

THE BISHOP'S BRIEFCASE

One advantage of a family history website is the way it leads to new contacts: to distant or long-lost cousins finding information about their ancestry, and contributing 'new' material like photos, family trees and letters.

This story can be told thanks to Julia Kirwan, who inherited an artefact that had been discarded or lost: a briefcase belonging to John Fielder Mackarness (1820-89), Bishop of Oxford from 1870. Julia, herself an amateur genealogist, tracked down JFM's descendants through The Mackarness Place, and generously offered to restore the briefcase to them (the Bishop's great-great-great-grandson Daniel Mackarness was able to collect it, having discovered he and Julia were neighbours!)

We will probably never learn the full story of the briefcase's journey, but believe it was found some years ago in a skip, during the renovation of a house in Petersfield. One document in it mentions the Bishop's youngest son, Arthur J C Mackarness, 1865-1960, who was a solicitor in Petersfield for many years¹.



The initials beneath the mitre stand for John Fielder, Oxon.

¹ AJCM co-founded the firm of Mackarness and Lunt (still in Petersfield High Street) in 1894. His great-nephew Peter Mackarness became a partner in 1952, and Peter's son Simon in 1970. Since Simon's retirement, there has not been a Mackarness at the firm.

The briefcase was evidently ‘top of the range’ for its time: as well as a variety of documents, it held ivory or bone writing implements and a paperknife, a small portable inkwell and tinderbox type lighter.



Among other official documents, the case contained an 1855 letter (below) from Lord Lyttelton, appointing JFM as ‘one of my domestic chaplains’, and (right) the Bishop’s Oath of Homage from 1870.

Dated 21 September 1855

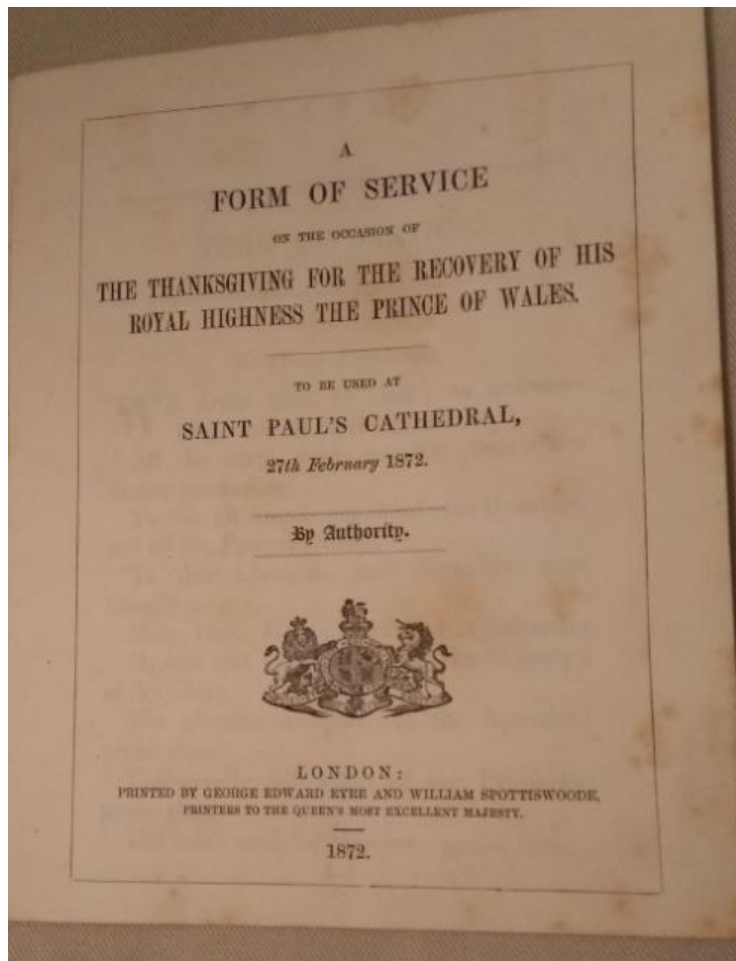
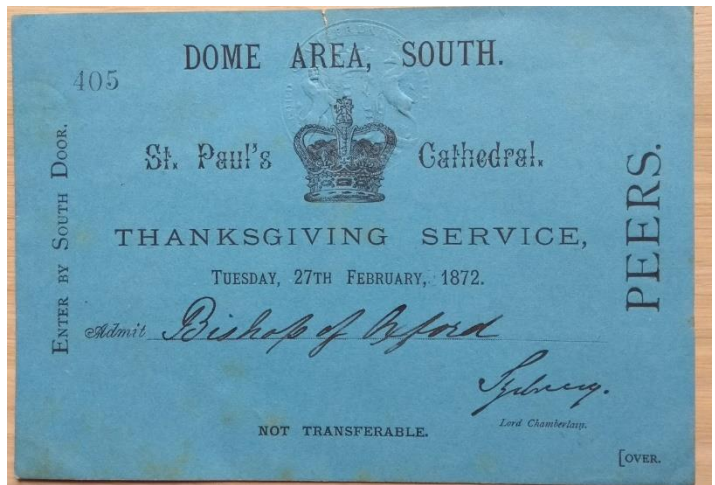
The Right Honble George
William Lord Lyttelton
to
The Reverend John Fielder
Mackenzie, M.A.

