to Pollie's elopement. I gained the impression that 'Dad' was something of a tyrant. I even traced the timid suitor, Alfred Gamblen and his mother, Anne, 'that horrid woman'. Alfred was a little younger than Pollie and was in the ship building trade with family connections to Ordnance Survey, so he might have been a friend of Charlie. (In 1883, he was married, perhaps to someone the formidable Mrs G. approved of.)

After this brief flurry, for three years I made no more progress. Then, for respite in an otherwise hectic time in our lives, I penned an article which was published in 1984, the centenary of the letter, in the Gloucestershire Family History Society Journal. I called it 'Ancestors in Search of a Descendant' hoping it would ring a bell with somebody. No response, so the thing went away again. Every time a new census was released, 101 years after the event, when those recorded are almost certainly dead, 1891, 1901, 1911, I would return to the Reference Library, hopes a-tingle. With my cubicle pre-booked, I would load a microfilm and wind an unwieldy spool on to an antiquated hand cranked machine.¹ Now it seems like a dark age. Try looking for a Mary or a Pollie, born in 1859 or thereabouts, with no surname, but possibly still Wells, living in the Metropolis. Nothing tallied. I concluded the marriage was a myth, like the one-word address: 'London'. Only an idiot would put herself through such torment every ten years. The lady did not want to be found. At last, in 2012, after the 1911 census came out, I gave up.

But.....during the lockdown of 2020/21, by then in my eighties and blind in one eye, I was attempting, for the nth time to clear out some of 'my stuff', so it will not be too much of a burden for those of my descendants who survive me; not by Miss Hooley's drastic method, but getting rid of the real dross, sundry notes pencilled on the backs of tatty envelopes, typewritten lists of 'good ideas', which had come to nothing, and other dead ends. But I do have files, of a sort, and in one, marked 'miscellaneous', I came upon Pollie's letter.

¹ 'Other People' would often put the spools back without rewinding, so the next person found them upside down or even inside out. Many a time, a new researcher could be found crying into tangles of renegade film until a librarian could be summoned to sort things out. One time as I exited a cubicle, a man emerged from the one next door. "'Ere", he said, "they'm all upside down. It don't 'alf 'urt yer neck trying to bend and read 'em." Poor man. I tried my best to get him to have another go, but he went off muttering.

Between times, family and social history research had entered a new era. Hope springs eternal. Would I have another go? You betchya!

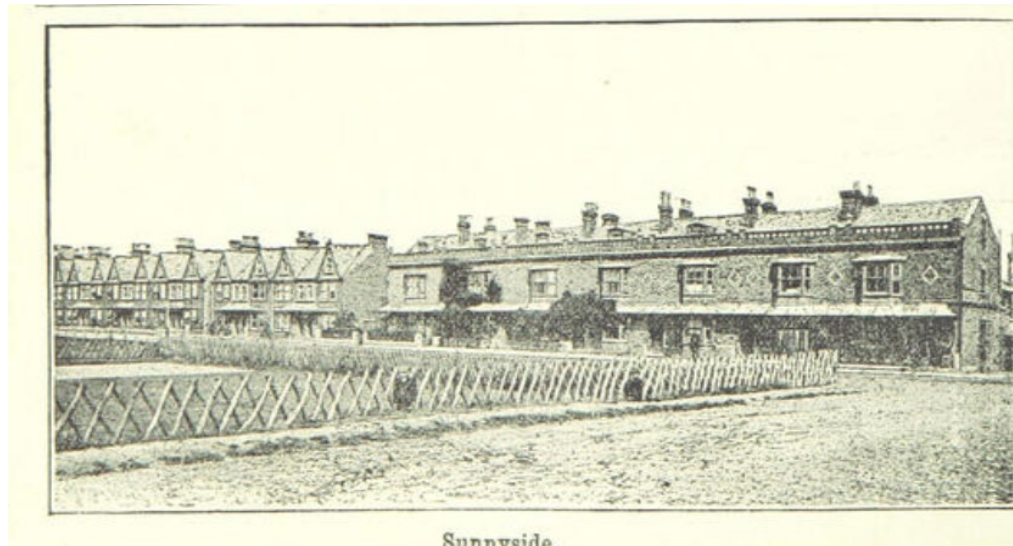
Chapter 2. Who was John G. Ashley?

'Herne Bay is a delightful spot'.

Herne Bay Illustrated, ca1900

For a few years I had subscribed to Find My Past, an indispensable finding aid, but so far I had withstood the temptation to join an additional organisation, called 'Ancestry', being too stingy, but also believing that one mighty organ would be as good as another. Covid changed everybody's life – we were unable to go out or have company, remember? Jigsaws, Knitting and Netflix flourished, and at last, to give myself a treat, I succumbed. I joined 'Ancestry'. I found the two organs complemented each other. On Ancestry many people have uploaded the fruits of their own research and though stern warnings suggest some contain mistaken conclusions, (true) the information is usually helpful, even when I disagree with some of the findings. To cut to the chase, I found Pollie almost at once; indisputably so it seemed, through the maiden surname of her 'dear Mama', the relatively unusual 'Boatwright'! Charles Wells married Mary Boatwright in Southampton right enough and their daughter Mary was born in 1859. So far, so good, but Mary junior, otherwise Pollie, our subject, was never officially married – as I had long suspected. How the ogress Mrs Gamblen would have licked her lips at such a delicious morsel! No marriage, but Mary E. Wells, the Pollie of the letter, now known as 'Marie Eliza,' had given birth to a son to whom she gave the middle name 'Boatwright'.

On 1st August 1884 Archibald John Boatwright Ashley was born to Marie Eliza Ashley, formerly Wells, and John Gilbert Ashley, a newspaper reporter, of 5 Sunnyside, Herne Bay, Kent, though the child was not officially recorded until six weeks later, 10th September 1884. Marie, she signed 'M.E.') registered the birth alone. My 'husband is away a lot', as 'Pollie' she had wistfully told Charlie in the letter. When it was written she was about five months pregnant, a condition which surely her recent visitor, sister Janey, must have remarked on.



'Sunnyside', where Archie, Pollie's son, was born in no. 5. Probably a row of guest houses.
(Picture from 'Herne Bay, Illustrated'. No date, but late Victorian era.)

Only one member of the Ashley family makes an appearance in the 1891 census, the boy, Archibald Ashley, by then six years old, born at Herne Bay, was living at 117 Victoria Terrace, Littlehampton with a woman called Eleanor F. Jackson, who headed the household. She was aged 38, born in Lancashire, of no occupation or marital status. In addition to Archie, there was another youngster in the house, Roderick Jackson, aged 13, born in Middlesex. The relationship of both these boys to Eleanor Jackson was 'N.K.' meaning 'Not known.' There was also a 16-year-old servant, Agnes McMahon.

By 1901, they had gone 'up North'. Archibald, by then 16, 'born Herne Bay, a visitor' was working as 'a teacher' at Southport, Lancashire, though still under the roof of Eleanor F. Jackson, 'aged 46, widow, living on her own means, born in Manchester.' Roderick Jackson, who was now identified as her son, was aged 23, born at Barnes, Surrey, a medical student. There was another person staying at the house, a 'hospital nurse' called Louise with an indecipherable surname.

On 5th September 1909, Archibald Ashley married Anne Catherine Henrietta Furst at All Saints, Southport. The address given, 17 Hartwood Road, is the same as that for Eleanor Frances Jackson in the 1910 Electoral Register.

By 1911, Archie, living with his wife in Staffordshire, had changed tack. He had abandoned medicine for a different vocation: he was a student of

theology. He was ordained in due course and his life from then on, as far as official records go, was straightforward. None of this information answered my questions regarding his parents.

So back to 'Ancestry'. Archie was not christened as a baby but as a three year old toddler in a double baptism with Roderick Jackson, aged ten, on April 26th 1888 at St John's, Bognor, Sussex.



The above, a misty facsimile of a poor copy, reads

Roderick, 10 years, son of William Oughton and Eleanor Frances Jackson, of Bognor, Captain in the Army

&

Archibald John, 3 years, son of [William Oughton, - deleted] John George and Maria Ashley, of Bognor, Gentleman.

Note: 'Maria' rather than Marie and 'John George' rather than John Gilbert.

With these new complications I thought it necessary to investigate the combined affairs of the Jacksons and Pollie or her 'husband'.

But.....before I embark on this trail, I have to impart some sad news.

Marie Ashley, [otherwise Pollie Wells] died painfully of peritonitis aged 27, on 3rd August 1886 at 5 Depot Road, Horsham, Sussex. Her death certificate describes her as 'the wife of John George Ashley, reporter'.

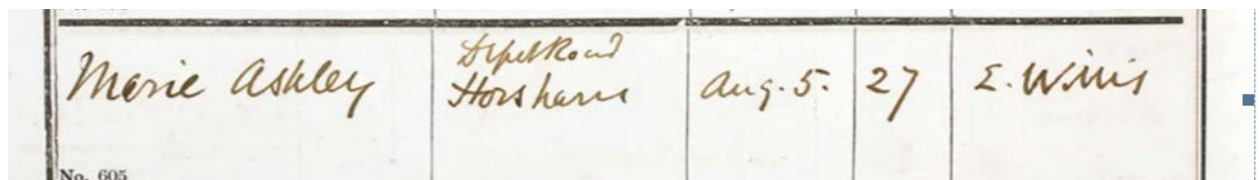
So this is a case where the principal character dies without warning before the end of the tale. This rarely, if ever, happens in a novel, but it is always

the way in life. So it was with Pollie. She was dead, but John Ashley, her supposed husband was not.

Ashley himself registered Pollie's death on 4th August, as 'John G. Ashley, widower of the deceased', of the same address.

So here for once, at the registrar's office, is the man himself, in flesh and blood, but there is a problem. There is otherwise no trace of him either as John George or John Gilbert Ashley, whether in parish baptisms, weddings or burials, in the official register of births, marriages or deaths, in wills, or in any census. And this is the only time he is known to attend in person in a particular place where he is also named. The fact that he is shown on Archibald's baptism entry, his name inserted in place of William Giles, does not mean he was actually present at the ceremony. Knowing what I now know about 'William Oughton Jackson' it is even possible that he was not in the church in person either. But I digress. William Oughton Giles is real. John G. Ashley does not exist anywhere else at all; apart from the death register, he is only ever identified by others.

'Marie Ashley' was buried the next day at St Mary's , Horsham. This is twenty one miles from Herne Bay.



The reason for this move to Horsham is likely to have its explanation in the birth of another child, Marjorie Oughton Giles, born a few months before at Birchington, two miles from Herne Bay, on 15th May 1886.

Chapter 3. Eleanor & Gertie

Having drawn a complete blank with John Ashley, I looked for Eleanor Frances Jackson, the *de facto* mother to Archibald Ashley with whom the boy lived from infancy until he was married.

She began life as Eleanor Frances Stavert in Salford, Lancashire on 11th May 1851, the third daughter of Robert Stavert, a cotton merchant,

(‘Manchester goods’) and his wife Sarah Ann, nee Nuttall, the daughter of a solicitor, who were married in 1843. (It was Robert’s second marriage: his first wife, Mary, had died on the Isle of Wight in 1841 leaving two young sons.) When the census was taken on 30th March 1851 for Cliff Point, Broughton, Sarah Ann was pregnant with Eleanor, therefore only two daughters are named on the 1851 census, Sophia and Janet, plus Robert’s sister, his mother-in-law and three servants. Eleanor Frances was christened at just over six months old at Manchester Cathedral, (where her parents had been married) on 27th December 1851. A few years later she had a younger sister, Gertrude.

