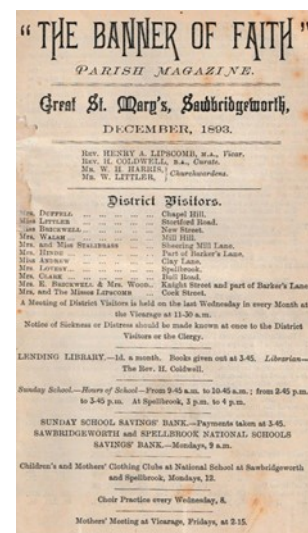
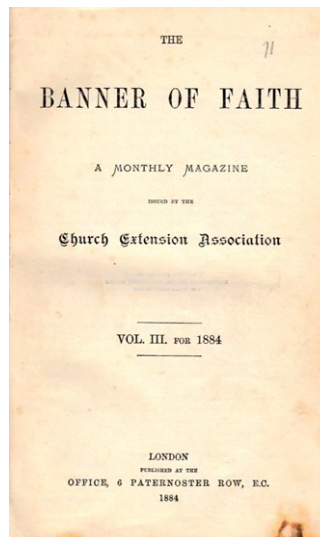
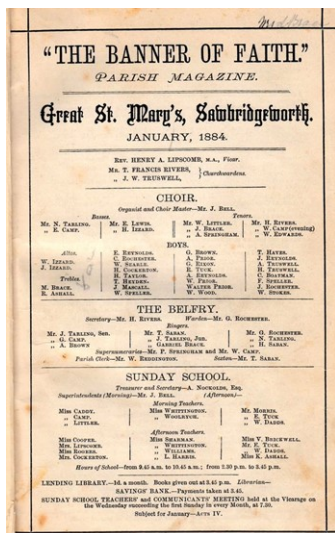


# The Banner of Faith: a Sawbridgeworth Church Magazine

Theo van de Bilt

The *Banner of Faith* magazine was a general magazine of the devotional kind, published from 1881 by the Church Extension Association. From 1883 onwards four pages with local Sawbridgeworth news were added to the main magazine, thus probably making it the first Sawbridgeworth magazine with local news. In the rest of this article the *Banner of Faith* is abbreviated to BoF



The BoF cover page on the left, with a 1884 local front page and, on the right, one from 1893.

The Church Extension Association was founded in 1870 by Mother Emily Ayckbom, an Anglican nun. The organisation had links with the "Community of the Sisters of the Church", a religious order of women in various Anglican provinces. The order still exists, and in 2012 had 105 sisters living in community. Mother Emily and other women who felt called to the religious life established schools and orphanages throughout England in the late 19th century. The order stood, and stands, under the patronage of St Michael and All Angels. The magazine was probably bulk ordered by the Sawbridgeworth vicar at the time, the Rev. Henry Lipscomb. Before we investigate local content, let us look at the BoF magazine in general.

With literacy still being a problem, and given the importance of religion at the time, the BoF must have been well appreciated. For openers there was a serial story. Serialised fiction was very popular then and most novels first saw the light in monthly or weekly instalments. The format was pioneered by Charles Dickens's Pickwick Papers in 1839 and by the 1880s was well established. Stories in the Banner of Faith had titles such as 'Hope', 'Straightforward', 'Who hath resisted his Will' and 'A Merry Heart'. They did indeed have a very Dickensian feel, telling tales of sick children, repenting sinners and god-fearing folk travelling abroad to convert the 'savages'. With excellent illustrations, these tales must have been the first thing readers went for in the magazine!