Appointment of a
Chaplain -

Homage

I, John Fielder Mackenzie, Doctor in Divinity,
now Elected Confirmed and Consecrated
Bishop of Oxford, do vividly Testify and
Declare that Your Majesty is the only
Supreme Governor of this Your Majesty's
Realm, and of all other Your Majesty's
Dominions and Countries, as well in
Spiritual or Ecclesiastical Things or Causes,
as Temporal. And that no Foreign Prince,
Primate, State, or Potentate, hath, or ought
to have any Jurisdiction, Seniority, Superiority,
Pre-eminence or Authority Ecclesiastical or
Temporal within this Realm, or any other
Your Majesty's Dominions, and therefore
I do utterly renounce and forsake all Foreign
Jurisdictions, Powers, Superiorities, and
Authorities. And do promise that from
henceforth during my Life, I shall and
will bear true Faith and Allegiance to
Your Majesty, Your Heirs, and Lawful
Successors

Several documents have a Royal connection. There was an invitation to a Service of Thanksgiving for the Recovery of the Prince of Wales in 1872, as well as an entry pass and Form of Service.



Below is an invitation from the Lord Chamberlain to the wedding of Queen Victoria's son the Duke of Connaught in 1879, together with Orders of Service from this wedding and that of his brother, the Duke of Albany, in 1882. Both took place in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

Lord Chamberlain Office,
St James Palace, S.W.

