

# BARRY GI BRIDES MAGAZINE

Number Three

January 2010



RMS Queen Mary, New York City, GI Brides Aboard?

## Welcome to Barry GI Bride Magazine Number Three!



- **MY THANKS** to those who have encouraged me to keep on with this venture! ☺
- Please check out **Mr. Adrian Pitman's** website @ <http://www.theworldatwar.info/> and see how he has kindly added Barry GI Brides' "stuff"!
- You can also find these magazines in pdf format @ <http://uswarbrides.com/> - My thanks to **Michele Thomas**, the webmaster!
- The history of the **863<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance Heavy Automotive Maintenance Company (Captain Peter Nelson's unit)** can be read @ <http://www.trowbridgemountain.info/historyof863rd.html>
- **THIS MONTH:** More about **Betty Farmer** and **Peter Nelson** and how her parents and her brother **Stuart** followed her to the North West of the USA.
- **ALSO:** Mrs. **Joan Young** and Mrs. **Gwynneth Hallett** who were mentioned last month are mentioned again this week.
- **PLUS:** **The Diary of a Barry GI Bride's Journey to America** – a contemporary account of an Atlantic crossing in 1946.

**While these young Barry women were marrying Americans where were the local lads?**

### **BARRY & DISTRICT NEWS**

**Friday December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1944**

It is estimated that there are no less than 4,000 and not more than 7,000 Barry men and women on active service in His Majesty's Forces. We think that will compare favourably with other towns of a similar size to Barry.

- But first a word about **Colonel George Pilkington:**



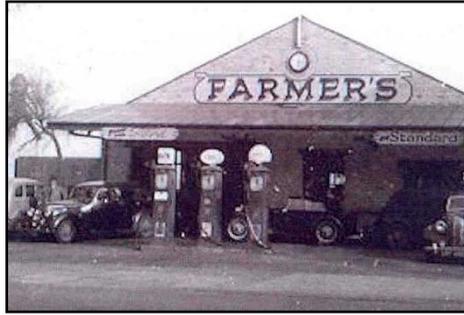
**George C. Pilkington, QMC, US Army**, born in Arizona in August 1888, **was the Commanding Officer of G-40** from 15<sup>th</sup> September 1942 to at least April 1944 after which I don't know what became of him. He was the third C.O. of the depot – his two predecessors were only *in situ* about a month. During his time here he was promoted from lieutenant-colonel to full colonel.

During the war years **Mrs. Elizabeth Pilcher-Clayton** was a WREN stationed at Barry Naval base and her father was a Major, 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Devon Regiment, second-in-charge of British soldiers on Barry Island, so they had social contact with Colonel Pilkington. She said that he “tended to take a huff if not included in any parties as a major named participant, and if missed out would ban his staff from attending.” Well, we can see (*previous issue, Number Two*) that he was certainly invited to the Farmer-Nelson wedding and was included in the official photograph.

Mrs. Pilcher-Clayton also said of Colonel Pilkington: “He was a quiet man and a strict disciplinarian... In as far as I can remember he was treated with some respect by his officers – I would not say they feared him, but they certainly watched their step.” Anyway, he was the man from whom officers at G-40 had to gain permission to marry Barry lasses!

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## Back to Betty Farmer and her family...



Farmer's Garage in Barry circa?

... Now Betty was not the only Farmer to migrate across the Pond, having married Captain Peter Nelson in 1944. Betty's brother, Stuart, wrote from Longview, Washington state:

"Before coming here I worked in my father's garage (Farmer's Garage) Broad Street, across from the Savoy ballroom. I was in R.E.M.E (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) for two years 1952-54, then back to the garage until 1957 when we came to Longview.... I worked for the Exxon Oil Company for 30 years and retired in 1987.

"My mom & Dad came here for a visit in 1960 to see if my dad liked it here. He didn't want to return to Barry at that time, but had to go back to sell everything. They then returned in 1963 and stayed until he died 19 years later at age 89. He said that he had never lived until he came here and enjoyed going fishing with my brother-in-law on the Columbia River and in the Pacific Ocean.

Before leaving Barry he ordered from Germany a new Mercedes 190. It arrived at the docks in Portland Oregon and I drove it back to Longview for him. It was the very first brand new car he had ever owned, even though he ran the garage in Barry since 1932."

