

**OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA — ALTERING THE MARKET DAYS — VISIT OF THE BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION — THE RUSSIAN GUN — A DAY OF HUMILIATION — DISCOVERIES OF SKELETONS — A MYSTERIOUS MURDER? — FORMATION OF A FREE LIBRARY — DEATH OF COLONEL KEMEYS TYNTE.**

IN 1842 a heavy gale visited the neighbourhood and did much damage, including the destruction of North Petherton Church tower.

1846. — "The Cemetery Company" was formed, with the view of obtaining an order for the closing of the Parish Church-yard for burial purposes. This order was ultimately obtained, and took effect in 1851. The Church-yard was then closed for burial purposes, and a new Cemetery for the town was consecrated on September 10th, situated on the Wembdon-road. The Bishop of Jamaica performed the ceremony, and the townspeople were afterwards astonished by his lordship's » sending in an account for £50, which was disputed by the Town Council.

In January of this year the Highbridge Cheese Market was established; and in February, St. Joseph's Chapel, Bridgwater, was opened.

1846. — In August, St. John's Church was opened, having been erected at a cost of between £5,000 and £6,000, at the expense of the Bev. J. M. Capes, M.A.

1849. — A restoration (costing nearly £5,000) of St. Mary's Church, Bridgwater, commenced this year.

1849. — There was a sad outbreak of cholera in the town, which bereaved many families. The defective sanitary arrangements and impure water are believed to have caused the visitation. The Corporation and townspeople formed themselves into a kind of vigilance committee, and visited all the lanes and bye-places, routing out all nuisances. Strict rules were also enforced as to the admission of strangers into the town, and citizens who wished to leave Bridgwater on any pretext were obliged to be furnished with passes by the Mayor, such pass not being forthcoming if the applicant had resided in a cholera-stricken house. Before the dreadful disease was eradicated over 200 persons had died, in the following localities West-street, 30 ; Union street, 29 ; Mogg's-buildings and Monmouth-street, 19 ; Albert-street, 17 ; Bath-road, 13 ; Prickett's Lane, 13 ; Honeysuckle-alley, 9 ; Bristol-road, 9 ; Gold's-

building's, 9 ; Eastover, 8 ; Moat-lane, 7 ; Barclay-street, 5 ; Pig Cross, 5 ; Taunton-road (including old poor-house), 5 ; Mount, 3 ; Brimble's-buildings, 3 ; St. Mary-street, 2 ; High-street, 2 ; Silver-street, 2 ; North-street, 2 ; St. John-street, 1 ; Quay 1 ; Pig-market, 1 ; Friarn-street, 1 ; Shambles, 1 ; Cornhill, 1 ; Green Dragon-lane, 1. Of this number 88 died in Eastover, and were buried in an isolated spot in St. John's Churchyard, where a stone is now seen, bearing the following inscription : — " In memory of the decease of 88 persons from cholera, 1849. 'Prom plague, pestilence and sudden death; good Lord, deliver us.' "

1851. — The Bridgwater Agricultural Association was formed and held an exhibition this year, on December 2nd. It appears to have been a short-lived Association, as we cannot find any record of it after 1860.

1852. — The Bridgwater Farmers' Association discussed the advisability of altering the Market days to better suit the convenience of agriculturists as well as merchants and townsmen. On the 9th November a deputation waited on the Council, and in response to their application it was agreed to recommend that the mid-weekly Market should be altered from Thursday to Wednesday. In 1857 an Act of Parliament was obtained for re-arranging the days of the Markets and Fairs, as follows: — Market on Wednesday instead of Thursday; St. Matthew's Fair, last Wednesday in September; Cock-hill Fair, last Wednesday in January ; Lent Fair, last Wednesday in March ; Midsummer Fair, last Wednesday in June.

In 1852 a large number of persons in the neighbourhood emigrated direct from Bridgwater to New York; two or three emigrant vessels left Bridgwater Bay for that port.

On the 18th November, 1852, the occasion of the public funeral of the great Duke of Wellington, all the shops in the town were closed and business generally suspended. This was done agreeably to the recommendation of the Town Council.

1856. — On Monday, August 25, Bridgwater was honoured with a visit from the British Archseological Association. The congress was opened in the Grand Jury-room, where the members of the Society were met by the Mayor (Mr. W. D. Bath) and Corporation, attended by the mace-bearers, (fee. A number of interesting meetings were held, and the Association visited the various places of historic interest in the neighbour-

hood. The borough muniments were inspected with much interest, the Corporation being congratulated on possessing such a valuable collection of relics of the past. Stress was also laid upon the importance of having them classed, arranged, and indexed. At the close of the congress (which was the thirteenth of the Association), resolutions of warm thanks were passed to the Mayor and Corporation for their pains in entertaining the Association.

