

Squire Gardiner goes to sea

As part of my study of building development in Goring 1870-1914, I have been trying to find out about Charles Lawrence Weare Gardiner (1849-1925) who owned much of the land in the parish at the start of this period. He inherited almost 2,000 acres from his father Samuel Weare Gardiner of Coombe Lodge, Whitchurch, when the latter died in 1866. Samuel bought the Goring estate in 1819 from John Nicholls soon after the Enclosure Act came into force. By 1871 Charles was living at The Temple in Cleeve, a single young man with a bevy of servants.

Yet Charles Gardiner has proved an elusive figure to research. He gradually sold off most of his inheritance for building land and advertisements in old newspapers have proved a useful source in tracking the sales. The recently available subscription website British Newspapers Online has been invaluable for searching these out from the comfort of home. Included in the collection are many national papers as well as local ones such as the *Reading Mercury* and *Jackson's Oxford Journal*.

Imagine my surprise when a list of names in the *Morning Post* dated 28 March 1876 under the unlikely headline of 'Arrivals at Radley's Hotel, Southampton' included our very own C.L.W. Gardiner. Then in the *Hampshire Advertiser* of 30 August that year, under 'Yachting Intelligence' our squire's name appeared again. He had arrived at Hammerfest aboard the SS Yacht *Glow-worm*. What was going on? Hammerfest is on the far North West coast of Norway.

Using the internet to locate sources, an incredible story emerged about Goring's Squire Gardiner. In 1876 the 300 ton steam schooner *Glow-worm* was registered at Southampton having been built for Gardiner by Day and Summers in Northam, Devon. She was intended for 'pleasure cruising'.

To understand Gardiner's 'pleasure cruise' we have to go back to the 1590s when the Dutch were attempting to find a northeastern route to China in order to set up trade. Due to wars with the Spanish and Portuguese, who held sway around Africa, the Netherlands found it difficult to use the southern route to Asia. This quest for a northeast passage via the Pole led to the exploration of Novaya Zemlya, an archipelago in the arctic waters north of Russia. William Barentz, aboard the *Mercurius*, charted the western coast in 1594 and on a subsequent voyage in 1596 rounded the northern point and, trapped by the ice, wintered on the northeast coast in a cabin built by his crew. In June 1597 Barentz and his co-explorer Jacob van Heemskerck left the house to row in open boats the 1800 miles to Russia. Barentz died on the voyage, but his name lives on in the Barents Sea to the west of Novaya Zemlya.

Other explorers subsequently mapped the islands and they were systematically surveyed in the 1830s. The first permanent settlement was established in 1870. In 1871 the Norwegian Captain Elling Carlsen, on a walrus-hunting trip to Novaya Zemlya, discovered Barentz's house at Ice Haven. It was still intact and he removed around 80 relics from the building, including a clock, navigational instruments, copper cooking pots and even books. Carlsen measured the house, which was 52 by 32 feet, before continuing to circumnavigate Novaya Zemlya and return to Norway where he sold the relics to an Englishman. The Dutch.



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A map of Novaya Zemlya showing Barents' Ice Haven at the Northeastern tip of the islands (Probert Encyclopedia)

government learned about the relics and bought them to display by a model of Barentz' cabin in The Hague. In 1875 Gundersen, another walrus hunter sailing around the island, stopped at Ice Haven and retrieved more artefacts.



THE 'GLOWWORM' IN DOVER HARBOUR, MAY, 31ST 1876.

News of these expeditions must have gripped the attention of Charles Gardiner, for in May 1876, having secured the services of Captain Carlsen as navigator, he set sail from Southampton on the *Glowworm* for Novaya Zemlya. The tale of his voyage is told in a postscript to a three volume work published in 1876 entitled *The Three Voyages of William Barentz to the Arctic Regions (1594, 1595 and 1596)*.

Charles Gardiner's SS *Glow-worm*.

.The yacht *Glow-worm* left Hammerfest (Norway) on June 23rd, and made her first ice on the 4th of July, being about twenty-five miles to westward of Goose Land (Novaya Zemlya). The approach to the land was found to be obstructed by solid icefields, but two days afterwards, Mr. Gardiner succeeded in reaching the landwater, and shaping his course north, he tried to get as far as Cape Nassau.

A continuance of westerly winds having blocked up the west coast entirely, Mr. Gardiner, a few miles north of Matotschkin Schar, was stopped by an impenetrable barrier of ice, which, closing upon the land, stretched itself far away to the westward. Finding the ice barrier which obstructed the entrance of Matotschkin Schar only two miles broad, Mr. Gardiner, under steam and canvas, forced his way through, and on the 20th reached the open water in the Straits. To his great surprise he found the Straits perfectly clear of ice, which, so early in the season, was a very unusual fact.

July 25th, his yacht reached the landwater along the east coast, and shaping her course for White Island, Mr. Gardiner boldly penetrated into the Kara Sea. Having got about thirty miles in that direction, his ship was brought up by a heavy solid pack, which stretched away to the eastward as far as could be seen. Judging that the westerly winds would have cleared the east coast of Novaya Zemlya, Mr. Gardiner steered north, with the intention of trying, if possible, to reach Barentsz Yshaven.