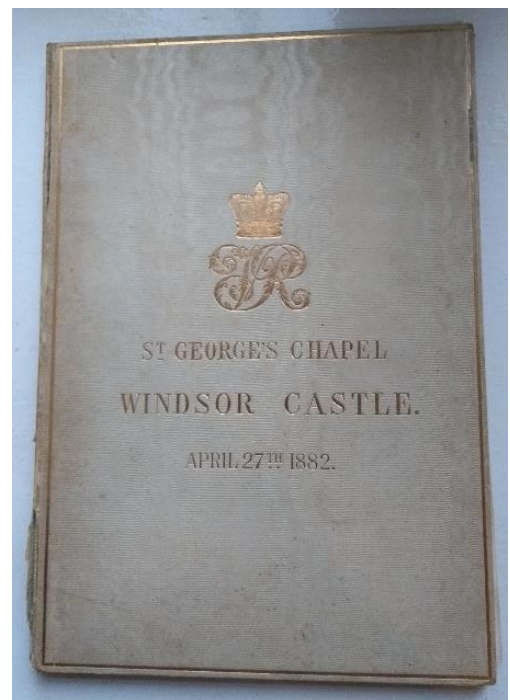
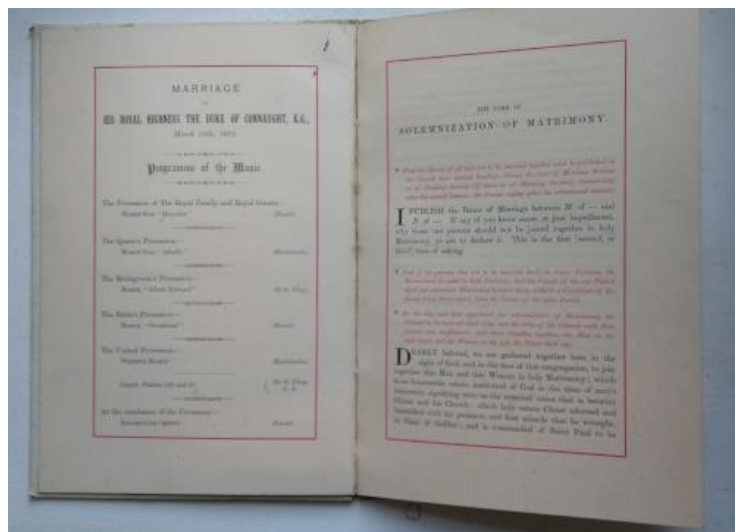
15 February 1879

My Lord Bishop,

I have received the Queen's Commands to inform you Lordship that it is Her Majesty's desire that you should take part in the Service at the approaching Marriage of His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, which is to be solemnized at Saint George's Chapel, Windsor Castle on Thursday the 13th of March next at 2.30 o'clock.

I have the honour to be,
My Lord Bishop,
Your Lordship's obedient servant,
Herford
Lrd Chamberlain

The Bishop of Oxford.



The Bishop of Oxford officiated at a third Royal wedding, that of Princess Frederica of Hanover to Alfons Von Pawel-Rammigen on 24th April 1880. The Bishop's invitation is on the right, a set of hymn sheets is above. Additional documents suggest that he was not originally going to conduct this ceremony, but stepped in to replace someone else.

The Lord Chamberlain
has received Her Majesty's Commands, to invite
one *Alfred* *Edward*
to the Ceremony of the Marriage of
Her Royal Highness the Princess Frederica of Hanover
(Princess of Great Britain & Ireland)
with The Freiherr von Pawel Rammigen,
in the Private Chapel at Windsor Castle,
on Saturday, the 24th of April 1880, at 3 o'clock

Dress
FOR LADIES — Morning Dress
FOR GENTLEMEN — Evening Gait, Morning Trowsers
Coats & Accessories

The text of the address given by the Bishop on that occasion (right) was in the briefcase, presumably written in his own hand. ("Duties!" There may be to some a harsh sound in the word. We are half inclined to doubt whether any thought of constraint and duty should intrude on this happy hour...)

Afterwards the Dean of Windsor, Gerald Wellesley, sent him a letter of thanks (below) on behalf of Queen Victoria.

The Marriage Service, with its hopes and blessings, is over. But some words must yet be spoken, - "de claving" - so the order runs - "The duties of man and wife." "Duties"! - There may be to some ears a harsh sound in the word. We are half inclined to doubt whether any thought of constraint and duty should intrude on this happy hour. But surely, when we consider it, there is no contradiction: - on this case duty and happiness are all one. There is a real blessing and joy in the discharge of such obligations as belong to this "holy estate." It is true indeed that mutual sacrifices - sacrifices of inclination, of habit, of temper, are required of husband and wife. But these are felt to be sacrifices no longer, when love offers them, - when duty is the tribute of loving, loyal hearts.

And so we come to see that the essence of all kindly affections between those who are joined together in "holy matrimony" is in truth an illustration of the great principle of all Christian duty, - that "love is the fulfilling of the law." As Christ "loved the Church, and gave himself for it," so Christian marriage is the school of mutual devotion: here his children are taught to deny themselves from day to day, - each for the other's sake.