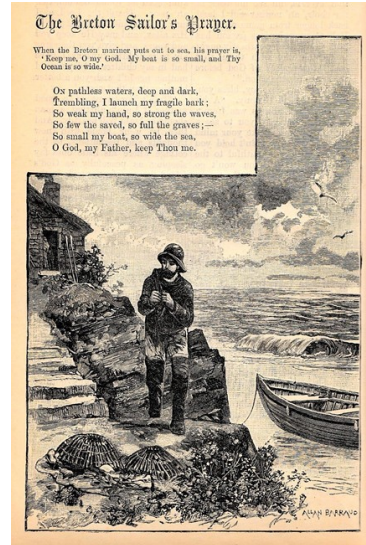
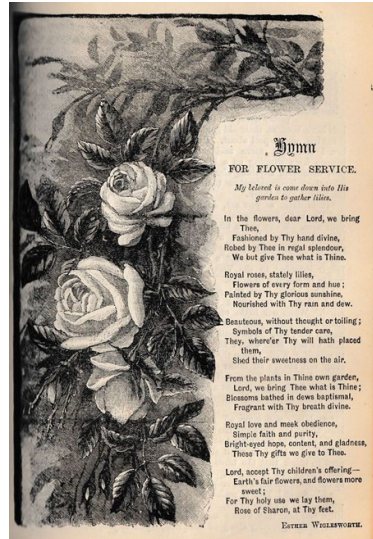
Before we carry on, let me show you some of the lovely illustrations that went with the stories in the BoF.



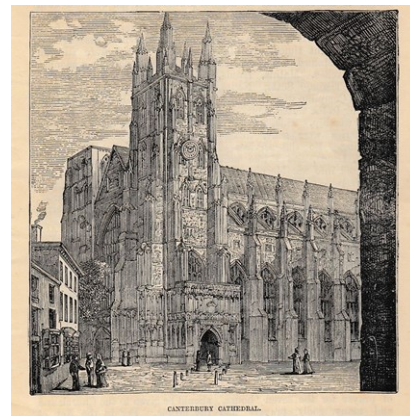
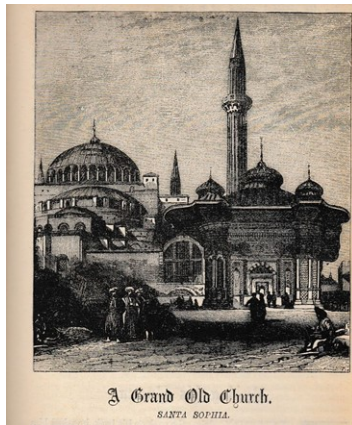
Religious festivals were, of course also marked with both illustrations and articles. On other pages, readers were encouraged to donate to the various causes supported by the Association.



Then there was poetry, something else the Victorians were very fond of.



Compared with us today, drowning in relevant and irrelevant information, news and fake news, the BoF's offerings were of a different, more simple, time. Easy as it is to look down on what is written in its columns, the Sawbridgeworthians, parishioners of Great St. Mary's Church, must have been very appreciative of the items selected for publication.



Looking at the Sawbridgeworth-specific pages now, we first look at the cover, which lists a great number of locals, many of whose names still strike a note today.

Firstly, there was the vicar, Henry Lipscomb, who probably took the initiative to start subscribing to the BoF. Lipscomb, was at the helm at Great St. Mary's for 30 years, from 1879 until 1909, thus making him the longest-serving local vicar. Then there were churchwardens: Francis Rivers and J.W. Truswell in 1884, and in 1894, W.H. Harris. In 1894 there was also a curate, Mr. H. Coldwell. No curate was mentioned in 1884 so Lipscomb was most likely on his own. In between, though, several other curates were mentioned.