The weather now became most trying. Continual fogs, numerous icebergs, and, at intervals, ice all round, made the navigation in these almost unknown waters very dangerous. The little ship for many days had to grope her way along the coast like a blind man, but Mr. Gardiner, never yielding to all these dangers and obstacles, had the well-earned satisfaction of entering Yshaven at eight o'clock in the morning of the 29th of July. Finding the bay still filled up with fast ice, he anchored outside of it. Amidst fogs and snow-drift he, during three days, made the most careful researches on and about the spot. He found the ruins of the Old House fallen completely into decay; but, leaving nothing untouched, and grubbing in every nook and corner, he gathered from under the ice a most splendid and highly interesting collection of more than a hundred different articles. Depositing a record of his having been there, Mr. Gardiner, on August 2nd, shaped his course for White Island.

In vain he attempted to make more easting. About thirty miles distance from the land his yacht was always stopped by impenetrable ice. This forced him to go south in the landwater, and on the 13th he arrived at Waygat Island. In order to cross over to the Yalmal Peninsula, he had to push his way through very heavy ice; and while coasting north, along the low Siberian coast, a heavy pack was always in sight on his port beam. On August 18th, very thick weather obliged him to drop his anchor. It blew a gale from the north-west, which, bringing the pack down on the land, threatened to force the yacht ashore. The position was very dangerous indeed, and steam was ordered to be kept up ready at a moment's notice.

Not long after, a very large floe, some 1,000 yards in circumference, drifted down on the little ship, and the pressure was such that the cable with fifty fathoms parted. In a few minutes, the yacht drew only eight feet of water under her keel. Mr. Gardiner, however, not only succeeded in saving his ship, but next day got his lost anchor again; on which he boldly pushed further north. Three days afterwards, in 67 deg. 10 min. east longitude and 72 deg. 20 min. north latitude, he experienced very bad weather. A strong north-east gale, it being very thick, brought so much ice down that the ship could not hold her ground. This weather continuing, and it being rather late in the season, orders were given to return. Passing Pet Straits on the 23rd, the yacht was back in Hammerfest on the 28th of August, after a most successful and interesting cruise, the history of which adds another bright page to the glorious annals of English enterprise.

The collection of the Barentsz relics, which were brought over to England, consisted of more than a hundred different objects. Remains of carpenters' tools, broken parts of old weapons, and sailors' materials, form the greater part of the collection. Among the most curious articles are a wooden stamp

.with seal, a leaden inkstand, two goose feather writing pens, a small iron pair of compasses, a little cubic diestone, a heavy harpoon with ring, besides twenty well-preserved wax candles, very likely the oldest in the world now existing. Besides these, there are three Dutch books, two Dutch coins, an old Amsterdam ell-measure, together with the ship's flag of Amsterdam, having been the first European colour which passed a winter in the Arctic Regions.

The authenticity of the Barentsz relics is now fully borne out, for in one of the powder-horns was found the well-known manuscript which Barentsz left behind, hung up in the chimney. Though much decayed, it is with the exception of a few words perfectly legible. It is not, as some have supposed it to be, a kind of journal, but merely a short record, giving the principal facts we knew already from De Veer's accounts. The dates it gives, perfectly, agree with the aforesaid accounts, whilst the record is signed by Heemskerck and William Barentsz. The signature of Heemskerck is identified, but that of William Barentsz was, till now, unknown.

Mr. Gardiner, knowing that the relics brought home by Captain Carlsen in 1871, were bought by the Netherlandish Government, and convinced of the great interest which they possess for the native land of the great explorer, has most generously offered this collection to the Dutch nation. When this fact becomes known by the general public in Holland, we feel sure every true Netherlander will be very thankful to Mr. Charles Gardiner for this generous and courteous act.

L. Pv. KOOLEMANS BEYNEN.'

Lieutenant Beynen was an officer in the Dutch Navy who had access to Gardiner's journal of the voyage, so the account is authentic. It was Beynen who took the Barents Relics (as they are known today) back to The Netherlands where they were displayed in the Naval Museum. The artefacts are now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Our adventurous and philanthropic squire does not appear to have gone exploring again. In 1878 the *Hampshire Advertiser* of 20 July reported that 'Lord Lilford ... has purchased the auxillary steam yacht *Glow-worm* of Mr Charles Gardiner. She has been lying up at Day's Yard, Northam since Mr Gardiner returned in her from Arctic seas towards the latter end of 1876 ...' Lord Lilford kept the yacht until 1888 and in 1889 she was renamed *Monsoon*. Records for the ship show her in existence to 1911. However on his marriage in 1891 Gardiner left the river Thames and Goring for Devon, where he spent the rest of his life living beside the sea, although seemingly not voyaging upon it. He remained squire of Goring until his death in 1925.

What did the venture cost? How was it funded? Is it a coincidence that in December 1873 Charles Gardiner took out a mortgage for £10,000 (worth £457k at 2005 values*) on his properties in Goring? In the absence of any family papers it is unlikely that we shall ever find out.

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*The National Archives currency converter

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