On 11th August 1856 the Stavert family’s comfortable existence was brutally shattered by an accidental death. Robert Stavert, of the firm Stavert, Zigomala & Co of Manchester, aged 54, was drowned when swimming at Scarborough. He had been warned that the sea was ‘running high’ but had assured the bathing machine attendant that he was a strong swimmer.²



The Bathing Machine was pioneered in Scarborough as far back as 1787. The vehicle could be hired for a fee and towed out to sea. It allowed the bathers to change out of their voluminous clothing in privacy before slipping into the water. The Staverts would have been a typical target clientele, middle class, with the time and money to afford an annual seaside holiday.

² Various newspapers, 16.8.1856, Bolton Chronicle, Blackburn Chronicle &c.

After the tragedy, by 1861 the widowed Sarah Stavert and her daughters were living in Edinburgh with her sister-in-law. For Eleanor Frances, aged nine, it was the start of what would be a peripatetic life. In April 1867, her mother Sarah was staying in fashionable Clifton, near Bristol, perhaps visiting the historic Lido for health reasons. To no avail, for she died in Clifton and was brought 'home' to Charlton in Medlock, Lancashire for burial.

In 1871, two of Sarah's orphaned daughters, Eleanor Frances, 19, and her 16-year-old youngest sister Gertie, were living in Brighton, both girls described as 'Lady', and overseen by a Scottish governess, Margaret Thompson. In the next few years, the sisters, known correctly according to etiquette as 'Miss Stavert and Miss G. Stavert', were girls 'on the town' probably having given their duenna the slip. Evidently on the lookout for likely husbands, they attended frequent tea dances, and other social occasions and were even listed among the guests at a gala when the Prince of Wales, the future Edward VII visited Brighton.

It is notoriously difficult to pinpoint when and where people meet for the first time, but I can make a guess that it was during these few hectic years of social whirl that Eleanor and Gertie first encountered William Jackson Oughton Giles. This is the same man surnamed as Jackson, above, when the boys Roderick and Archibald were christened. It is worth noting again that his name was crossed out on Archie's record, and the name Ashley substituted. Meeting William Giles completely overturned Eleanor and Gertie's lives.



Chapter 4. Gallant.....or Bounder?

*Do not trust him, gentle lady, though his voice be low and sweet
Heed not him who kneels before thee, gently pleading at thy feet
Now thy life is in its morning, blight not this, thy happy lot
Listen to the gipsy's warning, gentle lady, trust him not.*

Traditional.



William Jackson Oughton Giles in Highland dress, wearing what appears to be the Jackson kilt.

(With thanks to Debra Michael Cohig for sharing this photo, stated to be W.J.O. Giles, 'Ancestry' 14.6.2011.)

William Jackson Giles, without the Oughton, which came later, was baptised at the age of three at St Barnabas, Birmingham on 17th August 1842, as part of a job lot christening of six children belonging to Benjamin Giles and his wife Cordelia, nee Jackson. Benjamin Giles was a little ahead of his time, a japanner, an artisan who lacquered decorative vases and other household articles in the Japanese style. A vogue for all things Japanese was already gathering pace, and would become wildly fashionable, especially after 1853 when Japan opened its mysterious doors to the West. Subsequently Benjamin would be described as 'an artist'.

On 20th July 1861, William Jackson Giles, aged 22, married Emmeline Eliza Smith, at St Stephen's Paddington.

CERTIFIED COPY of an Entry in a REGISTER of MARRIAGES, Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON.

SUPERINTENDENT REGISTRAR'S DISTRICT *Kensington*

1861. Marriage solemnized at *Saint Stephen's Church* in the Parish of *Saint Stephen's* in the County of *Middlesex*

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession and Father.
	<i>20th July 1861</i>	<i>William Jackson Giles</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Esquire</i>	<i>of the Parish of Saint Mary Abbot Kensington in the County of Middlesex</i>	<i>Benjamin Giles</i>	<i>Artist</i>
		<i>Emmeline Eliza Smith</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Spinster</i>		<i>45 Westbourne Park Villas</i>	<i>John Hooper Smith</i>	<i>merchant</i>

Married in the *Church of Saint Stephen's* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church*
by Licence by me, *Harvey W. Brooke*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *William Jackson Giles* in the Presence of us, *John Hooper Smith* *Emmeline Eliza Smith* *Julia Hooper Smith*

CERTIFIED to be a true Copy of an Entry in the Certified Copy of a Register of Marriages in the District above mentioned.
Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, SOMERSET HOUSE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the *13th* day of *April* 1877.

Even at his youthful age and during an era when social class was rigid, William Giles oozed confidence. Though of no occupation, he boldly styled himself 'Esquire' on the marriage lines, signifying his place in the World, which he believed was obvious, if only to himself. He aspired to be a gentleman, even the marriage 'by Licence' indicated status, and I guarantee he was working on the task of erasing any trace of Birmingham from his accent. The young Emmeline aged 18, showed she was a worthy match in ambition, recording her father as a 'Merchant' which might cover everything from a fleet of ships to a village shop. She was the niece of a horse dealer, with whom she had been living a month or two previously.

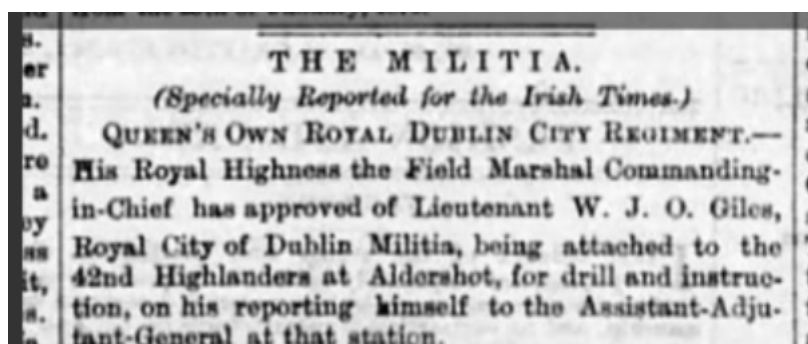
The couple soon had a daughter. Florence Jane Giles was born at Porteus Road, Paddington on 10th February 1862, and followed by a son, Clive Oughton, who appeared in June 1866. At the time of Clive's birth they were living in Birmingham; during the next few years they would spend a brief time in Coventry. By this time, William Giles, was unsatisfied with married life. He aspired to a career in the Army and in peacetime, thought his best chance lay in perpetually restless Ireland. When Clive was only six months old, he was off. He disembarked at Kingstown, (now Dun Laoghaire), the port of Dublin in mid December 1866. The passengers who were listed on arrival in the local paper were assumed to be gentry which suited Giles. In a few years his objective was accomplished.

He joined the Queen's Own Dublin Militia. This was not a regular force, but one which could be called upon to keep the peace at home and called into action abroad in time of war. For William Giles it was a match made in Heaven. He spoke and acted 'posh' and was of course commissioned as an officer.

The arrival of another son, born 2nd January 1869 was announced ten days after the birth in the Belfast Newsletter: 'to the wife of W.J.O. Giles, Lieut. of the Queen's Own Dublin Militia'. The name of the child's mother was not then given in such notices, so this is not exceptional, and it is possible, though unlikely, that Emmeline was with her husband in Ireland; if not, he must have made at least one visit back home to England when the child was conceived. Neither of the other two children had been announced at birth and perhaps William Jackson Oughton Giles, [hereafter WJOG] was showing off his position as an army officer. Sadly, the infant, named William Jackson Giles, after his father, did not live long. He died at Islington in London, in early 1870, aged one.

Following a pattern which would soon become familiar for WJOG's partners, in 1871, Emmeline, aged 27, was a single parent, living with the two surviving children in a shared house, 61 Barnsbury Road, Islington and working as a telegraph clerk. She employed a domestic servant, a woman from Birmingham, Margaret Arnold, probably as a necessity, to mind the children, allowing Emmeline to go out to work.

From 2nd February 1871, WJOG, the Reservist, was in England, called to training at Aldershot with the 42nd Highlanders as shown in the Irish Times, 8th February 1871.



This suited the ambitious William and there is no evidence he ever went back to Ireland. It is not altogether surprising to find him in 1871 at 42,

the Grove, Hammersmith, living alone but beyond his means. He was in permanent flight from his creditors. On 25th June 1872, the London Gazette listed his bankruptcy. On 13th December, from a different address 1, Bonchurch Road, North Kensington, 'Liquidation by agreement' of his affairs was announced, with, on 28th March 1873 '1/6d in the £ declared in the matter of proceedings for liquidation.'

It's an ill wind which blows nobody any good. At this vital moment international affairs conspired to give WJOG a temporary respite from his creditors. The Royal Dublin Militia, already in training at Aldershot, was called into active service with the 42nd Highlanders when the Third Anglo-Ashanti war broke out. Thus began WJOG's minor role in an equally minor war, which was part of the complex series of events which involved the entire continent and all the Great Powers of the day. It became known as the 'Scramble for Africa'.



Britain, having purchased the Gold Coast from the Dutch, formed a Protectorate ostensibly to defend the coastal Fante people from the powerful Ashanti Empire to the north. The British, anxious to avoid any interruption to trade, and keen to be shown, if belatedly, as 'the good guys' had a growing pre-occupation with stamping out slavery in the

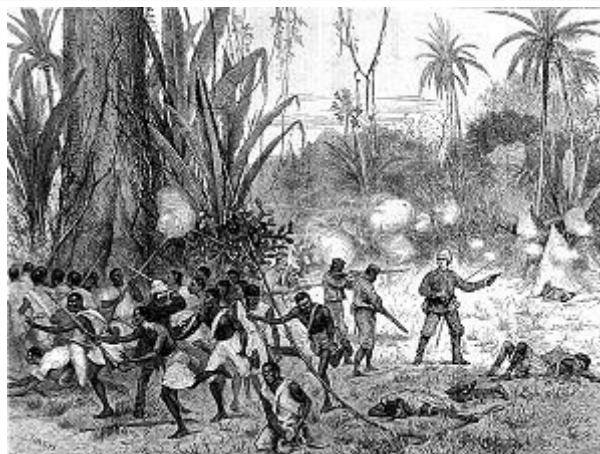
region. A fuse was lit when several European missionaries and their families were kidnapped by the Ashanti Empire and kept in captivity in Kumasi, which the Ashanti saw as their territory.

The Royal Engineers arrived at Gold Coast Castle in 1873, soon followed in January 1874 by General Garnet Wolseley with a task force of 2,500 British soldiers plus several thousand troops from the West Indies and Africa, including some local Fante. They were accompanied by the war correspondents H.M. Stanley (of “Dr. Livingstone, I presume” fame) and G.A. Henty.

The Royal Engineers, using local labour, hacked their way through 160 miles of forest, undergrowth and rivers, from the coast to Kumasi, building bridges and turning a single track into a major road capable of ensuring troop movements, with defensive stockades placed at ten-mile intervals along the way. Skirmishing began as they neared Ashanti outposts before the road was half-completed. Three battles were fought on the way.

