

Dorset History Centre

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DORSET RECORD OFFICE

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Bundle No.	Date	Description of Documents	No. of Documents
1	1840-1897	Autobiographical notes based on the diary of <u>Wynne Albert Banks</u> , written 1904 and later.	1 vol.
2	1898-1912	<p>As above.</p> <p><u>Notes</u></p> <p>The diary of Wynne Albert Banks which he started at the age of 64 in 1904 and continued until the year 1912, the year before his death was written because "it may interest those who come after me to read the recollections of some one who has lived before them". He describes his life as a very ordinary one, chiefly distinguished by his service in the Crimean War 1854-1856, when as a Naval Cadet and Midshipman, he was present at the taking of Sebastopol, and received the Baltic and Crimean medals.</p> <p>Wynne Albert Banks was born 31st May, 1840, the sixth son and eleventh child of George and Georgina Banks a scion of the Dorset family of Bankses of Kingston Lacy, Corfe Castle and Studland. Until 1848, the family lived six months of the year at 5 Old Palace Yard, Westminster, three months at Studland Manor and three months at Kingston Lacy. In 1848 Albert was sent to school at Temple Grove, East Sheen, Surrey, and in 1853 "it was supposed that I was intent on joining the Royal Navy, so I found myself at the so-called Royal Navy Academy at Gosport ... where I remained for nine months." In March 1854 he joined the H.M.S. St. Jean d'Acre which sailed with the Baltic fleet for Russia. There is mention of the numbers lost each day as Crimean cholera took its toll. Later his ship assisted in the removal of the Mutineers of the "Bounty" from their island stronghold and in 1859 he took part in the suppression of the Maori rebellion. Although his naval career gave him marvellous opportunities of seeing the world, (between 1857-1859 he visited Botany Bay, the South Sea Islands, Tasmania, New Zealand and much of Australia), it was not the career of his choice; in April 1859 he obtained his discharge from the Navy, and in 1860 began to read Greek and Latin with Horace Moule of Salisbury, brother of Henry Moule, who was for many years curator of the Dorset County Museum. The years 1860-1863 were spent at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he became acquainted with the Prince of Wales. After this he was trained as a barrister, being called to the Bar of the Inner Temple, in 1867.</p> <p>The diary is of great interest because of the insight it gives into the character of Albert Banks and the way of life of the upper classes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Albert Banks' life illustrates how generous a patron of the arts and how great a public servant the leisured classes could be, in an age before the welfare state, and before the days when those in public office were remunerated. In 1874, a</p>	1 vol.

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		<p>year after his marriage to Florence Marianna Fane, he bought Wolfeton House, in Charminster, the former seat of the Trenchard family, from Mr. W.H. Purcell Weston of Dorchester. In his Tudor manor house Albert Bankes always took considerable pride, preserving the famous Spanish oak doorways, and chimney pieces, adding to the beauty of the grounds and frequently entertaining historical and antiquarian societies there. Of his interest in public events and societies there can be no doubt. He had considerable dramatic talent; in 1861 whilst at Cambridge, he was elected a member of the Amateur Dramatic Club founded by Sir Francis Burnand, later editor of "Punch", and afterwards he formed another such society in Rome. He also wrote a number of plays to "brighten village life".</p> <p>His connection with the Dorset County Museum may have dated from the time of his training under Horace Moule, as for many years he served as honorary Secretary on the Committee, and was very active in raising funds to keep the Museum in existence. His diary records that at a General Meeting in January 1878, the present Museum site of the "George" inn was promised by Mr. R. Williams. Three new cases for specimens were ordered in 1884, possibly as the result of the profits from a successful bazaar in 1883. In 1893 the County Museum opened free to the public. This was made possible by a grant from the recently formed County Council. Further expansion of the Collection occurred in 1894 when Corfe Castle Museum presented its specimens to the Museum. On Albert Bankes' initiative a Ladies' Club was established in the then little used upper room at the Museum, and proved a great success. His interest continued even after his resignation as secretary in 1896, and he mentions in 1903 that the new gallery given by a Mr. Hansford improves the proportions of the Museum's interior. In 1887 he became a member of the Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club, which visited Wolfeton House on several occasions. It was with this society that Albert Bankes saw Eggardon, Powerstock, Mapperton and Parnham in 1899 and the Roman Pavement at Charborough Hill near Preston in 1900, and in 1908 he visited the excavations then in progress at the Roman Amphitheatre, Dorchester.</p> <p>He appears to have been an enthusiastic member of the Dorset County Club where he had tea the day before his death. In 1883 he mentions that it is flourishing, and that in October new premises had been offered to it over the shop of J.S. Biggs, a wine merchant of High West Street, Dorchester. In 1911 the lease was renewed for a further 21 years. After the death of William Barnes on 7th October, 1886, Albert Bankes was present at the Barnes Committee Meeting which resolved to have a bronze statue of the poet made by the Sculptor, Roscoe Mullins. This was eventually unveiled on 4th February, 1889, and Bankes was pleased with the excellent likeness the sculptor had produced.</p> <p>For many years Albert Bankes served the county. He was</p>	

