

Thought for the week

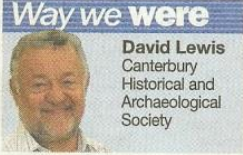
Monty Beeching  
Loss, Hoath

HER has reached the age of 90. Amazing! She is not just by family, but by international contacts for the years. You can tell she's had an interesting and varied life. Risk taking and problem solving have been at the core of her ventures.

Her stories to tell, fascinating grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They in turn, pay tribute to her determination, sense of humour and love of swimming and sailing.

She has possessed many of the gifts, not least, learning to swim in her adult life, having been born in Wales. One of her children describes my christening. To the horror of the orthodox church gathering, my mother proudly showed individualism, having sewn the christening gown. It did not go down well in 1923! The move to England was a result of her reserves of creativity. Perhaps it is not that my mother has many of these gifts. Her mother saw her living in Israel, travelling to many parts of the world. It is in part work-related, but a result of her wanting to spread a message of hope, justice and peace found within the faith. She had come to know a lifestyle enveloped in peace and kindness; knowing Jesus as her saviour and friend. It has been a joy, giving her hope, both in this life and the next.

# Jade axe leads to former MP with a shady history



IN 2010, Radio 4 listeners were able to hear a series of 15-minute programmes called The History Of The World In 100 Objects.

In each of the 100 episodes, the British Museum director Neil MacGregor described one object from the museum's collection which represented a key aspect or development in world history.

I was surprised to hear that one of the selected 100 objects, a jade hand axe, was described as being found in Canterbury.

I was even more surprised to find out that no local archaeologists could explain who dug it up, when it was found, where it was found, or indeed anything at all about an object that was seen by the British Museum as one of their top interesting 100 objects in the world!

The axe can be seen in the British Museum (Room 51). It is exquisite – pleasingly smooth, highly polished and just over six and a half inches (219 mm) long. Experts estimate that it could



THE MP'S MANSION: Abbot's Barton, home of Francis Bennett Goldney, is today a hotel in New Dover Road

take 1,000 hours of polishing to reduce a jade axe to this perfect state.

It dates apparently from around 4000 BC and has never been used

for cutting or scraping – this item was not a tool but was kept and treasured for reasons of prestige, power or art.

The inherent markings in jade are so distinct and variable that, in some cases, we can identify the block of jade from which they were originally cut.

In this instance, archaeologists have identified the source rock lying at over 6,500 ft (2,000 metres) in the North Italian alps.

from his personal library but also city charters that clearly belonged to the city archives, which were returned only after a court case that cost the city council £500 in legal fees (more than £40,000 in today's money).

It also seems he may have been implicated in the theft of Ireland's crown jewels from Dublin Castle in 1907.

In February that year Frank had been appointed to the office of Athlone Pursuivant, an obscure post in the Irish Office of



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Amazingly, a similar  
jade axe found in  
Dorset (now on show  
in the Dorchester  
Museum) can be  
traced to the same  
alpine source.

All this sheds  
fascinating light on  
trade routes and  
social organisation  
of our forefathers  
6,000 years ago.  
British Museum  
staff were able to  
tell me one further  
fact about the  
Canterbury jade axe –  
it was donated to them in  
1901 by a Major Frank Bennett  
Goldney.

Frank Bennett Goldney was MP  
for the city from 1910 to 1918 and  
mayor from 1906 to 1911. He was  
also curator of the newly formed  
Beane Museum, and was  
instrumental in getting Queen  
Victoria to confer a royal status for  
the new institution.

He was a confirmed bachelor  
and lived with his mother in Abbot's  
Barton, now a modern hotel on the  
Dover Road. He died in 1918 in a  
road accident in France whilst  
serving as an assistant military  
attaché to the British Embassy in  
Paris.

Since then serious doubt about  
his integrity has come to light. It  
seems Frank merged his personal  
life with his roles as MP, mayor and  
museum curator without clear  
boundaries, and was careless with  
who exactly owned what.

His estate for probate purposes  
included not just the 2,000 books

to the city archives, which were  
returned only after a court case  
that cost the city council £500 in  
legal fees (more than £40,000  
in today's money).

It also seems he may have  
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from Dublin Castle in 1907.

In February that year  
Frank had been appointed  
to the office of Athlone  
Pursuivant, an obscure  
post in the Irish Office of  
Arms. The robber has  
never been found, nor  
the jewels returned. Not  
long after the theft, one  
missing relic from the  
Irish collection turned  
up in the Beane  
Museum – Frank  
explained it had simply  
been temporarily  
borrowed. On Frank's  
death it turned up in  
his personal effects.

Given Frank's  
muddled personal  
affairs and dubious  
business ethics, we can  
only guess at the true  
facts. Did he own the jade  
axe? Was it really from a  
Canterbury source? I'm afraid we'll



DUBIOUS: Frank Goldney



Find more tales of Canterbury  
history at the website. Visit  
[canterburytimes.co.uk](http://canterburytimes.co.uk)

[canterburytimes.co.uk](http://canterburytimes.co.uk)

never know. But it's still a stunning  
piece with a fascinating story.

For more information, visit the  
CHAS website, at  
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