

PULVERTAFT PAPERS

A Newsletter on the Pulvertofts & Pulvertafts

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EDITORIAL

As this is the last issue of *Pulvertaft Papers* before the new millennium, it is perhaps fitting that we should also be celebrating a 100th birthday in the family! The celebration was actually two months ago at Folkestone where Nancy Pulvertaft now lives, she having been born on 21 October 1899.

Born in Cork, the daughter of James and Martha Worrall, Nancy became a Pulvertaft when she married Thomas Charles Bryan Pulvertaft on 10 December 1925 at St Paul's Kilburn. As a small contribution to the great event, much of this edition of *Pulvertaft Papers* is dedicated to her late husband. My thanks to Christopher Pulvertaft, son of Nancy and Bryan, who decided to write about his father for his own grandchildren and subsequently adapted his article for these papers.

Observant readers will note that there has been a change of typeface since the last edition – the product of a new computer that will bring other benefits in the years ahead! Happy Christmas – D.M.P

THOMAS CHARLES BRYAN PULVERTAFT

Bryan Pulvertaft was born in Dublin on 18 July 1899. He was the youngest child of Thomas John Pulvertaft (q.v. Vol. 2, No. 2 of these papers) and Barbara Charlotte Denroche. Shortly after his birth the family moved to London. He was educated at Streatham College Preparatory School and Westminster School. While a child Bryan had a serious attack of diphtheria, the first of many illnesses that afflicted his career and finally led to his early death. Following Westminster, Bryan was commissioned as a 2nd Lieut. in the Reserve of Officers but he did not see action, and he was demobilised in early 1919. At this point Bryan could have obtained a grant to study at a university, but, strangely, no one found this out until it was too late. Instead all that could be thought of was a career in commerce.

Bryan's first job was with a small shipping firm in Barcelona. After Barcelona he was recommended to Lord Inchcape, then Chairman of P&O, and in 1921, in response to his own urging, he was sent to India. Here he was stationed in Vishakhapatnam ("Vizag.") where he worked for the Coromandel Company, a subsidiary of Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co. who were agents for the P&O and British India shipping lines. At that time Vizag. was a busy but primitive port, and plans were being drawn up for the development of a proper harbour. This gave Bryan his chance. India and its people enthralled him, and he became deeply engrossed in his work for the Company. While still in his early 20s, Bryan was managing a large staff and large sums of money, and taking decisions of importance for the future of the port. He was the man to brief Sir William Currie, later Chairman of P&O, when he visited Vizag. and he was also called in to brief Head Office in London when on leave. In other words, his star was rising when in late 1924 misfortune struck. First malaria, then sprue, a disease with a recovery rate of no more than 10-15% at that time. Because of this Bryan was granted long leave in 1925, and before returning to India late that year, he married Nancy Worrall from Ireland.

On returning to India, Bryan had a relapse of sprue which made transfer to a better climate essential, and shortly afterwards he was sent to Japan where he worked for Mackinnon Mackenzie, first in Yokohama and later in Kobe. Bryan's work in Japan did not provide the same opportunities as in India, but he had considerable responsibilities. Mackinnon Mackenzie were agents for a number of large shipping lines, and Bryan was in charge of their Passage and Accounts Departments and also the Claims Settling Department of their Insurance Agency. In 1931 Bryan became a Member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers, and in 1934 he was elected Fellow of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce.

Bryan's position in Japan would have been quite satisfactory were it not for the signs that Japan was preparing for war. In late 1935 Bryan decided that the family must leave Japan, and after some deliberation he yielded to family pressure and bought his mother-in-law's large farm Gortatole in Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, even though he had no previous knowledge of farming. He thought that life in the country would suit his health. Little did he know what was in store.

For all its beautiful setting, Gortatole was a bad farming property, a fact Bryan's mother-in-law had never faced, being shielded by inherited means. However, Bryan studied the latest farming journals, set about draining and fertilising the land, and when tipped that there might be a market for Grade A, TT-tested milk, he decided to go for this. Cows were tested for bovine TB and only those that passed were retained in the herd. Byres were rebuilt, and the most modern milking machine installed with high pressure steam sterilising of the whole system every day. The result was that 17 months after Gortatole had been taken over by a complete novice, a whole column appeared in the county newspaper describing the dairy and hygienic



BRYAN PULVERTAFT

milking procedure there in glowing terms. In Northern Ireland at that time, only the Ministry of Agriculture's demonstration farm and one other farm could match Gortatole. Gortatole's technical success was not immediately matched by profitability. Bryan had invested heavily, but prices for farm produce remained low. It was World War 2 that forced government to change priorities, raise prices and guarantee a market, to the relief of thousands of farmers all over Britain.

Unfortunately Bryan did not enjoy the improved situation for long. Strain, intensely hard work, and a wet climate were more than his physique could stand, weakened as it was by illnesses in earlier life, and a severe illness in the winter of 1943-44 made Bryan realise that he would have to give up Gortatole. In late 1944 he sold up and moved to a small farm in Co. Wicklow on the drier side of Ireland. Here he had plans of starting one or other form of intensive farming but these never materialised. In the summer of 1945 illness, said to be hepatitis, struck again and for the last time. Bryan died on 15 July, three days before his 46th birthday.

