



## Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society

Citation: Dr V D Harris 'A Note on Anthony Batts and his Poems' *Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society Occasional Magazine* 1, 3 (August 1910) 32-36

### Notices to Researchers

Articles are prepared in good faith using material available at the time. Some information will have been superseded by subsequent further research. Older articles should be considered as a starting point for research.

### Donations

The provision of articles is free of charge. Our service is maintained by volunteers but inevitably there are some costs. If you would like to make a donation towards these costs then please follow this [link](#).

### GDPR

Persons who use information about living people from history archives have a duty, under data protection legislation, not to use that information in a way which may cause distress or damage to them.

Researchers should be aware that, just because information is in the public domain, it does not necessarily make it lawful for you to make it public. Personal information is not covered by the Open Government Licence and may also be subject to copyright.

### Licence: Attribution-NonCommercial [CC BY-NC]

This licence lets others remix, tweak, and build on the MOSHRS material non-commercially, and although their new works must acknowledge MOSHRS and be non-commercial, they do not have to license their derivative works on the same terms.

*Milford-on-Sea Record Society.*

(approximate). Height above high water, 80 feet (Light). Established in 1859. Altered in 1888. Fog-Bell altered to Fog-Horn, 1906.

---

**A Note on Anthony Batts and his  
Poems.**

BY V. D. HARRIS, M.D.

---

A small volume of Poems by Anthony Batts, at one time the Village Schoolmaster of Milford, has been placed in my hands, and it may be of interest to the Society to read a short note upon the Author as well as upon his work.\*

Anthony Batts was a member of a well-known Milford family. His father, William Batts, was the Parish Clerk for a number of years, whose quaint sayings and eccentricities have been handed on to this day. Indeed it would require a Dickens to do full justice to the character. Both William Batts and his brother John were gardeners, the former to the then Vicar\* and the other to Mr. R. Jennings of Carringtons. William Batts had four sons, Thomas who took a prominent part in the early Volunteer movement, as the inscription upon his headstone in the churchyard testifies, (he died in 1862 *aetatis* 36 years), he was landlord of "The Gun Inn," Keyhaven, George, who was at one time Village Schoolmaster, another who died young, and finally Anthony. Anthony appears to have succeeded his brother George as schoolmaster.

---

\*My attention was first called to the existence of Anthony's Poems by his nephew who drives H.M. Mails to Milford at the present time. Nearly all the information about the Batts' family was kindly given me by the Milford Postmaster, Mr. A. Cole, who also lent me the volume of Poems about which these notes have been made.

• Rev. Thomas Robinson.

*A Note on Anthony Batts and his Poems.*

The exact date of his appointment seems doubtful, as at that time no regular minutes of the proceedings of the School managers appear to have been kept, but account books show that the schoolmaster received £28 annually. He was certainly the schoolmaster in 1848 and 1849, as there are two addresses written by him, "School Children's Addresses to Mrs. Whitby of Newlands," for those years on the occasions of the Annual Treats. The one for 1849 was sung to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne." The Village School\* was at this time located in a lane in the Village, opposite the Cottage Hospital. It had previously been held in a small house on the Village Green, now pulled down. The small volume (6½" x 4") was printed and published by R. King of Lyminster in the year 1850 and would seem to have been written in the two preceding years. The preface records the intention of the author to publish more of his work supposing the first volume was favourably received. This intention was not however carried out as Anthony died in 1850 (June 19th) in the very year that his book was published, at the early age of 26.

The volume contains 135 pages and over 30 poems, most of them short pieces in a variety of metres. It must be confessed that the larger number of the poems are somewhat gloomy, perhaps this is accounted for by the fact that he was an early victim to consumption, and that ill health more or less impressed his point of view.

The volume is entitled "The Wreckers and Other Poems," and no doubt the named poem, which occupied 21 pages, is his most ambitious effort. It is to be hoped that the incidents related in it had no foundation in fact. It tells of a vessel :—

---

\*Now in the occupation of Mr. Geo. Berry.