In 1857 a requisition was sent up from Bridgwater, in response to which Lord Panmure presented to the town a cannon which had been captured in the Russian War. When, it arrived it was met with bands of music, and it was drawn through the town in a procession. The gun was afterwards allowed to remain in a degraded position for some months, until public indignation was aroused. Some strong expressions of feeling appeared in the *Bridgwater Mercury*, and ultimately it was arranged to place the gun on a pedestal on Salmon Parade, enclosed by an iron railing, and £30 was voted for the purpose by the Town Council. It was also decided to include the gun in the usual Guy Fawkes Celebration, and fire a dozen rounds from it, but the authorities objected. Shortly afterwards the gun was placed on a handsome carriage and erected on Salmon Parade, about forty yards from the Town Bridge. It was placed in position under the auspices of the Mayor and Corporation, amidst the enthusiasm of a large assembly. A bottle of champagne was thrown over it, and the Council drank wine together. In August, 1886, the Town Council decided to change its position, and it was placed on the ornamental ground at the junction of the Bath and Bristol road.

Wednesday, October 7th, 1857, was kept as a "day of humiliation" by Royal proclamation, having reference to the Indian Mutiny. Business was entirely suspended and special services were held in every Church and Chapel in Bridgwater, the attendance being very large. A fund for relieving the sufferers in the Mutiny was afterwards started, and £510 was collected in the town and neighbourhood, and forwarded to the Lord Mayor of London.

In November, 1857, some workmen digging for clay in a field at Dunwear (Mr. Browne's brickyard), discovered a human skeleton, about four feet deep, together with a large iron ring. There were no means of discovering how these remains came there,

but it was considered that they had been buried for several centuries.

1858. — On May 5th, Burnham Pier and branch railway to Highbridge were opened, amid great public rejoicings, in which the town of Bridgwater joined.

1858. — In August of this year the tenth annual congress of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society was held at Bridgwater. The members held several meetings, at which papers were read, and excursions were also made to Spaxton, Nether Stowey, Stogursey, the Quantocks, &c. The castle ruins at Stogursey came in for a good deal of attention.

1859. — In April a medal from the Royal Humane Society was presented to Thomas Griffiths, a pilot, of Bridgwater, in recognition of his signal bravery in rescuing from drowning a man named Thomas Warren. This was the fifteenth person Griffiths had saved from a watery grave.

1860. — In May an amount of public attention was directed to Horsey, where two skeletons had been discovered in a garden about eighteen inches below the surface. One was that of a fine woman, and the other that of a child, both being close together. There were no traces of coffins, and it was therefore believed that a foul murder had been committed; the doctors gave it as their opinion that the bones had been in the ground at least fifty years. The oldest inhabitants of the locality were closely questioned, but none remembered any "mysterious disappearance," and no clue has ever been discovered as to how the bodies came there. The bones were carefully collected and buried in consecrated ground.

In 1860 there was a proposal to found a Free Library in the town, and in spite of much opposition a public meeting declared in favour of it. A free reading-room was then in existence, having been opened in 1846, the average attendance at which was about forty per day. Nothing came of the agitation, however, until 1869, when the old Literary and Scientific Institute was discontinued, and it was decided by the Town Council to adopt the Free Libraries Act. A subscription was raised to pay off the liabilities of the Institute, and renovate and refurnish the reading-rooms, which were situated in George-street; next the "George" Hotel. A transfer was accordingly afterwards made to the Mayor and Town Council, for the use and benefit of the burgesses (under the Free Libraries Act), of the library of about 1,000 volumes, a

collection of fossils, &c., purchased of the executors of the late Mr. Robert Anstice ; and other articles. In 1885 the present handsome and commodious reading-room and library in High-street were opened (together with other Corporation offices) being part of the premises used as Judges' lodgings in the old Assize days. There was also a small reading-room in Eastover, for the use of the public in that locality. The adoption of the Act gave much satisfaction, and the library and reading-room are regarded as a boon to the town and its inhabitants.

In November, 1860, there died one who had for a great number of years been one of the best known and most generous benefactors of the town—Colonel Kemeys Tynte, better known as “ the Old Colonel.” His worth will be better understood when we give a list of the public presentations made to him during a long, busy, and useful life. From the Freemasons in London, in 1824; from the West Somerset Yeomanry Cavalry, in 1834 ; a chair from his constituents in Bridgwater, in 1832 ; from the Freemasons of the Provinces, in 1836; from the West Somerset Yeomanry Cavalry, 1839; from the workmen on his estate, in 1852; from the Knights Templars, in 1854; from his tenantry, in 1857; from the inhabitants of Bridgwater, in March, 1858, and again in 1860, the year of his death. The presentation in 1858 was a noteworthy one. It took the form of a massive silver shield, valued at nearly £200, and was beautifully engraved with pictorial representations of the old stone bridge, St. Mary's Church, the Cornhill, Market House, etc.; it was also inscribed to the effect that it was an offering to one who had faithfully represented the borough in six successive Parliaments. The gallant Colonel died at the age of 82, and it is no exaggeration to say that his death caused a gap which could not possibly be filled up. His memory even now is green in the recollection of many of our older inhabitants.

1860.— This year witnessed the inauguration of the Volunteer movement, the 5th Somerset Corps being formed in the town. It was looked upon somewhat coldly at first, and it was only after repeated trials that sufficient members were got together. The movement soon became a popular one. (See special chapter)