The 42nd Highlanders, WJOG’s outfit, also known as The Black Watch, charged the enemy with fixed bayonets accompanied by the skirl of the bagpipes rendering ‘The Campbells are Coming’.

Some British accounts pay tribute to the hard fighting of the Ashanti at Amoafu, particularly that of their commander, ‘The Great Chief Amankwatia, an able tactician and a gallant soldier’, who was among those killed.



A bush fight as portrayed in The Graphic, 1874



British officers with a prisoner at Fomena, 1874, en route to Kumasi

The British arrived on 4th February to find Kumasi had been abandoned.



They were impressed by the size of the royal palace and its varied contents which included 'rows of books in many languages'. Hardly the property of the ignorant savages they anticipated. Nevertheless, they blew it up and torched the town leaving Kumasi a heap of smouldering ruins.



The burning of Kumasi portrayed by H.M. Stanley.

The war ended with the Treaty of Fomena in July 1874. Under the conditions the King of Ashanti was fined 50,000 ounces of gold to indemnify Queen Victoria for her campaign expenses³, promised to keep

³ This levy remained unpaid by the time of the 4th Ashanti War. By 1900, the Ashanti Empire was part of the British Empire.

the road open and allow all persons freedom to carry their merchandise unhindered from the Coast to Kumasi. The Queen also demanded an end to human sacrifice, Colonialism not being all bad.

With the campaign completed within two months, Wolseley returned home a hero and was showered with honours. British casualties were officially 18 dead from combat and 55 from disease, with 185 wounded.

WJOG, who was at Kumasi, acquitted himself well enough to be awarded the silver medal with clasp.⁴

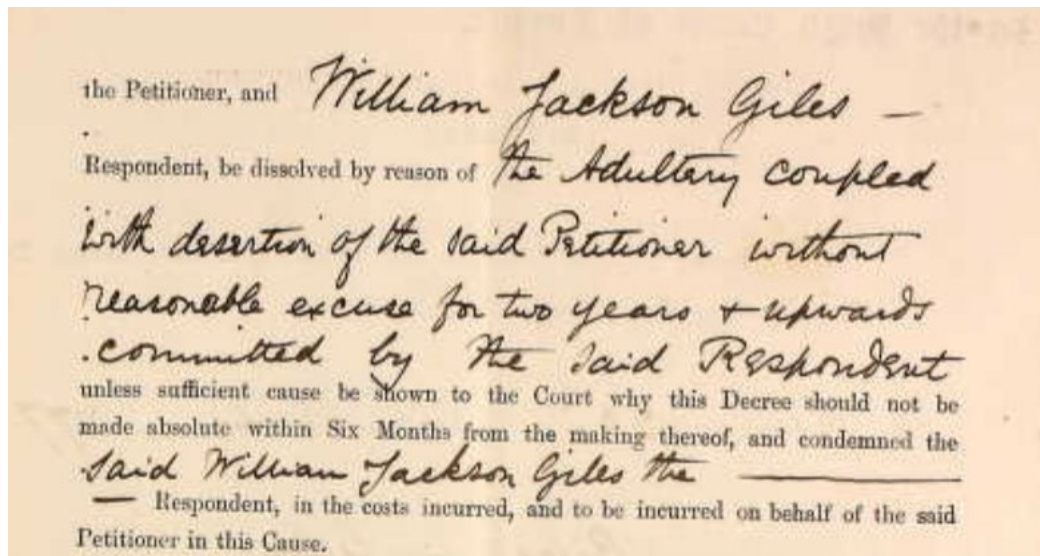
Revitalised, back home in England, and as a heroic returning soldier, WJOG made no attempt to return to his wife and children, but began to put himself about in London and Brighton.

On 9th August 1876, Emmeline Giles, then of 18, St Thomas Square, Hackney, sued WJOG for divorce. She stated that the respondent had deserted her more than two years before, leaving her and the children destitute and that within the current year he had committed adultery with two unnamed women. (These may well have been the sisters, Gertrude and Eleanor Stavert. WJOG later admitted that he had sometime lived with Eleanor as his wife; Gertie too was known as 'Giles otherwise Stavert' until her death.)

On 4th April 1877 the Military Gazette announced that WJOG from the Royal Dublin City Militia, had been raised to the rank of Captain, and transferred to the 1st Royal Lanarkshire Regiment. He was no longer active in the Army, but was seemingly regularly promoted to Major and Colonel. I suspect he may have awarded the titles to himself.

On the 20th April 1877, Emmeline was granted a decree nisi on the grounds of his adultery and desertion:

⁴ WJOG himself asserted this, (see Chapter 7) and online I have seen a contemporary copy which confirms it. Unfortunately, I lost the reference and have failed miserably to locate it since.



Emmeline had been awarded maintenance but asserted she had never received any. The divorce was not made absolute until the 13th November.

Chapter 5. On the Up

*As I walk along the Bois de Boulogne
With an independent air
You can hear the girls declare
"He must be a Millionaire."
You can hear them sigh and wish to die,
You can see them wink the other eye
At the man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo.
Popular song*

A month later, William Jackson Oughton Giles of Ham, Middlesex having evidently gathered a few influential friends was formally inducted into Oak Lodge, no. 190, of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England.

On 4th February 1878, a man shown as 'W.G.O Giles' made an application for a passport.⁵ This may be our man with a mistake in the hand written index. It is tempting to think it was prudent, if cowardly, for him to be out of the country at the time, as on 19th February 1878, a child named as Roderick Oughton Giles Jackson was born at 16 Merthyr Terrace, Barnes, London. This was Eleanor Stavert's son, the boy who, at the age of ten would later be baptised as the son of WJOG and Eleanor alongside Archie Ashley.

⁵ National Archives, FO 611

There is a possibility that WJOG, was abroad for a few months, perhaps in Africa,⁶ but by June he was back home in London, continuing his double life, he was out 'in Society'. On 29th June 1878 he attended the Royal Caledonian Ball and from the same year served on the Committee of the Wanderers' Club, Pall Mall. In October 1879 he mixed with celebrities at a particularly memorable banquet held by the club to honour two of the heroes of Rorke's Drift, Major Chard, VC and Surgeon Major Reynolds VC.



Surgeon Major Reynolds VC



Lieut (later Major) Chard VC

Absentees were not forgotten by the company which gave 'three hearty cheers for Major Bromhead VC and the other lads of the 24th.' Eleven VCs were awarded for the action at Rorke's Drift which was portrayed in the iconic film 'Zulu' (1964). Bromhead was played by Michael Caine and Chard by Stanley Baker.

On 4th June 1880 at 8 Priory Villas, Byrne Road, Streatham, Eleanor gave birth to her second child, Edith Mary, the daughter of Captain William Oughton Giles, Captain, of the 1st Royal Lanarkshire Regiment and Eleanor Frances Giles, formerly Stavert.

⁶ The dates do not quite fit, but see Chapter 7 where WJOG states he was in Africa 1879-80.

Superintendent Registrar's District <i>Wandsworth</i>										
Registrar's Sub-District <i>Streatham</i>										
1880. BIRTHS in the Sub-District of <i>Streatham</i> in the County of <i>Surrey</i>										
Columns:—	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
No.	When and Where Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth.
499	<i>Fourth June 1880</i> <i>2 Priory Villas</i> <i>Bygone Road</i>	<i>Edith Mary</i>	<i>girl</i>	<i>William Oughton Giles</i>	<i>Frances Oughton Giles formerly Stewart</i>	<i>Captain 1st Royal Lancers</i>	<i>Eleazer S. Giles</i> <i>Mother</i> <i>2 Priory Villas</i> <i>Bygone Road</i>	<i>Thirtieth July 1880</i>	<i>Augustus Taylor</i> <i>Registrar</i>	

On census night 3rd April 1881, WJOG, still the man about town, was staying, alone, at the Bath Hotel, Arlington Street, Hannover Square, London. In May 1882, he was playing at amateur dramatics, appearing as Pistol in a production of 'Falstaff' at the Club of the same name at Windsor Forest. ⁷

THEATRICALS AT THE FALSTAFF CLUB.

The first dramatic entertainment in connection with this beautifully appointed club took place on the evening of Thursday last, in presence of a large and fashionable audience, who, before the commencement of the proceedings, had abundant opportunity to admire the singularly beautiful act-drop, which is illustrative of Windsor Forest, and an episode in the career of the obese knight whose name the club bears. Very appropriately, the very first dramatic attempt at the Falstaff was made in a selection from Shakespeare's famous comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a couple of scenes at the Garter Inn and a room in Ford's house being chosen, and rechristened, for this occasion only, we presume,

"FALSTAFF."

Mrs Page	Mrs FOLGATION
Mrs Ford	Mrs JOHN DOUGLASS
Robin (Page to Sir John Falstaff) ..	MISS MICHAEL
Sir John Falstaff	Mr ARTHUR SKETCHLEY
Dr. Dolph	Mr HANS H. STEWART
Nim	Mr F. WALTER PARR
Pistol	Capt. W. DIGHTON GILES
Host of the Garter Inn	Mr F. P. CARELL

Mr Arthur Sketchley had consented to appear as Sir John, a part which he essayed some few years ago at the Gaiety, prior to his long journey to the Antipodes.

On 29th April 1883, WJOG, as 'Oughton Giles' was summoned for the second time by the Public Accountant under the Bankruptcy Act. ('My husband lost a lot', Polly had said in her letter.)

⁷ The Era, 27.5.1882

MAY 1883

THE BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1869.
 In the London Bankruptcy Court.
 To OUGHTON GILES, of The Junior United Service Club, 12, Charles-street, St. James's, in the County of Middlesex, Gentleman.—In the Matter of a Debtor's Summons issued against you by FREDERICK FOSTER CATES, of 23, Budge-row, Cannon-street, in the City of London, Public Accountant, TAKE NOTICE, that a Debtor's Summons having been granted against you by this court, the Court has ordered that the PUBLICATION of a NOTICE of the Granting of the Summons in the "London Gazette" and the "Morning Post" newspaper shall be deemed to be SERVICE on you of such Summons on the seventh day after such publication.
 The Summons can be inspected by you on application to this Court.
 Dated this 29th day of April, 1883.
 WILLIAM HAZLITT, Registrar.

.....but by the time this notice appeared, he had absented himself from the country. On 3rd May 1883, just four days after the summons was issued, he was at St Paul's Anglican Cathedral, in Valletta, Malta, being married to Beatrice Emma Sarah Ball, aged 23.

Page 36

1883 Marriage solemnized at the Collegiate Church of St. Paul, Valletta, in the Island of Malta.

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
71	May 3 1883	William Oughton Giles	27	Bachelor	Captain 3 rd Batt Highland Light Inf.	Valletta	Benjamin Giles	Gentleman
		Beatrice Emma Ball	23	Spinster		Valletta	Charles Philip Ball	Gentleman

Married in the Collegiate Church of St. Paul, Valletta, according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church, by *licence* by me, *Robert A. Hardy,*
Chaplain to Government.

