

Letters to the Wells Journal

Wells Journal
October 20, 1866

To the municipal electors of the city and borough of Wells – Electors, solicited as I have been by so many of my fellow citizens, to come forward on their behalf Member of the Town Council, I now beg to solicit your votes and interest, pledging to promote and support all measures having for their object the general welfare of the City and Borough.

Should you deem me worthy of your confidence, I shall feel personally obliged your recording your votes in favour on the day of Election.

I am, gentlemen,
Your obedient servant.

John Mead
Swan Hotel

Wells Journal
December 12, 1892

Dear Mr Editor – I have today received a letter from a lady “in consequence of Scarlet Fever being so prevalent in Wells I have decided not to attend the ball with my daughters as I had hoped. I am very sorry and of course I do not require the rooms.”

It appears that very exaggerated reports of this disease are flying about the county.

Cannot something not be done to reassure the public since with two or three exceptions there are no cases in town and Scarlet Fever is not prevalent at all?

F Brand George
Swan Hotel

Wells Journal
October 1896

To the municipal electors of the city and borough of Wells.

Ladies and Gentlemen – at the earnest solicitation of a few of the prominent citizens of this ancient city I beg to offer myself as candidate for your support at the ensuing election Monday, November 2, next.

Being a native of Wells and a large ratepayer I have the interests of this city thoroughly at heart and if you should honour me by electing me as one of your representatives on the Municipal Board.

I will endeavour to serve your interests to the best of my ability.

I am, ladies and gentlemen, your obedient servant,

F Brand George
Swan Hotel

■ Mr George was elected and remained as a councillor until his death in 1919.

Wells Journal
August 14, 1914

A Disclaimer – Dear Sir, I understand it has been stated in this city that I have given several members of my staff notice to leave owing to the scarcity of visitors.

I wish to deny this statement entirely.

On Friday last I called the whole of my staff together and told them that I intended to keep them all on as long as was possible.

Later in the day three of the senior members of staff informed me on behalf of the other members that they would be pleased to remit half their wages during the crisis.

I thanked them and said at present I would not accept their kind offer.

F Brand George
Swan Hotel

THE GEORGE FAMILY PHILANTHROPISTS

MOST EXCELLENT SOUP

Wells Journal
August 1865

Mr George, of the Swan Hotel, having many pieces of meat and bread left from his large dinners this week, had it made into some most excellent soup to supply many of the poor of this city. We understand that between 60 and 70 families were supplied with it gratis.

In the Wells Journal of July 11, 1878, under the headline “Workhouse Children’s Treat”:

Mr F.C. George of the Swan Hotel was praised for his philanthropy by “undertaking to receive donations to a fund to defray the expense of taking the poor little waifs and strays in the Union Workhouse for a day’s holiday at the seaside. Mr George will be pleased to receive further contributions. The object of Mr George is one that commends itself and we hope that he will speedily be in a position to ensure such a boon to the little children as he contemplates.”

On the July 17, 1878, the paper prints a letter from Mr George:

Dear Sir – Will you kindly allow me through your journal to thank the public for the handsome manner in which they subscribed to the Workhouse Seaside Fund and to say that a significant amount has been raised,
Yours

F.C. George

On July 24, 1878, a report is published from the Board of Guardians of the Wells Workhouse and it seems that Mr George’s philanthropy did not please some of the members of the board:

The Chairman, Mr T. Reach, thought that the actions of Mr George of the Swan Hotel had taken the decision out of the hands of the schoolmaster and the officers of this house and in consequence matters were in confusion. The chairman also

objected it going out to the world that if it had not been for Mr George the children would have had no outing whereas the board had provided funds for the last six or seven years for exactly that purpose.

He proposed that the children have their outing in the usual way and that the sum collected by Mr George be accepted for a future outing. A copy of this decision has been sent to Mr George.

In the Wells Journal of August 1, 1878, Mr George replies to the decision:

Dear Sir – My attention has been called to the report of the Board of Guardians on the 17th inst in which my conduct in promoting a day trip for the union children is stigmatised as an unwarrantable interference with the prerogative of the board.

I had no intention of offending the susceptibilities of the body in question and most candidly admit their existence never entered my head or the idea that I might be doing what could offend even the most touchy. I sincerely trust that the respect due to the board, to which I am now more aware than ever, will in future deter me from increasing its displeasure in a matter on which however there appears to be two opinions,
Yours

F.C. George
Swan Hotel

This response from the Board of Guardians did not affect Mr George’s philanthropy as in 1882 he paid for the children of the workhouse to go to the pantomime:

Wells Journal
January 19, 1882

On Saturday last through the kindness of Mr George of the Swan Hotel treated the children of the workhouse and their teachers to an excursion to the pantomime in Bristol.

On arrival in Bristol a meat dinner with coffee was provided for them. After din-

ner they walked to the New Theatre in Park Row where on entering Mr Chute the manager gave each child a bun and an orange and had them placed in a convenient position at the front of the stage. All were highly delighted with the various acts and songs displayed in the pantomime. On their return to the Bristol terminus a meat pie was given to each child. On arriving at Wells and before starting for home three hearty cheers were given for the generous donor of the treat who so nicely arranged that they should all spend a happy and joyous day.