The organist, Mr. J. Bell, was next to be mentioned, and then the choir. There were four basses, Messrs. Camp, Izzard, Lewis and Tarling, plus six tenors, Messrs. Brace, Camp, Edwards, Littler, Rivers and Springham. Then came the boys, two Altos, J. and W. Izzard and no less than 26 boys who sang treble. Let's go through those names as well: in alphabetical order R. Ashall,

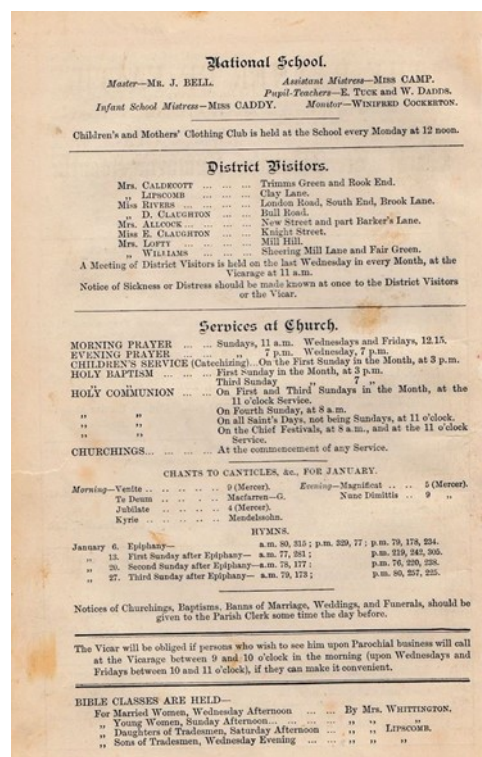
C. Boatman, M. Brace, G. Brown, H. Cockerton, T. Hayes, T. Heyden, J. Mascall, A. Prior, W. Prior, Walter Prior, A. Reynolds, E. Reynolds, J. Reynolds, G. Rixon, C. Rochester, J. Rochester, W. Searle, F. Speller, W. Speller, W. Stokes, H. Taylor, A. Truswell, H. Truswell and W. Wood.

In the belfry the secretary was Mr. H. Rivers and the warden was Mr. G. Rochester. Others on bell ringing duty were A. Brown, Gabriel Brace, G. Camp, G. Rochester, H. Saban, J. Tarling Sr., J. Tarling Jr. and N. Tarling. Supernumeraries, we would say reserves, were Mr. W. Camp and Mr. P. Springham.

The Parish Clerk was Mr. W. Reddington and Mr. T. Saban was the Sexton.

Next the BoF publishes details of the Sunday School, which at that point held two sessions, one in the morning from 9.45 to 10.45, and one in the afternoon, from 2.30 to 3.35. Mr. A. Nockolds was the secretary, assisted by Mr. J. Bell. In the morning the teachers were Misses Caddy, Camp, Littler, Woolrych and Whittington, plus Mr. W. Dadds, Mr. Morris and Mr. Tuck. In the afternoon the teachers were all female, two married ones, Mrs. Lipscomb and Mrs. Cockerton and eight unmarried ones, named respectively as Ashall, Harris, Sharman, Whittington and Williams. Sunday school teachers and communicants met monthly at the vicarage.

Finally, a lending library is mentioned, which could be joined for 1d a month. After the librarian, it strangely says 'Savings Bank'.



Another recurring page in the BoF listed staff at the National School, District visitors, Services at the Church, Hymns and 'Chants to Canticles' for each month, details about bible classes and a request from the vicar to normally only call at a specific hour. At the National School, (different of course from Fawbert and Barnard), the headmaster was Mr. J Bell, the assistant mistress was Miss Camp, the pupil teachers E. Tuck and W. Dadds, the infant school mistress teacher and the monitor was Winifred Cockerton.

I listed all these names to show how often the same families popped up in different roles, which in turn shows how important they were. and how crucially important the church was in the life of the town.

Turning to the Sawbridgeworth news pages of the BoF, headed either 'of the past' or 'of the future': it seems likely these articles were written by the vicar, which for the entire period covered was the Rev. Henry Lipscomb. The subject most often mentioned was the school. This was the National School maintained by the Church of England. (The Fawbert and Barnard School in Knight Street had no specific affiliation.) Time and time again parents are urged to send their children to school. Education for children between five and 10 years old had only become compulsory in 1880, just before the magazine started publication. Whether it was actually free is doubtful. From the *Story of Sawbridgeworth* we learn that 'school pence' were still required every Monday. However, many children stayed away from school when the weather was bad, or at harvest time. Prizes were, however, given to regular attendees. When you take into account that government grants were proportional to attendance it is understandable why parents were so forcefully encouraged to let their children attend school.

