

Obituary - John Montague Benett-Stanford  
5 February 1870 - 18 November 1947

Memories of a Colourful Personality



Jack Benett - "Old Jack" as he was affectionately known to a multitude of friends in all walks of life, was a great character with many endearing qualities. Blending with his colourful personality was a most active brain and pioneering spirit. A squire of the old type, he was equally beloved in White's Club as outside a cottage gate, or on the quayside at Poole.

Though some may think his versatile ingenuity occasionally outran discretion, it was always singularly appropriate, and he never harboured malice against anyone. Quick in temper, yes, but his natural instinct was unfailing kindness.

He was a born leader and pioneer. No appeal for the defence of the country went forth during his lifetime without finding him at the front or conspiring somehow to get there.

No novel idea or invention likely to improve his estate was passed by without consideration until these days of crippling taxes made such enterprise impossible for the old country landowners. His fertile active mind was never at rest; his interests were countless, and nobody ever got more out of life or more enjoyment there-from. All British sports and pastimes appealed to him but fox hunting always remained his favourite.

#### Countryside Interests

He read deeply in the history of his native countryside. If in this reading it so happened some fragment of local tradition took his fancy, he would order his car on the spur of the moment, and drive if needs be, miles in search of fresh clues and information. And should one have been fortunate enough to accompany him on such an expedition, one could not fail to be fascinated by his interrogation of old country folk in their dialect. They invariably "tuned in" to him, inoculated, it would seem, with his own enthusiasm.

When more active occupations became beyond his capacity, he took keenly to yachting and obtained a Master's certificate, passing the necessary examinations. He owned first, the converted Thames barge "Volunteer" and finally, the well-known tops'l schooner "Oceana". The former exactly suited his questing temperament and gave him perhaps, some of the happiest days of his life visiting shallow estuaries and little known Continental ports and canals.

#### Love of Crafts

Almost every room in his home at Pyt House reflected its owner's love of English craftsmanship. English good taste, and our culture generally. Nothing tawdry appealed to John Benett. He was a shrewd collector of English silver; spoons of provincial mark being his speciality.

Historically his great interest lay in the Carolean period, due to the active part his ancestors played in the Royalist cause, one of them being Military Secretary to Prince Rupert.

Conversationally, he was a source of delight to his friends for he had ready wit and lightning repartee. A fountain of information about his countryside, he was always ready with some interesting anecdote about any place one happened to visit in his company. And the countryside too, has many good stories about him - some founded on fact; some expanded into the realms of pure fiction.

His kindness and help to those less well circumstanced than himself was very great; but he never spoke of this, and few know the fullness of his charity.

#### "Feudal" Outlook

His character was complex and it is not surprising that some never really understood or appreciated him. His outlook was essentially feudal and he was out of tune with present times and tendencies. An old and valued friend of his once remarked, "John Benett was born 300 years too late", to which the writer would add heartfelt gratitude that the good God ordained it so.

Yes, there will be a few Wiltshire men in South Wilts and a few Dorset men in North Dorset who will not miss that old chocolate-coloured red-wheeled Ford V8. They will always remember it moving slowly along, the old squire inside, his strong face mellowed with age and a white beard, waving his benediction to all; stopping, now, to make some original remark to a passer-by again, to ask some provocative question, always terminated by his grand smile or full throated laugh, and, for the "Dedecai" woman with her babe, perhaps, a half-crown as well.

#### Funeral at Norton Bavant

The funeral took place in the churchyard of Norton Bavant where his family have been landowners since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Rev C G T Colson, vicar of Warminster, and the Rev J W Nind, rector of Semley, officiated at the choral service.

The cortege was preceded in the journey from Pyt House to the church by the late Lieut-Colonel's old car, in which he had travelled many thousands of miles and the coffin, borne by members of the Estate staff, Messrs J Day, K Mercer, F Hatton, R Sanger, D Parham and I White.

After the interment buglers from M Battery RHA, stated at Sutton Veny, sounded "Last Post" and "Reveille". The grave was lined by Mr F Hatton (head gardener) and Mr F Knight (head woodman).

Principal mourners were Mrs Benett-Stanford (wife), Mrs Webber (cousin), Commander Atwood (also representing Sir Charles and Lady Wingfield and Ethelred Lady Rumbold), Mrs Atwood, Mrs Arthur Pelly, Miss Andrews and Mrs Busby, Mr Hope (butler), Mr Clash (chauffeur) and Mr A G Bell (nurse).

Among the representative gathering were Lady Janet Bailey (also representing Lady Rumbold), Lady Lacey (also representing Major Walker), Dr Margaret Emslie, Mrs Edmund Rolfe, Mrs Sneyd (also representing Col R Sneyd), Mrs Russell Parsons (also representing Major Russell Parsons), Mrs Rimington, Mrs Egerton, Mrs Gerald Wills (also representing Mr Gerald Wills), Mrs G F Gauntlett and Miss Gauntlett, Miss Hatton, Miss Vigors, Miss Hart (also representing Messrs Gatehouse & Hart), Miss Mills, Miss Bowyer, Col and Mrs Mervyn Vigors, Lieut-Col and Mrs R F F Powell, Major and Mrs Morrison, Major and Mrs W A C Perry, Mr and Mrs Philip Rendell, Mr and Mrs W Michell, the Rev B FitzGibbon, S.J. (Wardour Presbytery), Sir Gerald Grove (also representing Miss Grove), Lieut-Col R A C Harding (also representing Mrs Harding), Major K P Wallis, Capt Pitt Rivers, Police Sergt Bardon (representing the County Constabulary), Messrs J Greenman, W Baragwanath, Richard Stratton, W M Drake, W H Clements, W E Brain, H J Dunford, L R Brice, E E Miller, H J Hiscock, Irving Gane, J Holdaway, G Miller, W Carter (representing Mrs Carter), J Bastable, W C C Hart, A F Sykes (also representing Mrs Frank Sykes and Mr W H Yeatman Biggs), R Stickland, R Drake, C M Hayes, G Cary, H J Musk &c. Members of the Pyt House estate staff also attended.

Among the floral tributes were tokens from the staff of Overhouse Laundry and members of the Fellowship Club, Hindon.

Western Gazette Friday 28 November 1947  
(From A Correspondent)