*Milford-on-Sea Record Society.*

HOMeward BOUND.

“Struck on the bar which girds the bay around  
The anxious crew by ardent labour tried  
To float their vessel on the buoyant tide ;  
But vain their struggles, ———”

Whilst the fishermen gave a helping hand to snatch  
“the prizes” from the waves :—

“Yet ’twas not love, no, nor compassion’s strain  
Nor other virtue led them on the main.”

The vessel strikes and breaks up. The wreckers look  
on :—

“Careless they stood, till the impelling sea  
Broke the strong hull, and set its treasures free,  
Then with a shout above the tempest heard,  
They cried, ‘She’s ours, self be the cheering word.’  
And hand-in-hand the Wreckers breast the wave,  
Not with a view some drowning wretch to save,  
But to secure a portion of the wares ———”

Further than this the chief wrecker does not hesitate  
to murder an unconscious passenger thrown upon the  
shore, round whose waist he had found a belt contain-  
ing gold, and whom he afterwards recognised as his  
son :—

“The deed was done, the father turned and fled,  
Trying to escape the image of the dead ;  
Vain the endeavour ! each moment, in each place,  
His eyes beheld the murdered stranger’s face,—  
Stranger no longer, for his hand had laid  
His own forgotten child among the dead ; ——”

This is tragedy indeed !

The next piece is “The Needles, after the late Wreck,”  
and the tone somewhat like that of the preceding  
poem :—

“Another sacrifice ! How many bones  
Lie bleaching in the caves beneath your base,

*A Note on Anthony Batts and his Poems.*

Or stud with phosphorous light the ocean's bed !  
Another wreck ! Upon your altars burn  
An immolating fire to quench the life,  
The hope of man, when in his happiest hours,  
Home gleams before him ; ——”

Another longish poem is on “Hurst Castle” and is more or less historical and contains an allusion to

“The martyr Charles, with fears distrest,  
Found in thy cells a captive's rest ——”

and

“Even now the cells are often shown  
Wherein the Stewart king was thrown ;  
But many a year has passed since then,  
With many a change of thought and men ;  
Some foolish customs are disused,  
While others good are more abused ;  
Invention, too, has, since thy birth  
Created girdles for the earth ;  
Steam and electric force have shown  
The power of man in every zone ——”

“The Loves of John and Joan” is certainly more cheerful than those already quoted, and tells of the wooing of John a farmer's man :—

“—— he'd plough and sow  
Plod on successive months, then reap and mow.  
The first to bind the sheaf of yellow corn,  
He led the month'smen from the dawn of morn.  
No master's eye he needed to inspire ;  
His iron frame no harvest-day could tire.——”

Of Joan :—

“A strapping wench was Joan and passing fair,  
With her for health and strength could none  
compare ;  
One fault she had, or rather blemish 'twas,  
And accident and not design the cause.  
Her master kept an inn (some say hotel—  
I can't decide although I know it well ; ) ——”

*Milford-on-Sea Record Society.*

The wooing went on apace until—

“Her timid glances on her plate were bent,  
While on her features John was quite intent ;  
But ere his look was o’re, an upraised eye  
Made John withdraw his gaze and deeply sigh.  
Thus did she feed the flame that burned his heart,  
Nor dreamt that she herself would feel the smart.”

This terminated happily in their marriage :—

“John bought the ring, his master did the rest,  
And in each other John and Joan are blest.”

Among the short pieces is a rather amusing sketch of a marriage of an old man of eighty-nine with a bride of sixty or so, a marriage which no doubt caused at the time a considerable amount of interest in the village.

The “School Children’s Addresses to Mrs. Whitby,” already mentioned, very prettily thanked that lady who took much interest in the school and entertained the children at Newlands.

Most of the other pieces in the book are short with the exception of one, “The Sacrifice,” treating of the finding of Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh.

Of course it is not pretended that this small book of poems proves Anthony Batts to be a genius, but at any rate it shews that he had read much and that his work was promising. If he had not died at so early an age it is quite possible that his matured efforts might have given him some more than local fame.