Below is a picture of the National School Building in Sheering Mill Lane. The National School was used from 1826 to 1947 as a school for all ages and from 1947 until 1959 as a secondary modern. The building itself dates from 1851 and was enlarged in 1870. This photograph, donated by Wally Wright, most probably dates from the 1920s or 1930s.



On a number of occasions national events are mentioned. In 1887 that concerns the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria which took place on 20 and 21 June. This was a big occasion, both nationally and locally. The parish magazine provides quite a lot of detail, so that an article on the subject elsewhere on this website will need to be rewritten.

One year later, in 1888, a big local occasion, but one which also made the national news, was the death and funeral of Corporal Joseph Vick, a veteran of the Battle of Balaclava and one of the 600. Vick, who was born in Pitton near Salisbury, had been living in Sawbridgeworth with one of his sons, got a military funeral. Nine years later, on the occasion of Victoria's 60-year jubilee, a plaque was unveiled at Great St Mary's Church as a memorial to this local hero.

Whether the Reverend Lipscomb was more or less strict than other men of the cloth is difficult to say. What did strike this reader, however, was the frequency with which he reprimanded parishioners for lack of respect. Poor attendance was frowned upon occasionally. In February 1888 Lipscomb notes that 'a habit has grown up of sitting during the saying of the psalm in the

beautiful service of the burial of the dead'. The vicar then goes into a lengthy explanation about when exactly people should sit or kneel.

In 1889 the death of Susan Wybrew was mentioned. She most probably lived to 102. Centenarians surely must have been much more of a rarity then. Mrs. Wybrew was born in Gilston in 1786 and was buried next to her husband Richard in High Wych churchyard. In 1890 and 1891 the building and inauguration of the school at Spellbrook is mentioned a number of times. Other subjects covered are the various clubs and organisations. One of these was the Drum and Fife Band, which was led by Mr. Bell who, as we saw above, was a teacher at the National School. A Sgt Howe was also involved in it. As reported by the BoF, the Drum and Fife Band supplied some musical entertainment on a number of local occasions. The photograph on the next page, kindly provided by Steve Hyam, was taken in 1884



PETER TAYLOR,  
Open and Closed Flys, Waggonettes,  
and Traps on Hire.

✧ GOOD STABLING. ✧

WILLIAM IV. INN, SAWBRIDGEWORTH.

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W. LITTLE,  
FAMILY BUTCHER,  
THE SQUARE,  
SAWBRIDGEWORTH, HERTS.

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W. H. HARRIS,  
BAKER AND CONFECTIONER,  
SAWBRIDGEWORTH.

Dealer in Corn, Flour, Meal, Bran, &c.

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B. ALCOCK,  
Furnishing and General Ironmonger,  
GLASS, CHINA, AND EARTHENWARE WAREHOUSE.

Water and Gas Services Laid on from Company's Mains.  
Plate, Cutlery, China, and Glass Lent on Hire.

SAWBRIDGEWORTH.

How long did the BoF continue? Bound copies of the magazine at Sawbridgeworth Library go up to and include the year 1893. On the internet old volumes are offered for sale up to 1897. It is possible the townsfolk discontinued their subscription in 1893. For those last three years a page with adverts was included in the Sawbridgeworth supplement. See above. Only two of the names mentioned on this page ring a bell for this author, the 'William IV' pub and Harris the bakers. Does anybody know more?

The main source for this article was, of course, the *Banner of Faith* magazine itself, selected pages of which can be found in the Archive section of the SLHS website. Bound copies of the Magazine itself can be accessed at Sawbridgeworth Library. Additional information came from Wikipedia.