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *William Oughton Giles* in the presence of us, *Robert Beck*
Beatrice Emma Ball *H. Jessie A. Hardy.*

*I hereby certify that the above is a correct & true copy of the Register of the above named Church & made by me this 3rd day of May 1883.
 Robert A. Hardy: 1883*

Back in 1871, ten-year-old Beatrice Emma, daughter of Charles Philip Ball, the Superintendent of an Assurance Firm, and his wife Isabella, lived with her parents and several siblings at Binfield Road, Lambeth. The family kept a domestic servant and a governess which suggests reasonable circumstances rather than untold riches, but by the time of his death eight years later, 30th July 1879, Charles had prospered. He left a considerable estate 'under £12,000', (probably about £100,000 today) with probate granted to his widow, Isabella Jackson Ball of the Clock House, Tooting.

Beatrice's mother was born Isabella Jackson Rogers. Though it is tempting to pursue this possible connection further, I will assume that the Balls were relatives of WJOG's own mother; either known to him already or he presumed kinship which allowed him to inveigle his way into the family's affections. After Charles Ball died they became especially vulnerable, the inheritance leaving them with sufficient cash to make them a worthwhile

target. He must have had considerable charm and captivated the young Beatrice. By the time they were married in Malta, she was about six months pregnant.

The couple's daughter, Beatrice Thornton Oughton Giles, was born on 8th September 1883 in London at Putney. In the same year, in November, Archibald Ashley was conceived and on 1st August 1884 was born to Marie Emma and John Gilbert Ashley at Herne Bay. Meanwhile WJOG's daughter with Eleanor, 'Edith Mary Jackson', aged six, sadly died on 10th June 1886 of 'Typhoid Fever & Haemorrhage' at 2 Albert Terrace, Bognor. The child's death certificate adds to the rest of the mysteries: neither parent seems to have been present. The informant who gave details to the registrar was an unknown stray 'Elizabeth Morse, present at the death'. The father was stated as 'John Jackson, retired Captain in the Army.'

Superintendent Registrar's District <u>Northampford</u>									
Registrar's Sub-District <u>South Bersted</u>									
18 <u>86</u> . DEATHS in the Sub-District of <u>South Bersted</u> in the County of <u>Sussex</u>									
Columns:—	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
No.	When and Where Died.	Name and Surname.	Sex.	Age.	Rank or Profession.	Cause of Death.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.
164	Tenth June 1886 Bognor W.S.D.	Edith Mary Jackson	Female	6 years	Daughter of John Jackson Retired Captain in the Army.	Typhoid Fever Haemorrhage Certified by W Conway Cooke M.R.C.S.	Elizabeth Morse Present at the Death 2 Albert Terrace Bognor	Eleventh June 1886	William Badges Registrar

On 15th May 1886 at Birchington, Kent, less than a month before Edith's death, Marjorie Oughton Giles, was born, the second daughter from WJOG's marriage to Beatrice. Birchington is about nine miles from Herne Bay, so it is understandable that it was necessary for 'Marie Ashley' to move. A few months later on 3rd August 1886, she died at Horsham, 90 miles away.

Nothing is known of her son Archie until the double christening on 26th April 1888.

I believe that WJOG, in all variations, plus John Jackson, and John Ashley were the same person.

It can only be speculation but it is possible that not long after Marie died WJOG brought the boy to Eleanor, with whom he was still involved, giving her a cock and bull story, something on the lines of.....

.... Oh dear! this is a really tragic case; the poor little boy is an orphan, whose parents have both recently died; his father, John Ashley, an old army chum, entrusted the child's welfare to me.....what's to become of him, sad little mite?

If this was meant to show Eleanor the compassionate side of WJOG'S nature then it succeeded, but she must have had her suspicions. Whether she believed the tale or not, she was evidently besotted with him. That she would come to have doubts about Archie's paternity may lie in the deletion of William Oughton's name on the baptismal record. All that is known for certain is that Archie lived with Eleanor up to the time he was married and there was definitely affection between them: he named his first daughter after her. Archie's education seems to have equalled Roderick's; both grew up to be professional men, Roderick as a Physician and Archie, an Anglican clergyman.

In 1887 'Major W.O. Giles' was named on the Electoral Roll for The Hatch, at Sunninghill, Berkshire, where he was then was living with Beatrice and their two daughters. He applied for a passport renewal and sometime towards the end of the year he went to Egypt, but whether this was with Beatrice or with another 'wife' is not known. On 25th February 1889 'Lt-Col W.J.O. Giles and Mrs Giles', are named in the local press among those newly arrived in Plymouth from Port Said and on the 27th the couple registered at the Burlington Hotel in Eastbourne. On the 1st March he was in London, enjoying himself among the nobs at the Scottish Club at a dinner given by the Earl of Mar. 'The Prince of Wales' piper, by special permission from His Royal Highness, played between toasts,' warbled the Globe newspaper.

By September, Mrs Beatrice Giles had had enough. She sued for divorce on the grounds of WJOG's adultery and cruelty. She listed a catalogue of outrages at the family home and elsewhere between 27th August 1888 and 6th September 1889.

At various dates supplied he allegedly subjected her to violent abuse:

'seized her violently by the throat, causing severe injuries;
'tore her watch from her wrist and after smashing it committed a violent assault';

'during another assault threatened to murder her and then commit suicide';

'attempted to tear off her wedding ring from her finger before blacking her eye';

'subjected her to violent abuse in front of her children and servants before throwing stones at her';

'seized a knife and threatened to cut her throat'.

Then there were the women. Between January and September 1889 the respondent was stated to have 'committed adultery with divers women', at the Charing Cross Hotel in London, and specifically on 28th September 'with Kate Cox when they stayed at 4 Weymouth Street, Portland Place as Mr & Mrs Graham.'

'Kate Cox' it would appear, was only a fleeting fancy, for WJOG had landed a bigger fish.

Chapter 6. The Philanthropist



St Scholastica, c480-543, discussing religious texts with her brother, St Benedict, at their meeting when she emerged annually from her convent. She is generally depicted with a crozier.

A decree nisi of the divorce between WJOG and Beatrice was approved on 14th February 1890, but WJOG was not one to hang about. Though the final decree absolute had not been issued (making him technically a bigamist) Colonel William Oughton Giles and Ellen Lees, were married in September 1890 at the Church of the Assumption in Sidmouth, Devon, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Ellen's previous marriage had been in the Presbyterian Church, and WJOG's two marriages in Anglican Churches. Under RC doctrine these did not exist, being considered 'null' in the eyes of God, not proper marriages.

The marriage was announced in the Exeter & Plymouth Gazette, 16th September 1890:

FASHIONABLE WEDDING AT SIDMOUTH.—On Monday the marriage of Colonel Oughton Giles, of the Highland Light Infantry, with Mrs. Ellen Lees, of Rock Cottage, Sidmouth, and Cadogan-square, London, W., took place at the church attached to the Roman Catholic Convent of the Assumption, Sidmouth. The Rev. Father J. Corbishley officiated. The high altar was magnificently decorated with flowers and candles. After the ceremony the nuns sang "We will be true to Thee till death," and as the bridal party left the church "The War March of the Priests" was played on the organ. The wedding presents were very numerous and costly. A large number of guests sat down to the wedding breakfast at the Knowle Hotel.

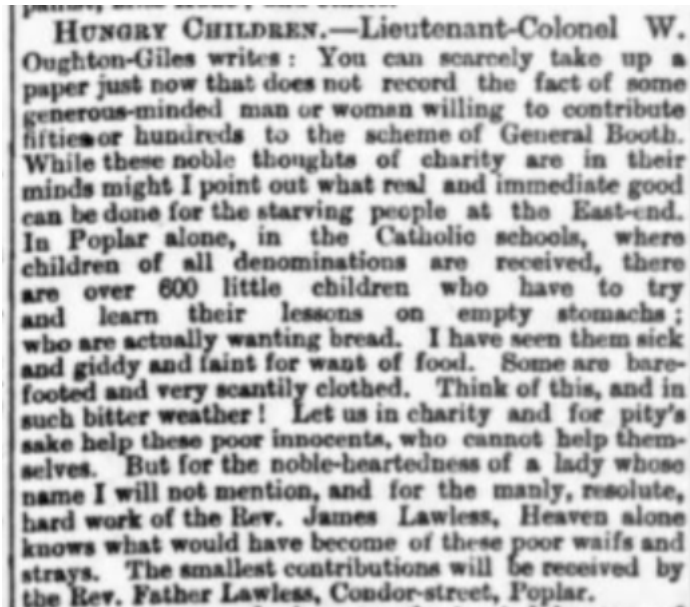
Ellen Lees, nee Preston, had been left a widow when Harold Lees, her husband, a landowner and Justice of the Peace died in a hunting accident on 21st October 1887 at Pickhill, in Denbighshire. He left estate valued at £198,078 13s 5d. Ellen was rich, even by today's standards, mega rich in WJOG's own. That was more like it.

Ellen seems to have been a cradle Catholic, but neither she nor her new husband had been noticeably religious before, or if they were, their activities have not been reported. Now Ellen gave full vent and WJOG went along with the apparent zeal of the recent convert.

His first known sally into the world of 'good works' was on 29th November 1890, when he wrote to the Daily Telegraph. His letter, under the heading 'Hungry Children' praises the efforts of General Booth of the Salvation Army, but calls upon other generous hearts to contribute to the cause of the starving children in the Catholic schools of Poplar in London's East End where, he said, 600 children tried to learn their lessons on empty stomachs.

"I have seen them sick and giddy and faint for want of food. Some are bare-footed and scantily clothed. Think of this and in such bitter weather! Let us in all charity and for pity's sake help these poor innocents who cannot help themselves. But for the noble heartedness of a lady whose name I will not mention and for the manly resolute hard work of the Rev

James Lawless, Heaven knows what would become of these poor waifs and strays. The smallest contribution will be gratefully received by the Rev Father Lawless, Condor Street, Poplar.”



HUNGRY CHILDREN.—Lieutenant-Colonel W. Oughton-Giles writes: You can scarcely take up a paper just now that does not record the fact of some generous-minded man or woman willing to contribute fifties or hundreds to the scheme of General Booth. While these noble thoughts of charity are in their minds might I point out what real and immediate good can be done for the starving people at the East-end. In Poplar alone, in the Catholic schools, where children of all denominations are received, there are over 600 little children who have to try and learn their lessons on empty stomachs; who are actually wanting bread. I have seen them sick and giddy and faint for want of food. Some are bare-footed and very scantily clothed. Think of this, and in such bitter weather! Let us in charity and for pity's sake help these poor innocents, who cannot help themselves. But for the noble-heartedness of a lady whose name I will not mention, and for the manly, resolute, hard work of the Rev. James Lawless, Heaven alone knows what would have become of these poor waifs and strays. The smallest contributions will be received by the Rev. Father Lawless, Condor-street, Poplar.

From then on, Colonel and Mrs Oughton Giles are to be found fulsomely reported attending many Catholic functions, generally making lavish donations.

(It will be recalled that ‘John Ashley’, WJOG’s suspected *alter ego* styled himself ‘newspaper reporter’. I have a theory that he was ‘a stringer’, one who is paid a fee when the snippets of varying interest he submits are used to fill small spaces in the press. As ‘Ashley’ this would have given him an irregular, if meagre, income, and the excuse to be “away a lot” as Pollie tells us in the letter. Again in later times, I suspect WJOG himself supplied much of the positive information about the Colonel and his wife particularly that which appears in religious newspapers.)