***Captain Irving Peter Nelson*** was the CO of the **863<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance Heavy Auto Maintenance Company** which consisted of 6 officers and 1 warrant officer and 195/204 enlisted men. **The 863<sup>rd</sup>** was sent to Barry on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1943 and then sent to Cardiff June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

<http://www.trowbridgemountain.info/historyof863rd.html>

Next: we come to the two Barry GI Brides who ended up in California as mentioned last month, **Mrs. Joan Young** and **Mrs. Gwyneth Hallett**. Mrs. Young married in the USA, and as for Mr. and Mrs. Hallett, they tied the knot in Barry:

### BARRY HERALD

Friday September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944

#### HALLETT – WILLIAMS

The charming wedding took place at All Saints Church, Barry, on Saturday of **Lieutenant Herbert Francis Hallett**, US Army, son of Mr. P E Hallett of Oaklands, California and the late Mrs. Hallett and **Miss Gwyneth Eileen Williams**, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T J Williams, Tan-y-Fron, Barry...The best man was **Lieutenant D Crawl**.



Gwyneth's sister also married a GI, becoming **Mrs. Mair Conrad**. By 1951 Gwyneth has moved from California to Richmond, Virginia, on the east coast near her sister.

**WESTERN MAIL****Wednesday May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1944****CONRAD – WILLIAMS**

The engagement is announced between **Lieutenant Ernest Upsher Conrad, junior**, US Army, only son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Upsher-Conrad, Richmond, Virginia and **Mair**, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T D Williams, Tan-y-Fron, Barry, Glam.

**BARRY & DISTRICT NEWS****Thursday October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1951****HOME FROM THE "STATES" – Barry Girl's Impression**

Returned to Barry this week after a stay of five years in America is **Mrs Joan Young**, formerly Miss Joan Montgomery, Dovedale Street, Cadoxton, (Barry). Mrs Young went to Oakland, California, *where she married her husband*, who is a glass machine operator. While she has been in the "States," she has met and corresponded with another Barry girl – **Mrs. Gwyneth Hallett**, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs Williams, Tan-y-fron, Garden Suburb, Barry who now lives in Richmond, (Virginia) with her sister, **Mrs. Mair Conrad**.

A few days after her marriage in Oakland, California, Mrs. Young went to a newspaper office with a report of the wedding and had the idea that "Gwyneth," whose married name she did not know, would read the paper. The report of the wedding was printed and on the next day Mrs. Hallett (Gwyneth), called to see her. Since then they have been very friendly and now that they are living far away from each other they write regularly. Mrs. Young is staying with her mother in Dovedale Street until November 1<sup>st</sup> until she sails back. Mrs. Young said she receives the "Barry and District News" every week and is able to keep up-to-date with local affairs. She is pleased that wedding photographs are published as often she recognises the bride and bridegroom by sight, where she might have forgotten the name.

Maybe someone knows something about these three GI Brides and how their stories panned out?

It is good to hear from the GI Brides themselves. But you do have to wonder what the folks back home in war-weary, still rationed and bankrupt "Old Blighty" thought of this Letter from America! (Below)! But first, the wedding:

### BARRY & DISTRICT NEWS

Friday October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1945

#### MARTIN – GRANT

The Wedding took place privately (by special licence) at Cardiff on Monday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, between **Corporal William Martin** of Geneva, Ohio, USA, and **Yvonne Valerie Grant**, youngest daughter of Mr. Percy and the late Doris May Grant, and a grand-daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dure of Winston Road, Barry, who were both present. Best man (was) **Private M. Shearer**, USA Forces...

### BARRY & DISTRICT NEWS

Friday July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1946

#### Diary of a Barry GI Bride's Journey to America

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Dure of 14 Buttrills Walk, Barry, have received the following day-by-day diary from their grand-daughter, **Yvonne**, who sailed on May 6<sup>th</sup> to join her husband, **Dale William Martin** of Geneva, Ohio, U.S.A.

**Monday** – Well, I've finally started on my way. We left Tidworth Camp this morning, and taken by bus to Southampton. We got on board at 4:30 pm and sailed at 5:00 pm. Just had tea. Gosh, you should see the way they look after us. Coloured American stewards to serve meals and to bring us what we need. It's just like you see in the pictures. There are a lot of American soldiers on board going home. I can have anything I wish to order – turkey, chicken, steak, ice cream, bananas etc. From the PX (**Post Exchange**), all kinds of chocolates, perfumes, and the like. My two friends are with me in the same cabin.