THE DEANERY
WINDSOR

My dear Bishop
The Queen having
to express her sympathy
with the performance
of the ceremony a sketch
by you of the altar
work is so as to meet
sympathy and interest in it
Ever Yrs
G. Wellesley

April 28
1834

Princess Frederica also wrote him a personal thank-you note (image and transcription below).

ASHBURNHAM PLACE.
BATTLE, SUSSEX.

3. 2/0

My dear Lord,

I hope you
will accept my
best thanks for
the services you
were kind enough

4. 5
I hope
for all
the dear Palace
be for all

ASHBURNHAM PLACE

BATTLE, SUSSEX

3.80

My Dear Lord,

I hope you will accept my best thanks for the services you were kind enough to render [sic] me on my Wedding day, for which I had no opportunity of thanking you at the time.

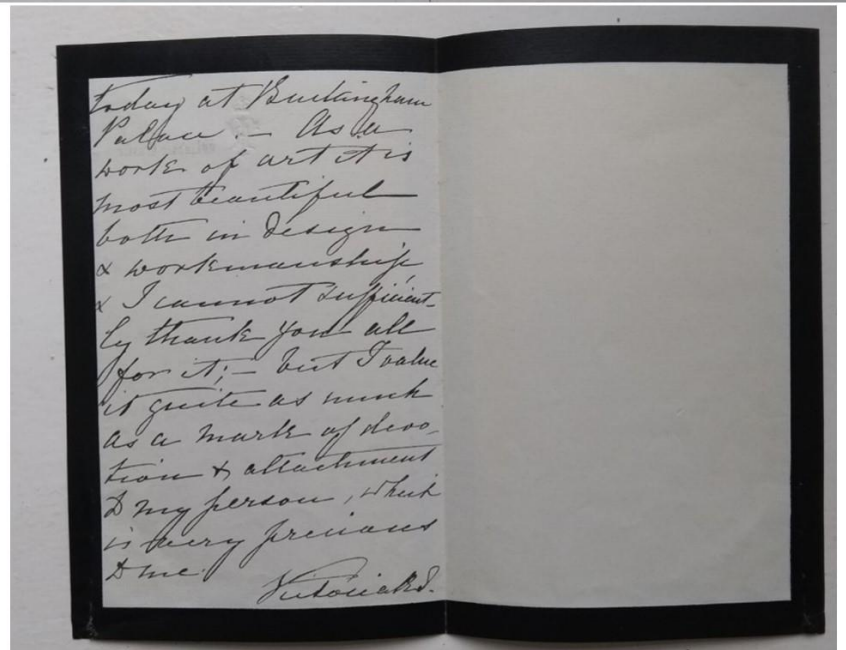
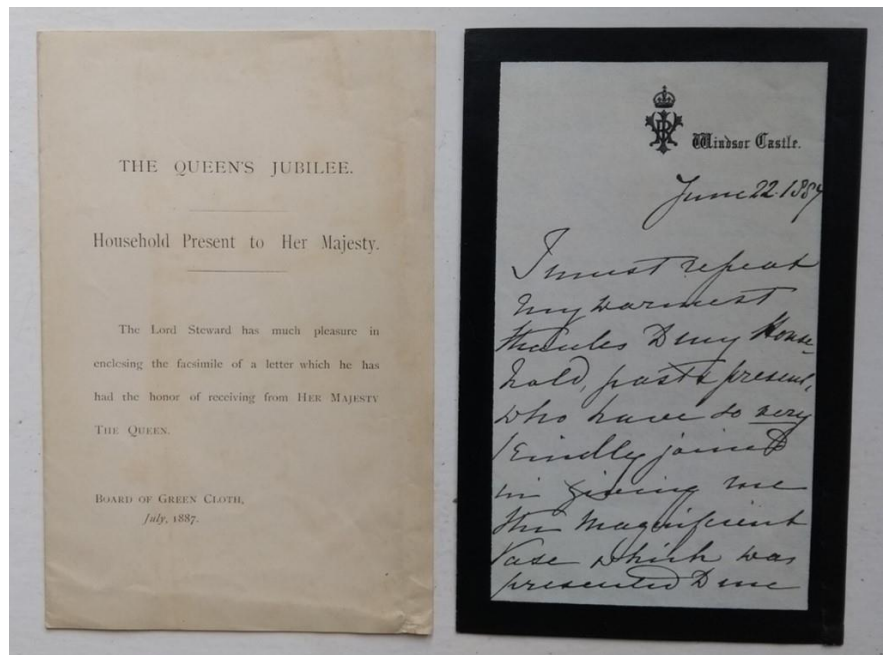
The address you substituted at the close of the service for that usually read was very touching and I appreciated it very much.