In November, Mrs Oughton Giles played a key part in an ‘impressive’ ceremony at St Scholastica’s Abbey, Teignmouth. A novice was taking ‘the black veil’ and Ellen as one of ‘the matrons’ had the honour of ‘delivering’ the new bride of Christ to the altar, having ‘accepted’ the woman from the Abbess, who, carrying a crozier, headed a procession of nuns. Meanwhile, WJOG watched the proceedings from ‘the sanctuary’ along with high ranking clergy.⁸ Pure Cecil B. de Mille.

⁸ Western Times, 19.11.1890

Public adulation for Colonel and Mrs Oughton Giles continued for their generous financial support of Abbey and Priory funds (they guaranteed ground rent for a year to St Peter's Priory) as well as making donations to other causes. One of these provided Catholic literature to lighthousemen working in remote stations which may or may not have provided a welcome diversion. The Colonel must have greatly enjoyed the limelight, spending his wife's funds.

In a secular capacity WJOG, (who, remember, had twice been declared bankrupt) had recently been appointed, as, of all things, Master to the Guardians of the Chelsea Workhouse. He is variously reported in attendance at routine meetings and personally lobbied vigorously and successfully in a campaign for the Chaplain to receive a stipend.

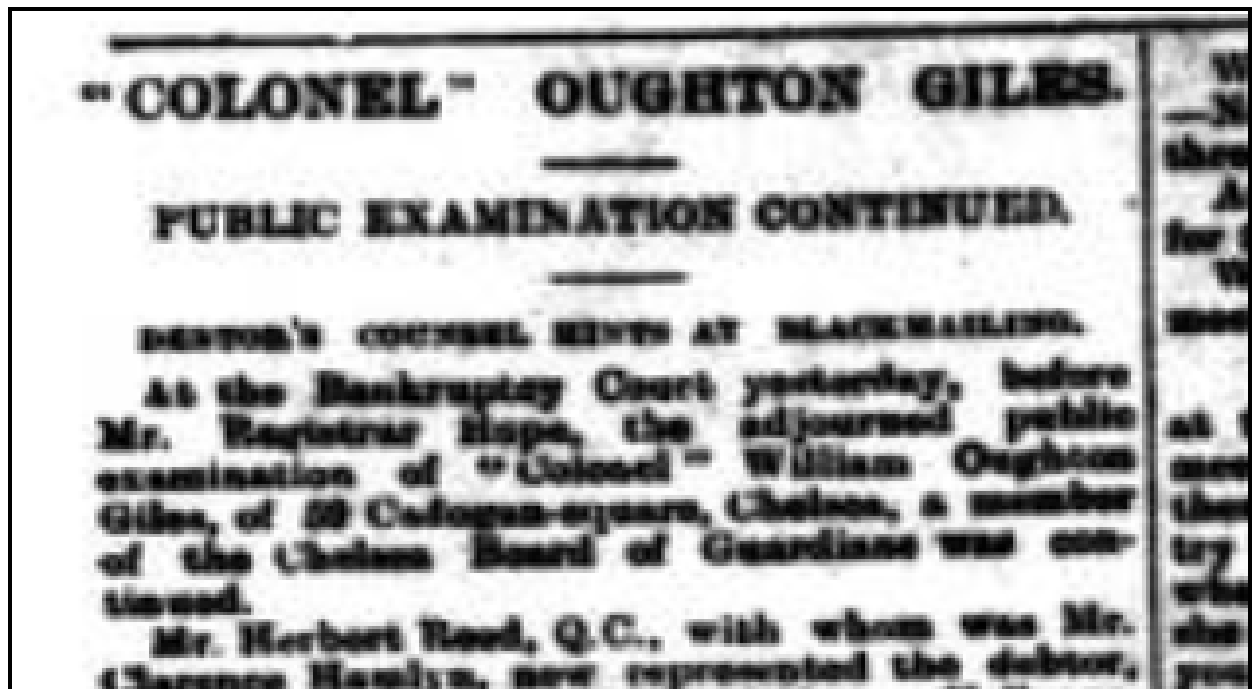
His must have been oblivious to the fact that with all this publicity, his distinctive name was bound to attract attention. A storm was gathering with Nemesis waiting in the form of an old flame.

Chapter 7. *The 'Outing' of Colonel Oughton Giles*

*I'm Burlington Bertie, I rise at ten thirty
And saunter along like a toff
I walk down the Strand with my gloves on my hand
Then I walk down again with them off
I'm Bert, Bert, I haven't a shirt
But my people are well off you know.
Nearly everyone knows me
from Smith to Lord Roseb'ry,
I'm Burlington Bertie from Bow.
(Popular Music Hall song)*

On 10th January 1893, the London Evening Standard reported that Lieut-Col. Oughton Giles of Montpelier Street, Brompton Road, of no occupation, had been served with an order of Bankruptcy.

Worse followed on 10th February when the Chelsea News & General Advertiser published what then passed for a banner headline:



There followed a transcript of the hearing of the Public Examination of 'Colonel' Oughton Giles, 29 Cadogan Square, Chelsea, a Master of the Chelsea Board of Guardians. The inverted commas are particularly damning. The 'Colonel' was unmasked as a fraud.

Various solicitors appeared for the parties concerned including one for 'a lady creditor for a large sum named in the course of the proceedings.'

The newspaper account which follows is reproduced verbatim

The 'Colonel' admitted he had no right to the title by which he is generally known, had never been in the army, but once had been in the militia. He had never at any time had an independent source of income but had tried to make a living on the Turf. He had of late lived on allowances from his wife, a lady of large private means but since the discovery of other transactions with another lady (said now to be living abroad) to whom he was once engaged to be married and from whom he had borrowed money, the sum owing being £8,000. The Debtor's liabilities were £11,413. 13s. 11d, his assets Nil.

'When the case was called Mr Oughton Giles stepped into the box looking smart and well groomed as ever, every inch a soldier.'

Official Receiver, [from here shown as O.R.]: You have told us your name is William Oughton Giles. Is not your full name William Jackson Oughton Giles?

WJOG: Well, I believe it is but I have dropped the second name for a great many years. I have never gone by it. There are family reasons for this.

OR: But any proceedings that may have been against William Jackson Oughton Giles would refer to you?

WJOG: Unquestionably.

OR: You filed a petition for Bankruptcy in April 1873?

WJOG: I believe that is so.

OR: Your liabilities were then £1,111 and your assets £80?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: You paid compensation of 4 shillings in the pound. Or rather, it was paid by your friends?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: The principal creditor was Mrs Boyd, £300.

WJOG: Yes.

OR: An adjustment in Bankruptcy June 1881, was rescinded the same year?

WJOG: Just so.

OR: A further adjustment in your own petition, May 1883?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: Your principal creditors then were a Miss Jackson, £1,000 and a Miss Harrison, £1,300, money lent.

WJOG: Yes.

OR: Under these proceedings you were described as an officer in Her Majesty's Army. Were you a Captain in the Army?

WJOG: No Sir, in the Militia.

OR: What Regiment?

WJOG: The Lanarkshire Regiment.

OR: Did you under these proceedings disclose a claim of £8,000 by a Miss Stavert?

WJOG: No, I did not.

(Miss Gertrude Stavert, of the Hotel des Isles Brittanique, Nice, spinster, is the lady who made the present claim of £8,000.)

OR: Why not?

WJOG: She wrote me a letter at that time saying I owed her nothing.

OR: Did you file her name under the list of creditors?

[Here, WJOG went on to explain that he did include her name, but that it was struck out on the advice of the Bankruptcy Clerk. He stated the Clerk told him "If that is the case then you cannot put her name in." **OR** asked whether he still had the letter. You can guess the answer.]

WJOG : I have lost it since.

OR: Under the present circumstances the largest creditors are Miss Stavert for £8,000 and Mrs Giles for £3,000?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: You told me that 15 or 20 years ago your only source of income was the Turf?

WJOG: If I may explain, I was a friend and adviser to Mr Gritton and practically managed his racing stud. My income fluctuated as such incomes often do. If I won it was very large indeed. I might be in funds of three or four thousand pounds in one quarter and in the next be unable to pay my differences.

OR: Did you invest any of your winnings?

WJOG: No.

OR: The monies you borrowed from different ladies, was that for living or for Racing?

WJOG: For Racing.

[In answer to whether he had a bank account, WJOG named several accounts at different banks, but agreed that all of them were overdrawn, but for small sums, in each case about £50.]

WJOG: I had no dividends that I can recollect.

OR: Messrs Drummond, when you banked with them received dividends from your account upon certain stocks and securities?

WJOG: They were the property of Miss Stavert. I entreated her to put them under her own name.

OR: I put it to you you received certain checks and received dividends.

WJOG: Yes for her. I paid them to her.

[Here the Registrar asked whether Miss Stavert was still living. He was assured she was and that she had proved her claim.]

OR: How much did you receive from her altogether?

WJOG: I do not remember. It was 18 or 20 years ago.

OR: Did you sell any of the securities that belonged to the lady?

WJOG: Yes. For her.

OR: Were you trustee for her?

WJOG: You are asking me ticklish questions which I cannot disclose without I disclose the relations between the lady and myself which I should regret to do.

OR: Did you make any payments to Miss Stavert out of the monies you received for her?

WJOG: For household expenses, horses, carriages and so on.

OR: Did you pay any money to her?

WJOG: If she said "I want £100" or "I want £200" I would draw it and hand it to her.

OR: There are payments through the account at Drummonds to Mrs Cordelia Giles.

WJOG: Stavert, not Giles. It was the sister of this lady

OR: Were you married at this time?

WJOG. No sir.

OR: Did she pose as Mrs Giles?

WJOG: She did sir, but I wish to spare the lady in this matter.

OR: Was there at this time a Mrs Giles in existence?

WJOG: There was an intimacy between myself and her. For whom I had and still have the deepest respect. These payments were to her.

OR: Do you tell me the payments to Mrs Cordelia Giles were really paid to Miss Stavert?

WJOG: They were paid to the lady with whom I was then living.

OR: And this was Miss Gertrude Stavert?

WJOG: She used my name as Mrs Giles.

OR: The sums paid to Mrs Cordelia Giles were the same as paid to Miss Stavert?⁹

WJOG: On my word as my recollection goes.

OR: When you were sued on the debt of £3,000 in 1883, you defended?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: Were you at that time in receipt of any income?

WJOG: None whatever. I had an allowance of £300 a year from my wife.¹⁰

OR: And you consented to judgement and gave bills of £4,000?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: What was your expectation of being able to pay them?

WJOG: I was in terrible straits at this time. I personally had no chance of meeting the bills, but rather than what was then threatened I said I would give the bills and do my utmost, with my shoulder to the wheel to pay them off. I appealed to my wife who said "Will you go into that business for which you think you are fitted?" I said I would and she went to her relations to give me money to go into business. They said I must first disclose all my liabilities. I may have deceived my wife for the moment but when I was dealing with her friends I disclosed the liability for £4,000. When they knew I had made a mess of things, they said, "We will have none of you." My very wishing to do right by Miss Stavert had been the undoing of me.

OR: And did you go into business?

⁹ 'Cordelia' was WJOG's mother's name

¹⁰ This was Beatrice Giles

WJOG: No.

OR: What was the business you wished to go into?

WJOG: The wine trade.

OR: And the capital was to be supplied by your wife's relations?

WJOG: Yes.

OR: Have you paid anything in respect of the bills?