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		<p>admitted as a Justice of the Peace for Dorset at the Epiphany Quarter Sessions in 1875, and was afterwards a Deputy Lieutenant. For many years he sat regularly on the bench at the Dorchester petty sessions. He was elected to the Dorset County Hospital Committee in 1876, and had for many years been interested in the growth of the asylum. In 1860, he mentioned the site for the new lunatic asylum "over Herrison Field" and he made frequent visits there in an official capacity from 1875-89. He was Chairman from 1887-1889 when the County Council took over the institution, much to his joy "I am very glad after 14 years to have no more to do with the poor lunatics as it is a necessary but most thankless task as the poor patients naturally look up every official from the Chairman down to the nurses as their enemy". In 1903 he visited the new private asylum at Herrison Hall.</p> <p>He was also the originator of the "Spare Time Movement" in Dorset, encouraging the formation of evening classes for teaching various kinds of arts and crafts. The diary often records his lectures on toy making, which he gave all over the county with the object of giving the lower classes some profitable and interesting entertainment during the long winter evenings. He suggested to Mr. Longman, the stationer in Dorchester, that his library could be widened in scope by circulating magazines also, and this, started in 1904, proved a great success.</p> <p>A devoted churchman, he served for many years as churchwarden, and initiated a successful scheme of investing subscriptions to augment the somewhat slender stipends of the clergy in Charminster, and later this method spread to other parts of the county as well. Largely through his efforts in 1897, Charminster Church was restored, and his gifts for its improvement were frequent.</p> <p>In many ways he was against innovations. "I hate telegrams and telephones as they invariably go wrong." He could not understand a certain friend being a Radical: he was too nice. In 1896 he mentions the visit of the Sanitary Inspector with the same distrust of things modern: "I am always so afraid of being obliged to put in modern drainage which I am convinced is not so good as the simple old fashioned system of cesspools". In other respects however he delighted in new inventions, welcoming the advent of the car, in which he first rode in August 1903. He also became a keen cyclist, taking his first lesson in April 1895; later he was sorry to have to give up this form of exercise, which proved too great a strain on his heart.</p> <p>Devoted as the family were to the Monarchy, it was a particular pleasure to them to help entertain Edward VII at Kingston Lacy, in 1905, and the German Emperor in 1907. On such occasions the grounds of the house were opened to all the local inhabitants who were "respectably dressed."</p>	

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		<p>His charming personality and his dignified manner made his neighbours at his death feel that it was indeed a privilege to have known him. For those who can only know him through this diary, the main image that emerges is that of a man with wide interests devoted to his family and to the public good, and who was fortunate enough to have the means and social standing to give help where he saw it was most needed.</p> <hr data-bbox="742 725 1082 735"/>	

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DORSET RECORD OFFICE: W. A. BANKES OF WOLVETON

Reference	Description	Date(s)
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3	<p>Scrapbook of W. A. Bankes: includes a group photograph of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Kingston Lacy, sketch of the Boat Race 1870, verses and photographs of Charminster village, church interior, jubilee, parsonage; W. A. Bankes and his family, guests and servants and including the wedding of Gladys Bankes in 1902, views of Wolveton 1902, Captain Bankes and his troop on the lawns of Kingston Lacy, the Poole Natural History Society and Primrose League at Wolveton 1902, the memorial of Sir John Bankes, Ripley Castle, Hartland Quay, Clovelly, Rufford Abbey 1898, Loch Laggan, Melbourne House and Ceylon (1 vol: 98 pages)</p>	
		1870-1912