

The Branscombe Project

LOOKING FOR HISTORY

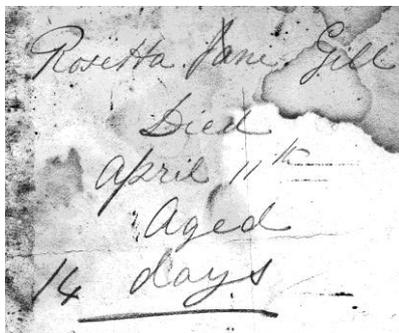
We'll begin with a newspaper bundle found at the Fountain Head.

Thomas Gill was inn-keeper at the Fountain Head for sixty years, from 1874 to 1935. He wasn't just an inn-keeper, he was a wheelwright and sign-maker, and made all the coffins for the Street end of the parish.

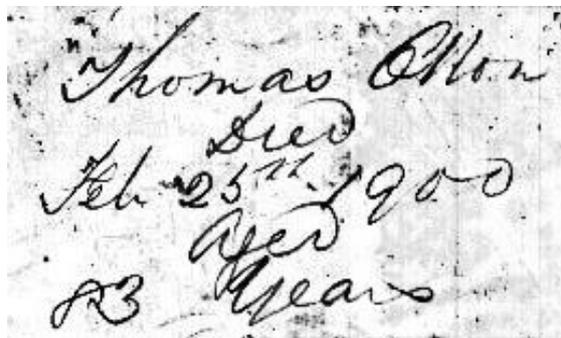
When he retired, his nephew Archie took on the pub and looked after it for another thirty years. Just before he retired in the late sixties he told his neighbour, Dick Fisher, that he could help himself to anything in the old workshop. So Dick swept up a whole load of papers, wrapped them in newspaper, and took them next door. Another thirty-five years went by and then Sheila Fisher gave us the bundle.

When we came to open it, we found that Archie had never used the workshop and that most things belonged to Thomas and dated to the later nineteenth and early twentieth century. They were more than a hundred years old.

There were dozens of scraps of paper with details of people for whom Thomas was making coffins. Of 31 slips, 6 were for babies



Rosetta Jane Gill
Died
April 11th
Aged
14 days



Thomas Ollon
Died
Feb 25th 1900
Aged
83 years

of less than a year (all girls), 2 were five year olds (one boy, one girl), 1 an eighteen year old-woman, 3 twenty to forty years old (three women): 4 forty-one to sixty (all men); 11 sixty-one to eighty (six women, five men); and 4 over eighty (three women, one man). It suggests high infant mortality – but why so many girls? – and, probably, high mortality of women in child-birth.

In the Easter exhibition (April 4 -8) *The Tale of Three Pubs* there'll be a display Thomas's papers. There's a great range - a recipe for toothache, practice lettering, bills of sale, potential investment portfolios.



Cure for the Toothache
Sincture of Benzoin six
drachms, iodine tincture
one drachm, Spannin
half drachm, Chloroform
one drachm.
Thomas Gill

APRIL 1914

A woman will cling to the
object of her heart alike a
Postum to a gum tree, and
you cannot separate her without
snapping strings, that no art can
mend, she will sometimes ^{leap} a
and a portion of her soul on
the upper ^{leaf} of your affections
she will sometimes see something
to love where others can see
nothing to admire, and when
her fondness is fixed on a
fellow, it sticks like glue
and tangles in a busy
head hair.

ARTHUR WHEELER & Co.
 STOCK AND SHARE BROKERS,
 TOWN HALL SQUARE,
 LEICESTER.

Telegraphic Address: "Catsola, Leicester."
 Telephone (No. 1000 in street) Town Hall

Thomas was a life-long bachelor, and here, to finish with, is a rather curious, unenthusiastic appraisal of women ...

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