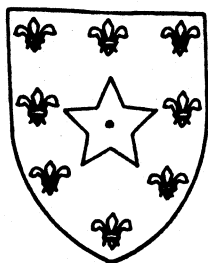
Bryan Pulvertaft did not achieve the fame of his illustrious elder brother Robin (q.v. Vol. 2, No. 10 of these papers) but considering the misfortunes that dogged him throughout his life, his achievements were remarkable, first in India and later at Gortatole. As recently as in 1991, when the name Pulvertaft was mentioned to a farmer in west Fermanagh, he said that that was the man who brought modern farming to the county. But life in Northern Ireland would never have been easy for Bryan. He was a Protestant, but he would have nothing to do with the Orange Lodge. Indeed he may have been appreciated more by the Roman Catholic community, as can be seen from the letter he and his wife Nancy received from Father McGauran, R.C. priest for the Gortatole neighbourhood, just before they left Gortatole:

Dear Mr and Mrs Pulvertaft

Just a line, to wish you every comfort and consolation on the day of your departure from Gortatole. I can well imagine the feelings of you both, but then, you also may be comforted in the thought that you set a great headline while there, and made others lead a more Christian life, by your good example. I shall always look back on my acquaintance with you, as being a great help in many ways. Praying God to bless you and your family in your new home, with many years of health, happiness and prosperity. When times shall become normal, you shall see me. I am, Yours sincerely J. McGauran

THE PULVERTOFT FAMILY OF BOSTON

One of the regular articles in the Lincolnshire Family History Society magazine is called "*Six of the Best*" in which the magazine's editor, Tom Wood, illustrates the coats of arms of six once prominent Lincolnshire families and writes something about the family. The series has been running for the best part of ten years so over 200 coats of arms have been illustrated but not that of the Pulvertofts; that is until March this year when they appeared with five other families. The sketch was:



and the text read:

The PULVERTOFT Family of Boston is also very ancient. It has well-established connections at the port going back centuries. By the 16th century the family appears to have removed to nearby Whaplode. Amongst the children Gilbert and Mussenden were favourite Christian names for boys. It is almost certain the unusual Mussenden came into use in the family because of the Marriage of Thomas PULVERTOFT (1561-1590) to Catherine a daughter of Francis MUSSENDEN of Healing. Arms: Or, a mullet pierced Gules within a border of fleurs-de-lis Azure (a red star with a central pierced opening within a border of blue fleurs-de-lis, all over a gold shield).

Any reference to the Pulvertoft name in family history society magazines is very welcome as it provides an opportunity for others who may know something about the family to make contact. The only small doubt that I have about the article in the Lincolnshire magazine is whether Mussenden was used more than once as a Pulvertoft Christian name. Certainly the name was used for the son Thomas and Katherine as was shown in 1981 in the very first issue of *Pulvertaft Papers* amongst *The Pulvertofts of Boston & Whaplode*. Since then, the records of his baptism and burial have been found in the Whaplode parish register but, other than this individual, no other references to this unusual Christian name have been recorded.

In response to the article I took the opportunity to publish a letter in the June edition of the Lincolnshire Family History Society magazine expressing my delight at seeing the inclusion of the PULVERTOFTs in *Six of the Best*, explaining that I had been researching them and the Irish PULVERTAFTs for over 30 years. I reported that it had long been my assumption that the first of the Irish family arrived there from Lincolnshire with Cromwell's army and asked whether any of the magazine's readers could suggest where in the Lincolnshire records I might find evidence of people moving in the middle of the 17th century from Lincolnshire to Ireland.

Two or three people made contact after reading my letter but I have to report that none got me any closer to finding that elusive connection than I was before *Six of the Best* was published. Despite this, the exercise was worthwhile as I was also able to quote that *Pulvertaft Papers* are lodged in a number of Lincolnshire libraries, thus giving them a bit more publicity.

[As a rather pedantic aside; had I been offering the layman's explanation for a *mullet pierced Gules* in the text opposite, I would have called it a *red rowel of a spur* rather than a *star* as that is the origin of the mullet.]

NOTES & QUERIES

I am most grateful to:

- Those readers who responded to my requests for wedding photographs and details of family medals.
- Those who have searched the Internet for PULVERTOFT & PULVERTAFT references. Amongst the numerous medical and geological items was an obscure Russian text quoting my involvement in national security issues! The most rewarding, however, was one of two references in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site – to R W PULVERTAFT who died on 5 November 1918. I was aware of his death from *Ireland's Memorial Records* (Vide Vol 3, p 55 of these papers) but had not been able to include him in the modern family tree. The War Graves site quotes that he was the son of Robert & Mary PULVERTAFT of Cork, confirming that he was the young man known to the family as "Laddie" – (M34R).
- Alison Evans (née Pulvertaft) for details of an annual Pulvertaft Prize and Pulvertaft Fellowship awarded by the British Society for Surgery of the Hand in the memory of her father, Guy Pulvertaft. Readers may also have seen in the press that Prince William had an operation on his finger after a rugby injury; performed in the Pulvertaft Hand Centre at the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary.

Birth

Congratulations to Robert Pulvertaft and Anne Line Rasmussen of Copenhagen whose daughter, Katinka, was born on 23 June 1998.

Death

It is with deep regret that the death is recorded on 19 May 1998 of Herbert Alexander Pulvertaft of South Africa.