WJOG: Nothing at present.

OR: You gave some other bills to Mrs Beatrice Giles. When?

WJOG: At the end of 1883. She said I have advanced you money and if anything happens to you I shall be in a very bad position. You should give me £3,000 and probably my friends will discount them and trouble you no more. In full confidence I gave her the bills and I am sorry I have to disclose it.

OR: Has it been discounted?

WJOG: I cannot say sir. It was never hinted when I gave Mrs Giles the bill that I would be called upon to pay it. It was only security for her in the event of anything happening to me. Among her friends she has an uncle who is very rich.

(In an abrupt change of subject) the **OR** asked

Have you ever been on Active Service?

WJOG: Yes. In the Franco-Prussian War and in the Ashantee Campaign, 1873-4 on the staff of General Colley who always reported well of me. I had the medal and clasp for Coomassee. I was in Africa 1879-80 and worked there until I was a skeleton.

OR: Could you tell me the dates more particularly?

WJOG: In '74 I returned from Ashantee and had the questionable pleasure of meeting Miss Stavert. I went out to Zululand in July 1879 and returned in September 1880. I have not since been on Active Service.

[NB. Maybe WJOG was economical with the truth here. If he was in Africa in July 1879, then three months later according to the London Evening Standard, dated 18th October that year, the previous evening 'Captain Oughton Giles' had been at the Wanderer's Club, Pall Mall, where he drank the Loyal Toast at the banquet to honour two VCs, Maj. Chard and Sgt Maj. Reynolds. He may of course have gone to Africa in July, returned to England and immediately sailed out again, but at a time when travel was not almost 'instant' as it is today, this seems unlikely. By 3rd April 1880, the Hastings & St Leonard's Observer recorded him 'in uniform' at a 'fashionable fancy dress Ball' at the St Leonard's Assembly Rooms, Sussex. It will be remembered that he had obtained a passport in 1878 so maybe he did a certain amount of independent coming and going; it would have suited WJOG to have suggested he was on 'special missions'. With WJOG nothing would surprise me.]

At this point Mr Vallance, solicitor for Miss Stavert, then asked WJOG as to his rank and entitlement. The Registrar cut this line of questioning short: "We have had all this."

Mr Vallance: I wanted to ask if he had given himself out as Colonel Giles to the World. (to the Debtor) Was it at your request and not Miss Stavert's that the money was paid into Drummond's Bank in your name?

WJOG: At her request.

Vallance: Did you not suggest to the bank that you open an account in her name?

WJOG: No. Never.

V: The sums you paid to Mrs Eleanor Giles. For whom were they?

WJOG: I don't remember. Probably household expenses. Jewellery, dress or similar.

V: Were you not living with Eleanor, Miss Gertrude Stavert's sister, as Mr & Mrs Giles? And were the payments to her?

Mr Reed, (solicitor for Debtor): This is a scandalous abuse of examination. This lady has waited until Mr Giles has married a rich woman and now for the first time she brings this forward?

V: Were these payments made to her sister with whom you were living at the time?

Registrar: He has already said "No".

V: Were you not manager for a Birmingham firm at one time?

WJOG: I may have done something of that kind in my early days.

V: Where are you living now?

WJOG: At 24 Montpelier Street.

V: With your wife?

WJOG: I don't ask you whether you are living with your wife.

V: Have you a residence at Slough?

WJOG: Never was there in my life. I am driven from pillar to post till I am glad to put my head in any place.

V: The probability of your paying these bills to Miss Stavert ceased when your wife found out what you had done?

WJOG: I have said my wife's relations found out I had liabilities and would not start me in business.

(This concluded the cross-examination on behalf of Miss Stavert.)

(**Mr Reed** then questioned his client who said that when his association with Gertrude Stavert ended he made an allowance to her, which would only terminate if she met someone else. She made no call on him when

he went into liquidation in 1883, and only came forward when he married his present wife, a very rich woman.)

Mr Reed: She found it out? She wrote to your wife threatening an exposure unless she paid?

WJOG: Yes. I do not want to say anything harsh about her.

R: Tell me about the discontinuance on the allowance you made her.

WJOG: She said she was going to marry a rich man and would not need the £150 a year I paid her. I said "Goodbye, and God be with you." After ten years she found I was married and wrote to my wife. When the action was brought in 1892 all imputations were withdrawn on both sides.

R: You were anxious to avoid a scandal?

WJOG: Unquestionably.

R: And your wife refused to be blackmailed?

This question was not answered. Then **WJOG** said

"I shall to the best of my ability pay all these bills, and in this I shall be aided by a very good friend indeed, and that is my wife."

The examination then concluded

[NB. When WJOG refers to 'my wife' he generally means Beatrice. The questions asking if he lived with his wife, the wife who refused to be blackmailed and the wife who was his "very good friend" is Ellen.]

But by the date these details were reported in the newspaper, WJOG had departed abroad, though not to get married as had been the case with his previous bankruptcy proceedings. This time he was in a vast throng which included some very big noises. On 13th February 1893 he left London by special train, on a Pilgrimage to Rome, with a great many of the English Catholic hierarchy, headed by the premier Roman Catholic layman in England, the Duke of Norfolk.

Then, you would never believe what happened next if it was not preserved in black and white.

From the *Pensione Gianelli*, where he was staying in Rome, WJOG fired off a complaint to the editor of the Westminster & Pimlico News:

“Sir, -

“I regret to say that my attention has just now been called to a report in your paper..... the facts on which you comment with undue criticism on my bankruptcy which lately took place. The facts as stated which I have read are not as were elicited in court on oath.

“On the contrary I swore on my oath that I held the rank of Lieut-Colonel and had seen a great deal of active service. And also that I had never benefited by the claim of £8,000, a claim of 20 years ago, which was characterised by my Counsel as disgracefully blackmailing, an opinion on which the Judge did not dissent. My income at times has been a very large one. My debts other than this claim are trifling, every one of which in due course will be paid.

“I passed my public examination without one word of censure from His Honour the Judge, and not a single creditor other than the solicitor who represented the claimant made the slightest opposition or said one word against me. Exactly the reverse was the case, for I had, it was felt, the entire sympathy of the general *bona fide* creditors. Thus, in simple justice, I request you publish this letter.

“I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
W. Oughton-Giles
Lieutenant-Colonel.”

The man certainly had *chutzpah*.

To the Editor.

Sir,—I regret to say that my attention has been but just now called to a report in your paper of the 26th of January, in which you comment with undue criticism on my Bankruptcy, which lately took place. The facts, as stated in your paper, which I have read, are not such as were elicited at the Court on oath.

On the contrary, I swore on my oath that I held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, and that I had seen a great deal of active service, and also that I had never benefited by the claim of £8,000, a claim of 20 years ago, and which was characterised by my Counsel as disgracefully blackmailing, from which opinion His Honour the Judge, on reading the claimant's letters, did not for one moment dissent.

My income at times has been a very large one.

My debts, other than this claim, were comparatively trifling, every one of which will in due course be paid.

I passed my public examination without one word of censure from His Honour the Judge, and not a single creditor, other than the solicitor who represented the claimant, made the slightest opposition or said one word against me. Exactly the reverse was the case, for I had, it was felt, the entire sympathy of the general *bona fide* creditors.

Therefore, in simple justice, I request you to publish this letter.

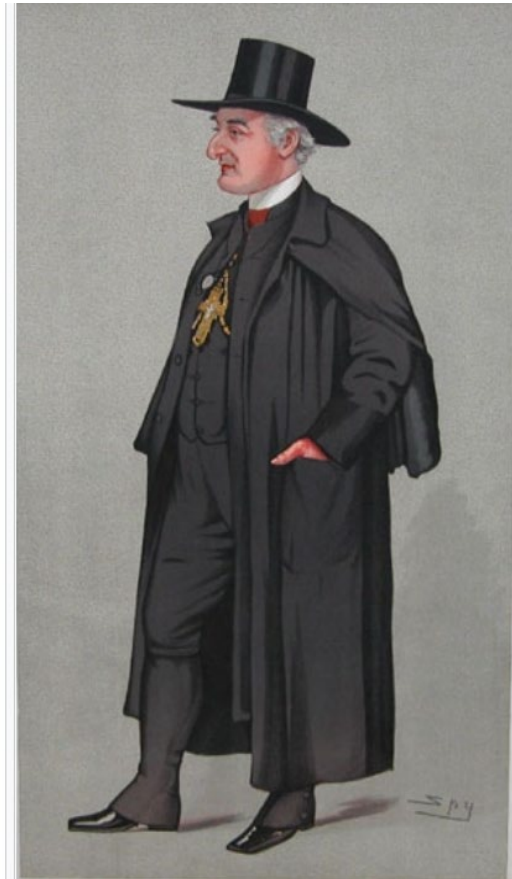
I am, sir,
Your obedient servant,
W. OUGHTON-GILES.
Lieutenant-Colonel.

Pension Gianelli,
15 Via Ludovici Roma.
8th March, 1893.

WJOG's letter dated 8 March 1893. Note that the Hyphen which comes and goes, is becoming more frequently used.

Chapter 8. Lazarus Rising Again

It must be that WJOG's version of events, that he was the innocent dupe of grasping women, was quickly swallowed by Ellen; he was restored to favour within months. She probably settled his debts and the couple's benefactions increased. This brought them immense favour within the Roman Catholic Church and their continuing rise even took them into the orbit of the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster himself.



Cardinal Vaughan by Leslie Ward, from the magazine Vanity Fair, 7 January 1893.

As early as 10th June 1893, WJOG, as reported by The Tablet, the RC newspaper, was on song, appearing at St Peter's Priory, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester where Mrs Oughton-Giles was due to lay a foundation stone.

'The Colonel made an amusing speech. He said he found himself on the horns of a dilemma; if he praised his wife he would be praising himself – that is his *better half*. Addressing the Prior, he said it was a difficult undertaking to give thanks to those who had already given so generously in that it was premature; he felt sure they would want to give again.' [Applause]

'A pleasant time was then given to conversation with the entertainment brought to a close by the Midgets' Band.' [Such 'curiosities' were popular in Victorian times, though seem bizarre to modern eyes, especially in conjunction with a religious event.]

In September, 'Colonel Oughton Giles of Ascot' was in Portsmouth, where he and another gentleman presented stained glass windows to the

Catholic Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. The Cathedral was then still new, having been dedicated only in 1882. The stained glass windows unfortunately suffered irreparable damage in the blitz of 1941.

In October 1894, Cardinal Archbishop Vaughan who was suffering from an unspecified illness was a house guest of WJOG and Mrs Oughton-Giles at 'their seat', Ravensbury, Ascot. His condition was reported as 'still far from reassuring to his friends'.¹¹ However, these worries proved unfounded, the Cardinal rallied and three days later on the 13th of the month he was well enough to preach at the nearby Franciscan Mission and Priory during the Feast of St Francis. His subject, equally valid today, evoked the spirit of the saint, "to help us cope with the evils of our age".

This was a red letter day for the Oughton-Giles who again hosted the event at Ravensbury, at which many Protestants also attended.