**Tuesday** – Another day in here, land no longer in sight. Its pretty rough, the boat is tossing and rolling. Lots of girls sea-sick, but I feel OK up to now. I'm on the top deck most of the time as I like to watch the sea. Went to the pictures last night, then to bed. The American girls are real nice to us and do all they can to make us feel at home. Pouring with rain, but I slept well...

**Wednesday** – Weather still rough. I am up at 6am every day and take a walk on deck, then go to breakfast. Meal times are: breakfast 7.30-8.30, dinner 12.30-1.30, tea 5.30-6.30, supper 10.30-11. Both my friends have been sea-sick. I'm feeling fine...

**Thursday** – Been pretty busy today. Had to practice to put our life belts on; Line up on deck and when the officer said "abandon ship" gave us three minutes to do it. Lots of fun now, with plenty to amuse us – table tennis, pictures, music room, library. Days have gone very quickly. Sea air doing me a lot of good. What do you think of this, some of the girls are going over to get a divorce as they say that they are in love with Englishmen? They say it's quickly done this way.

### LONGING FOR LAND

**Friday** – Another day dawning and the weather is calm now. They tell us we would get to New York on Monday. Getting excited, all of us, wonder how I am going to like America? Missing you all now but feeling fine in myself.

**Saturday** – Weather good now, warm sunshine. Listening to gramophone records. Many girls here with children and one with twins and another little one. But they all look well and longing for land.

**Sunday** – Weather calm. About 100 American planes flew over the ship and the pilots waved to us. Must be getting near to the States. Don't expect I'll go to bed very early as I want to see everything.

**Monday** – Another day here. Had to go off our course as there's a girl aboard very ill. Sailed towards Canada where a small tug met the ship and an iron lung was hauled up.

I feel sorry for the poor girl. Doctor examined us today, looked into our throats. Voyage delayed.

### HELPING IN SURGERY

**Tuesday** – Lovely weather now. Most of us in deck chairs. Was chatting with the doctor today and when I told him I had worked in a chemist he asked me if I'd like to help him in the surgery. I got on fine. Tomorrow I'm getting up early to get a glimpse of the "Statue of Liberty."

**Wednesday** – Well at last we have arrived. Shall have to wait outside for a day, but I have seen the "Statue of Liberty" and it's 7 pm. Can see New Jersey at the back and what with the skyscrapers and the lights flashing in and out, cars running along, it's a grand sight.

**Thursday** – Landed at last and taken to the (train) station by taxi. Stopped at a sweet shop and when the girl behind the counter knew I had come from England they gave a three lbs. box of lovely chocolates just to hear me talk. Dale met me in Geneva with the car. His brother and sister were with him. All's well, and I've had a grand voyage.

### A LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

In a subsequent letter Mrs. Martin gave her impressions of life "over there". Shopping is a pleasure, plenty to buy, no queuing or coupons. Just walk in and fill your basket with anything you like. Plenty of butter, lard, eggs, fruit and cream cakes of all kinds. Prices are very reasonable in many things: ladies shoes 10 shillings to 15 shillings a pair and good at that; ladies real wool suits £3; furniture at all prices and so stylish. Most of the people, she adds, think a lot of the English and get a great kick of hearing us talk. It's very hot here now; you could fry your eggs on the pavement.

Again, if anyone should know how this story continued please let me know. Oh, the name of the ship is not given. One of the liners I should think. Definitely not a liberty ship!

Oh, and shillings? There were 20 shillings to a pound (£) and four dollars to a £...

Let's end this month with this *friendly* piece of advice for War Brides in the Newport based newspaper, the South Wales Argus. ☺

## SOUTH WALES ARGUS

Tuesday April 18<sup>th</sup> 1944

### LIFE IS NOT ALL HOLLYWOOD AND SWIMMING

#### Warns Girls Who Wed Americans



British girls marrying Americans serving here are warned by **Helena Pickard**, the actress and wife of **Sir Cedric Hardwicke**, that life in the USA is not "all Hollywood and swimming pools."

Lady Hardwicke, who has just returned to England from America to help in the war effort, told a Press Association reporter in London today that men in America gave more to their wives, but they also demanded more.

"Their wives must be able and willing to cook, clean and keep the house and children perfect", she said. In addition they must keep themselves glamorous.

Americans, especially in small towns are "very family-conscious, largely due to the attitude of mothers, who encourage their boys to have a good time." -- Reuter