Believe to be, my dear Lord,

yours truly,

Frederica

A facsimile thank-you note from Queen Victoria (right), dated 1889, refers to the gift of a vase from 'my Household, past & present'.



Other documents in the briefcase include:

1. A letter from 'Abingdon' – assumed to be Montagu Bertie 1808-1884, 5th Earl of Abingdon – to the recently consecrated Bishop in 1870.
2. An incomplete letter written from Osborne House in 1885 to Lady Biddulph, Maid of Honour to the Queen. It was presumably sent by Princess Beatrice, Queen Victoria's youngest child, who married Prince Henry of Battenberg in that year. It promises to 'buy some Honiton lace for my trousseau' and refers to 'the Bishop of Oxford's letter, which I have shewn Mama'. Honiton was the Bishop's home town.
3. Four newspaper cuttings, all presumed to be from *The Times*: a section headed 'French Papers' (date missing) with a translation of Louis XVI's Last Will and Testament from 1798; two cuttings from 1858, concerning the retirement of the Bishop's father-in-law Mr Justice Coleridge from the King's Bench; and one from 25 April 1880, reporting on the wedding of Princess Frederica (*The Bishop of Oxford, in his lawn sleeves, accompanied by Dean Wellesley, celebrated the marriage*).
4. Note written in March 1871 apparently referring to items of the Bishop's clothing, including *The Ordinary Episcopal habit; gold fringed gloves & the collar instead of ribbon..*
5. Sheet with a list of guest houses in Scarborough – Esplanade, South Cliff, St Nicholas Cliff – with noted features such as *Good Sea View* and *Good rooms & good cooking*. JFM's eldest son Charles became vicar of St Martin's Church, Scarborough, in 1889, the same year that the Bishop died.
6. Sheet of accounts from around 1915 (after the Bishop's time, and therefore probably relating to Arthur Mackarness or one of his clients), with items such as *Venezuelan cattle 75,000 head sold at £5.50 a head, £43,000; 200,000 shells for Russian govt, profit £4,000; 300,000 shells to French govt, profit £7,000; Horses from Missouri, 20,000. profit £5,000.*
7. Three documents relating to financial affairs of the Rev P J Miller of Langrish Vicarage, Petersfield: 1917 letter from the Rev Miller concerning the transfer of shares; receipt for £16 11s 3d paid by the Rev Miller in 1935 for Ecclesiastical Dilapidation Measures; Notice of Income Tax Assessment dated 1934 (Arthur Mackarness' name appears on the document as Clerk to the Commissioners).
8. Page 3 (undated) of a letter relating to an insurance policy worth £1,000, mentioning Mr and Mrs Dixon and 'infant children'.

The briefcase contained two images: a postcard of St Peter's Church, Tiverton, Devon...



... and a photo of a young woman. The profile is like that of the Bishop's second daughter Eleanor (Nell) Parsons née Mackarness, 1855-1936. However, the youngest daughter Florence 'Flossie' died in 1887, aged only 17. A document in the archive says her father never got over her loss. Could this photo have been the last one ever taken of Flossie, wearing her hair 'up' for the first time?



Patience Jones née Mackarness

November 2021