Ellen Oughton-Giles, who apart from her religious activities, was a keen supporter of women's rights and a Suffragist, took a house in London's Kensal Rise in April 1895. This allowed her to devote time to her latest project, a settlement for girls. As she had no children of her own, this may have satisfied a deep-seated need. Meanwhile, Mammon once again entered WJOG's life when he saw a chance to make money of his own. The discovery of gold in Australia, and the consequent Gold Rush was almost half a century old, and albeit slightly late, WJOG, went into the prospecting business. Undoubtedly helped with capital from his wife, he became one of four directors of a group whose first advertisement appeared on 1st April 1895.



The enterprise offered shares in a gold mining venture at Kilbarra in Western Australia. The date of the notice, All Fools Day, though

¹¹ This, surprisingly, was reported on 10.8.1894 in the Aberdeen Free Press, quite a distance from Ascot!

coincidental, was itself ominous; but the name of the company - the 'Just in Time' Goldmines - carries a whiff of panic. What could possibly go wrong?

Chapter 9. 'Just in Time' & other stories

By that Autumn WJOG and Ellen decided they deserved a break and chose to go to Bristol. The magazine *Clifton Society*, 12th September 1895, includes their names among the worthies currently staying at the Clifton Down Hotel. Though the era of 'taking the waters' at Hotwells had passed, the Hotel, in Sion Place, near the marvel of Bristol's Suspension Bridge, was a byword for comfort and luxury.



(Clifton Down Hotel, 1880. Copyright Bristol Archives.)

In February 1896 canvassing for the 'Just in Time' was in full swing and advertisements appeared in newspapers from North to South of the island of Great Britain.

**THE JUST IN TIME GOLDMINES
Limited**
Proposal to make a Pro Rata Allotment to Subscribers
CAPITAL £500,000
Australian Gold Trust Limited
Shares at £1 each, 250,00 at par of which
50,000 have already been allocated
Payable 2/6d on application, 2/6d on allotment
5 shillings 2 montha after allotment
And Balance not exceeding £10
As required at intervals not later than 3 months
The Directors:
The Rt Hon Earl of Donboughmore,
(Chairman of Colonial Goldfields Ltd) [Chairman]
Lt. Col. W. Oughton Giles
(Director, Hampton Goldfields Ltd)

Three more directors were named, plus bankers and solicitors. An anonymous hack (WJOG himself?) issued an endorsement in the British Australasian, 20th February 1896.

I regard this enterprise as altogether a most promising one, and I shall be surprised if the shares are not at a respectable premium before many weeks are over. I am sure the numerous signatories, all shrewd business men, who planked down £500 each before any prospectus was issued, would not have associated themselves with this concern had they not the utmost faith in its future and every confidence in the board of directors, which includes the Earl of Donoughmore, Lieut.-Colonel W. Oughton-Giles, Mr. Ernest C. Haines, Mr. Howard C. Parkes, and Mr. T. Columbus Smith.



The 5th Earl of Donoughmore, 1848-1900, an Irish Peer who spoke in the House of Lords in favour of Home Rule, portrayed here in 1870, another drawing by Leslie Ward, for Vanity Fair.

In April 1896, Mrs Oughton-Giles attended the AGM of St Joseph's Foreign Missionary Society at Mill Hill. The next month in May, WJOG played a part in the dedication of an altar in the Catholic Church at Kilburn and in August, Colonel & Mrs O-G attended the Church of the Holy Redeemer, at Upper Cheyne Row, Chelsea. On October 24th Mrs O-G alone, was among the large congregation at the church for 'the departure of the missionaries' to Uganda, Punjab and Borneo.

After this 'solemn occasion' the couple abruptly disappear from the religious whirl they had inhabited so prominently. Ellen returned to the country having taken up a new pastime, breeding and showing dogs, which perhaps satisfied her maternal instincts, the canines possibly being less problematic than the London teenage girls. As a female dog breeder, she remained highly newsworthy. As for WJOG himself, he was absent from the papers for over a year.

On 9th December 1897 there was a 'real' news item in the Liverpool Mercury. WJOG volunteered a statement at a London enquiry concerning the activities of the Australasian Gold Trust Limited. The piece, under the heading 'A Nobleman's Defection' concerns the resignation of the Chairman, the Earl of Donoughmore, 'having deserted the company at the time of its distress'.

**AUSTRALASIAN GOLD TRUST
LIMITED.**

A NOBLEMAN'S DESERTION.

The Earl of Donoughmore having resigned the chairmanship of the Australian Gold Trust Company, Limited, Mr. T. C. Smith presided at a crowded and excited meeting of shareholders, held in Cannon-street Hotel, London, yesterday. When the chairman rose to move the adoption of the report, the Rev. A. F. Adams (rector of Doddinghurst), asked by what authority Mr. Smith took the chair. The Earl of Donoughmore having deserted the company in its time of distress, it lay with the shareholders to elect a chairman. Mr. Smith having read the articles of association was allowed to retain his seat. The Chairman then went on to explain the various items in the accounts and the assets and property which they represented, regretting that the state of the mines and the development had not enabled them to recommend a dividend. Several questions were asked as to the payments on shares by directors, and it was stated that only Mr. Smith had paid up the whole of his shares.—The Chairman: The balance will be called up in a day or two.—Mr. Adams: And I hope the directors will be served the same

In his resignation letter, His Lordship cited 'lack of time'; the feeling of the company was that he should have been aware of other commitments before he took up the Chairmanship. A Mr Alston asked that since "no Dividend had been declared, whether the Directors would be prepared to reduce their fees?"

The *bona fide* reporter at the meeting must have noticed that 'the Colonel' was good copy. WJOG seems to have been the only 'name' brave enough to appear in person. He went down well, speaking of doing the noble thing on his "Honour as a gentleman and a soldier", but making the curious additional statement "I am bewildered as to why I was made a Director. I didn't get any Director's fees, but I don't go grouching about it." [applause] He had invested, he said, £375 and was £125 in arrears, "but I

am perfectly willing and able to pay that amount. [Hear, hear.] “I say never mind about Director’s fees. Nothing dishonourable has been done. I have come here, 150 miles, at personal expense and inconvenience, to transact your business, when I would sooner be at home with my beagles.” The meeting adjourned with the promise that an investigation, already underway, ‘would report at the earliest opportunity.’

And that was that. If any such report on the doings of the ‘Just in Time Goldmines’, was eventually published then I have not found a note of it. Whatever the truth of the matter, WJOG, by this account, silver tongue intact, was more sinned against than sinning.....but there was certainly the whiff of wrongdoing attached to the whole affair and undoubtedly some aggrieved investors.

If WJOG’s statement at the ‘Just in Time’ enquiry can be taken at face value, then he and Ellen were living under the same roof when he travelled to London. Perhaps Ellen had been obliged to hand over yet more cash, but it may have been his allusion to “my beagles” which provided the last straw. They were not his business at all. The beagles and the other dogs belonged entirely to his wife. From this time on ‘Mrs Oughton-Giles’ alone is respectfully and frequently reported, with updates on her activities in the canine world including, occasionally, a sad piece on the death of one of her dogs. Of WJOG there is nary a word. It is as though he had been ‘sent to Coventry’. I suspected Ellen had kicked him out.

Nevertheless it was something of a shock to find that within a few years he was dead, aged only fifty five, described on his death certificate as a “Colonel, Highland Light Infantry (Retired)”. He left no will, no surprise there, but there was no newspaper obituary for him either. Not a word of regret from his widow or any Cardinal or Bishop who had been pleased to accept the Oughton-Giles’ lavish hospitality, not to say their money. WJOG was clearly *persona non grata*.

For one who had so often extricated himself from mostly every scrape and skirmish in his life through a glib turn of phrase, his death, probably speechless, from “Cancer of the Throat, Exhaustion” was the very cruellest imaginable. At the very end his passing must have been merciful. But he was not alone and forgotten as I had feared.

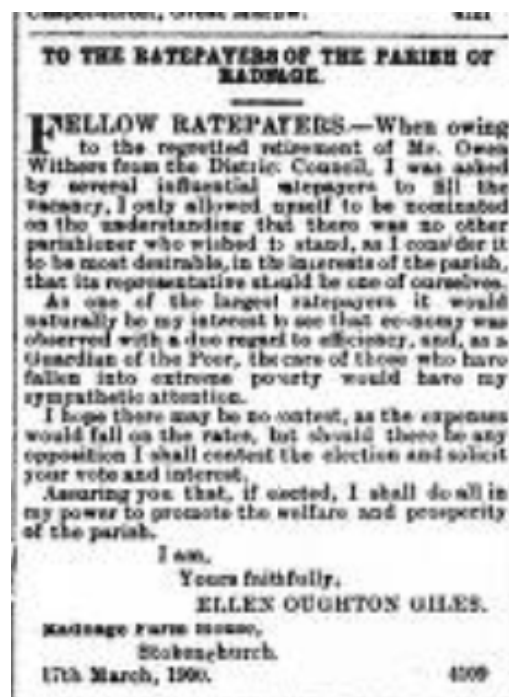
A surprise was revealed in the name of the informant who was by WJOG's side on 4th March 1900 when he took his last breath: 'Jessie Harben, sister-in-law of the deceased'. If Ellen had washed her hands of him, then at least one member of her family cared.

Jessie Harben was Ellen's younger sister. The two girls were born in London, the daughters of Stanton Preston, a successful wholesale druggist and his wife Ellen Harben. They spent their childhood and young adulthood at Evesham, Worcestershire where the family business was based, being taught at home by a governess. Ellen married the well-off Harold Lees at Taunton, aged 19 in 1866, later becoming chatelaine at his country house in Denbighshire. Jessie at 25 may have been on the road to becoming an 'old maid' by the time she was married, at Ramsgate, Kent, in 1875. The bridegroom, John Timms, was a tailor, sixteen years her senior. They spent their married life at Lillington, a suburb of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. The local papers are full of John Timms' business advertisements but of Jessie there is no mention until 26th May 1887 when the Birmingham Post reported a scandal: the details of their divorce proceedings. Timms gave evidence that two years before, in 1885, they had been 'abroad', the destination unspecified; on their return his wife took out a petition for divorce on the grounds of his 'cruelty', which he denied. He counter sued alleging her adultery. Jessie fled to Scotland, staying with a Miss Sinclair at Thurso, before leaving for Wick with the correspondent, a man called Wise, where Timms had tracked the couple down. They were identified as having stayed at the Pulteney Hotel, Wick. The hotel staff gave titillating evidence of 'the gentleman leading the lady upstairs', 'a closed bedroom door', a room with 'the blinds down and a disarranged bed'. For the court this was the case proved. Timms' was exonerated from the cruelty charge. Jessie's petition was dismissed and she was duly divorced. Jessie's notoriety must have been such that she could never return to Leamington again. To escape the stigma she changed her surname to Harben, the maiden name of her mother. In 1891 'Jessie Harben, widow' was living alone in a flat at Utrecht Buildings, Haarlem Road, Hammersmith. Of 'Wise' (his first name is not stated) nothing else is known; even I would think it too much to suggest that this was another of WJOG's aliases. He would surely have been too busy in 1887 to have been involved. But...there is one more teasing fact. WJOG's last abode was with Jessie at 'Rockdean', Albion Road, Birchington in Kent. Jessie has no known previous connection with this small seaside town but WJOG has. It is the very place his daughter Marjorie, Beatrice's second

child, was born in 1886. Again it is necessary to point out that Birchington is only a couple of miles from Herne Bay where WJOG as John Ashley dallied with Marie (otherwise Pollie Wells) before she left for Horsham. Could it possibly be that WJOG had known Jessie in London and suggested to her that like Herne Bay, Birchington was 'a very pleasant place'?