Mr F.C. George’s son Mr Frederick Brand George carried on the family’s philanthropic trait during the early days of the First World War:

Wells Journal
September 18 1914

Through the kindly efforts of Mr Brand George of the Swan Hotel a large quantity of fruit and vegetables have been sent to the Wiltshire Company of the Somerset Light Infantry who are on encampment on Salisbury Plain

Wells Journal
December 11 1914

Dear Mr Editor – The Somerset Royal Horse Artillery have been on the bleak east coast for four months since the start of the war sleeping in barns and roughing it generally. There are about 30 Wells men doing their best to keep the flag flying. All have volunteered for active service. It has been suggested that we should send them something for Christmas to show our appreciation of their self-sacrifice.

Vegetable and fruit they never get, cigars and cigarettes would be very acceptable and they may know what to do with cakes, plum puddings and mince pies.

Parcels should be sent to Mr George at the Swan Hotel with the donor’s name. All gratefully received.

Yours

Mr F B George

Inquest: Child covered in boiling water

Wells Journal
December 3, 1864

Saturday an inquest was held at the Swan Hotel, in this city, before Bruges Fry, Esq. Coroner, on the body of John Spurlock, aged 2 years and 7 months who died under the following circumstances. Ann Spurlock, mother of the deceased child placed him on a bed. On the foot of the bed there stood a saucepan containing a quantity of boiling water.

By some means the poor little fellow fell upon the handle of the saucepan, and the boiling water went over him, scalding him dreadfully. Dr. R. Purnell, surgeon, attended the child from 17th to the 24th of November when the child died. After hearing the evidence of the mother and Mrs Wilton, nurse, a verdict of accidental death was returned.

Sovereign stolen

Wells Journal
May 5, 1898

John Guppy, “Under Boots” at the Swan Hotel, was charged with stealing one sovereign the property of Arthur Holloway, “Boots” at the Swan Hotel.

There was a saddle house in the yard where Holloway kept a box containing cleaning materials. On Monday morning he put two sovereigns in it and locked it and on his return he found that the prisoner had left the premises.

He looked at the box, which was still locked, but thought that the screws had been tampered with. The prisoner on being confronted admitted stealing the sovereign and was given two moths hard labour.

Recherché repast

Wells Journal
November 1905

Between 70 and 80 guests sat down to a recherché repast at the Swan Hotel for the Mayor’s Banquet. The Mayor presided at the feast and was supported by The Lord Bishop, Mr R C Dickenson MP and Sir W H Wills Bart MP. Special efforts had been made by the management to give éclat to the occasion. At the foot of the stairs by which the dining room was reached a light arch of trailing greenery interspersed with coloured lights had been arranged and the balustrades each side were similarly treated and presented a bright and festive appearance.

The lighting, which included electric light, at the upper table and the decoration of the dining room was most effective while the tables were resplendent with plate, glass and flowers which pleasantly carried the eye forward to the central position at the end of the room where the cross table in front of the Mayor was arranged with taste and appropriateness.

Jailed for begging

Wells Journal
March 14, 1889

Henry Day was charged with begging outside the Swan Hotel in Sadler Street. PC Bartlett proved the case and prisoner was sentenced to seven days imprisonment.

Old oak beams

Wells Journal
May 1893

There is a record in the books of the Corporation that the Swan was rebuilt in 1549.

Since then it has been materially adapted and altered from time to time to meet the requirements of the age but the hotel still retains traces of structural reminiscences of its old time origin many of the walls being 5 feet thick and old oak beams may be seen in many of its rooms.

The cellars are probably in their original state and are 230 feet long by 10 feet wide.

R.I.P.

Wells Journal
October 2, 1884



We regret to announce the death of Mr F.C. George of the Swan Hotel which took place on Thursday night after a long and lingering painful illness.

Many of our readers will remember that about four years ago Mr George was laid up for a short time with what was doubtless the premonitory attack of the disease which proved fatal but by skilful management and a trip across the channel seemed to have been checked and he for a time recovered to all outward appearance his buoyant spirits and physical activity and all his friends had hoped he would be spared many years but a little more than six months ago the symptoms returned, and, as if to make up for the brief respite enjoyed developed with such increased acceleration that in a few days the patient was compelled to take to his bed which he never left again alive.

For more than six months through the spring and the summer he lay without hope of recovery and frequently suffered intense agony without a murmur his only contact with the outer world, apart from the members of his own family, being the friends who visited him and whom he was always glad to see and converse with, and when the end grew near and his strength failed him, the feeble grasp of the hand and the pleasant smile symbolised a word of kindness and gratitude.

His mental faculties remained with him to the last and only gave way with his fine constitution which had fought the battle so bravely though vanquished in the end by this cruel and wasting disease.

The general esteem in which Mr George was held manifested by blinds universally drawn.

Of a kindly disposition Mr George always entered with spirit into any undertaking that would confer benefit and give pleasure to children or to the aged for whom he felt no trouble too great and begrudged no expense and no one was happier than he to see them enjoying themselves.

His consideration for those who were suffering or in distress was always active and this help always prompt and unostentatious and rendered with the genial sympathy of a friend.

Mr George was 51.



Water surges past the Swan Hotel in the Wells flood of 1926

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