Whatever their relationship – sisters clearly had 'a thing' about WJOG - Jessie had looked after him at the end. Before his illness, they may have found comfort, each a sympathetic listener to the other's marital tribulations.

If Ellen Giles went into mourning at all, she swiftly recovered. The following letter dated 17th March appeared in the South Bucks Standard of 23rd March 1900. Ellen had been proposed as a member of the District Council. A new career in politics awaited.



I have yet to discover where WJOG was buried.

What became of WJOG's women?

Emmeline:

In 1881 Emmeline married her second husband James Kerr Anderson in Brighton. James, the assistant manager of the Army & Navy Stores at Woolwich Barracks, was aged 62, twenty five years her senior. The couple

lived in Woolwich with Emmeline's two teenage children, Florence, 18, a saleswoman, and Clive, aged 16, a scholar. They were sufficiently well off to employ a domestic servant. By 1891 James had retired and they were living in Battersea.

At the time of her death, 17th January 1892, aged 47, Emmeline Eliza, the wife of James Kerr Anderson was of Devonshire Place, Eastbourne. She left estate £210 15s 1d, naming her daughter Florence (Mrs Ernest William Hayes) as executrix. This may have been another failed marriage as James Kerr Anderson was alive until 1897 when his death was registered at Basingstoke.

In March 1886 Clive Oughton-Giles, son of Emmeline and WJOG, was staying at Trinity Mansions, Grand Parade, when he appeared in a list of 'fashionable visitors to Eastbourne'.¹² The double-barrelled name still implied a bit of swank. He emigrated to Australia where he married Evelyn McKay in Sydney in 1890. He died in 1902 at Woolahra, New South Wales.

Gertrude:

The attentions of the promising suitor, if he ever existed, referred to by WJOG in his third bankruptcy evidently did not result in marriage. I can find nothing about Gertie's life in the south of France or when she returned to England. She never married but all her life thought of herself as 'Mrs Giles' and wrote her will as 'Gertrude Anne Stavert or Giles'. She left effects to the value of £124 19s 5d with administration granted to Sophia Nuttall Irving, widow, (nee Stavert), a cousin. She died at 13 Leicester Street, Southport on 3rd June 1914, registered as Annie G. Stavert.

Eleanor:

She also retained the myth of having once been married to WJOG as Mrs Jackson. In 1911 as Eleanor Frances Jackson, she was aged 57 and lived at 215 Woodchurch Road, Birkenhead. She described herself 'a widow of independent means.' In the household there was a nurse and a servant. She died on 19th January 1928 at The Cottage, Lydiate, Heswall, Cheshire. She left £914 1s 4d, with administration to her son Roderick, a physician.

¹² Eastbourne Chron. 23.3.1886

Beatrice:

In 1891 just after her divorce, Beatrice and her two girls were staying in London with her widowed aunt, Annette Rogers, and her teenage sons, Augustus, Adam and Herbert Rogers, all of whom had been born in India. (Annette's late husband presumably part of The Raj, may be 'the rich uncle' who WJOG mentioned in the 3rd bankruptcy hearing.) On 3rd March 1900 during the Boer War, Jackson's Oxford Journal recorded that 'Mrs Oughton Giles and her daughters, the Misses Giles', took part in a patriotic concert at Woodstock, playing 'a pianoforte trio nicely rendered', which raised £26 in aid of the 2nd Battalion the Cameronians (The Scottish Rifles) 'now at the front.' On the night of the census that year at the Horsefair, Woodstock, Beatrice and her daughters Beatrice junior, 17 and Marjorie, 14, shared the house with a German visitor, Marguerite Reginer, two female boarders, a cook and a housemaid. I can find no trace of them in 1911. In 1939 Beatrice, by then 60, was a visitor to St Mary's School for Disabled Children, Horam, Horsham, Sussex, where her elder daughter, Beatrice, a nun, was Principal.

Beatrice E. Giles died aged 88 in 1949. Her death was registered at Battle, Sussex.

Jessie:

On 10th June 1902 Jessie married an architect, Robert Dalby Reeve at Hambledon in Kent. She died there three years later, on 12th December 1905. In 1911, Robert was a widower aged 48, living at Margate with his niece.

Ellen:

To avoid anti-climax, I have left Ellen until last. After WJOG's death, despite another marital bump along the way, Ellen thrived in her careers in dog breeding and politics.



Judging room at Crufts 1899 in which Mrs Oughton Giles entered Dot & Dainty her beagles. (pictured in Illustrated Sports & Dramatic News, Jan. 18, 1899)

According to the press report 'It was a red-letter day for Pocket-Beagles and Whippets, neither of them enjoying much popularity, when they numbered amongst their supporters such an enthusiast as the above-named lady, who had been a lover of dogs all her life and had kept several varieties, including such opposites as St Bernards and Pugs.'

In 1901 as President of the Ladies' branch of the Kennel Club, Ellen travelled to the USA, when invited to judge the Beagle and Foxhounds Show in Rhode Island.

On 17th September 1902 she ventured into matrimony for the third time. Her bridegroom, Charles Higford Chapman, was a 'retired Captain of the Cheshire Regiment', 15 years her junior. The marriage took place at the RC 'Bavarian Chapel' in London, where a rather dour time was had by all, with no bridesmaids and no organ allowed – apart from the conclusion of the service - because 'the bride and groom were of different faiths'. Ellen wore grey with the only colour noted, a sapphire scarf clip, (a present from the bride), worn by the 'page', Harold Hyde Lees, an Eton schoolboy, a step relative from her first marriage. After a reception for 200, the newlyweds left for a honeymoon in Cornwall.

I wish I could say that Ellen had more luck this time around. In October 1903 she brought a petition for nullity on the grounds of non-consummation which Chapman denied. The suit was rejected at the first attempt and the 'marriage' dragged on until 1907. Chapman died in

Buenos Aires in 1910, leaving funds to the value of £57 12s 10d. Administration of the estate, (1912) was granted to Ellen.

An article on 'lady dog breeders' appeared in the *Gentlewoman*, 9th March, 1913:

Time was, women were supposed to concern themselves with toys and other small breeds, but they have proved themselves so adept at kennel management, breeding, and rearing that before long they had sufficient confidence to challenge the men with the larger breeds. Who first set the fashion, I cannot say without the tedium of long research, but I should imagine Mrs Ellen Chapman, the former Mrs Oughton Giles, must be one of the earliest with her kennels of beagles what a pity she is not taking a hand now....



'Mrs Oughton Giles with her whippets' (From a photo by C. Reid, Wishaw.)

In addition to her celebrity in the dog world, Ellen was a notable suffragist and prominent campaigner for female franchise. As a politician she became the first woman Mayor of Worthing (whence she had moved in 1913). She remained a devoted Roman Catholic. A blue plaque to her memory was unveiled in the town in 2021.

When she died of a heart attack in December 1925 aged 88, the following tribute was made:

She was detached from everything petty, small or unworthy and, having formed her opinions at an early age on what she believed was best for her country and its constitution, she had the courage of those opinions, and fought for them through thick and thin. There is scarcely a spot in Worthing that will not seem poorer for her passing.

She left assets of £34,097.

Of **Mrs Boyd**, one of those who lent WJOG money, and **Mr Gritton**, the racehorse owner, both briefly mentioned in the third bankruptcy hearing and **Kate Cox**, alias Mrs Graham, a dalliance, named in Beatrice's divorce petition, nothing more is known.

Pollie's son, Archibald John Boatwright Ashley:

Archie Ashley and his wife Anne Furst had three daughters, the first of whom were named after his 'two mothers', Eleanor Frances, born at Cannock, Staffordshire in 1912 and Marie, in 1914 at Huddersfield. The third daughter, Noel, was born in 1915, also at Huddersfield. Archie remained in Yorkshire for the rest of his ministry, at Farnley Tyas, before becoming vicar at St John the Divine, Rastrick in 1934. In 1939, Eleanor married Rev Peter Monie of Edinburgh, at Rastrick. Marie and Noel were then still living at home with their parents at the general registration at the outbreak of war, and both eager to serve, they were working as ambulance drivers, with Noel having also joined the ARP. She married Maurice Godfrey at Woolwich in 1942 at the height of WW2. Archie was vicar at Eltham by the time of his death in 1943 and he is buried in the churchyard there.¹³

Epilogue

Though I never knew her by any name other than Miss Hooley, her first names were Elsie Mabel. She was the daughter of Jane Wells (Janey of the letter) and Frank Hooley, a clerk. It is quite possible, even likely, that there was other correspondence saved by Janey which went up in flames.

¹³ For an A-Z of the people of the region, see Malcolm Bull's enviable 'Calderdale Companion' <http://www.calderdalecompanion.co.uk/a.html>

Pem, my aunt, who was almost my second mother, died suddenly in 1979. Our visits to Shawford ceased. Mum and my cousin Eunice Trevatt, who had been another frequent visitor, went down to clear out the house. Before they left, they called on Miss Hooley. "We'll keep in touch, of course", Mum said kindly, thinking the elderly lady might be lonely without her neighbour, "just to see how you are." Miss H. replied haughtily, "No need. I probably wouldn't reply if you did."

The two callers were quite taken aback, offended even. Pem was obviously mistaken in saying that Miss H. always wanted whichever one of us was visiting to pop next door. All those times she must have suffered us in silence. I can see the smile of wry amusement on Pem's face. She always said Miss Hooley was "a cranky old stick".

Pem would have greatly enjoyed my shocking tale. Miss Hooley would have been mortified.

Postscript:



Two of Mrs Oughton-Giles' pocket-beagles, 'Benedict of Radnage' and 'Dot'.

By the mischief of coincidence, Mrs Oughton-Giles and her beagles bring to mind a small boy who often stayed at 4 Bridge Terrace in the 1950s. He would excitedly race outside with a whoop, as soon as he heard the muffled hooter of a train approaching Shawford Station, shouting “the 3.10 to Southampton” or whatever it was; he knew them all. He would watch and wave as the train rattled down the tracks, cross the railway bridge, sometimes drawing to a halt at the station, sometimes accelerating with a whoosh and clatter of wheels before it disappeared out of sight, until the next one, when the whole hullabaloo occurred over again.



The railway bridge at Bridge Terrace. Pem's cottage was to the right of the picture, last but one on the terrace and Miss Hooley's at the end.

We knew nothing then of Mrs O-G. or her beagles, or that the boy would one day have his own Beagle, whose ingenious name owed nothing to the above, but was the brainwave of his wife Judith. True to form with such a spirited breed, it got lost for a while on Mars. Which only goes to show when you start something like this you never know where it will lead. We are all made of stardust after all, fellow travellers through time and space.



***Beagle 2 – a dog lost and found on Mars.
RIP Colin Pillinger, 1943-2014, my brother***

Acknowledgment: I would never have found Pollie and this account would not have been possible without Ancestry UK and FindMyPast along with contributions from the various connections of WJOG and the others in this saga, who have kindly uploaded their findings on Ancestry. To those whose pictures I have borrowed, I am also very grateful. I have acknowledged the origins where they are known. They of course remain your property. Thank you all and most of all, to Kevin.