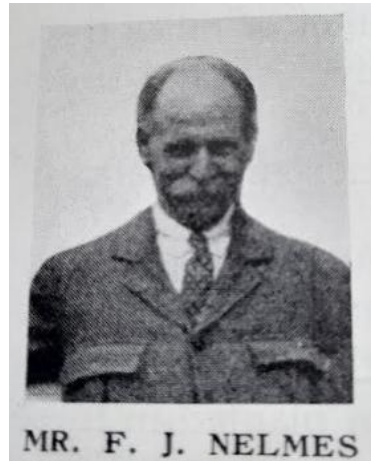


## **VILLAGE ECHOES**

### **FREDERICK JOHN NELMES** (Bedgebury Pinetum 1924 -1945)

With the Pinetum at Bedgebury celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Frederick and Annie Nelmes came to mind. In the 1950s/60s the 'ladies of Kilndown' took it in turns to host afternoon tea once a week. My Grandmother Dorothy Shepherd took part in this ritual and I was often taken along to sit quietly in a corner! One of those that participated was Mrs Annie Nelmes, wife of Frederick Nelmes who had been Head Forester at Bedgebury for 28 years.

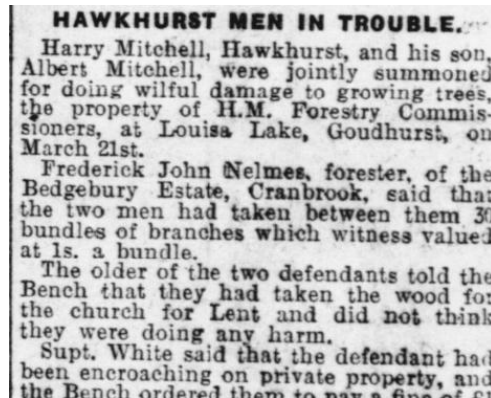


Frederick was born on the 27 June 1887 in Brains Green, Gloucestershire, to John and Mary Nelmes. His father was a coal miner. In 1911 he was boarding with the Jones family in Tintern, Monmouthshire, with his occupation given as Crown Woodman, working for the Woods, Forests & Land Revenue Department. The Jones had a daughter Mary Annie, seven years older than Frederick. Annie (as she preferred to be called) and Frederick married in 1911 and lived with her parents paying for board and lodgings at 14 shillings a week.

By 1921 the couple were living in Oxshott, Surrey and he is listed in the Census as a Crown Forester, working in Esher Woods. September 1924 saw them moving to Kilndown, firstly living at Priors Heath, then White Limes and then Park House. The couple did not have children.



Frederick was appointed Head Forester in 1936. He would have worked closely with William Dallimore in the creation of the National Pinetum. He would have seen the increase of visitors during the 1930's, especially picnickers (which were discouraged). He also saw the felling programme during WWII, when over a million cubic feet of timber was sawn in four sawmills. He saw bombs being dropped in 1940 and the disastrous fire of 1942, which spread over 360 acres. He no doubt would have had to deal with the 'Lumber Jills' of The Women's Timber Corps, which was set up in 1942 to help with the war effort.



8 April 1932

Frederick retired around 1945. In the 1952 Birthday Honours List, he was awarded a British Empire Medal for Services to Forestry. He died in 1964 in Capel Hospital, Tonbridge. My Grandmother continued to visit Annie, after she left Kilndown. We would take the No 80 Maidstone and District bus to Tunbridge Wells, then walk across the town to 85 London Road, a nursing home run by an Esme Bidlake. It had been the home of Thackeray, the writer and is now a restaurant. Small gifts were always taken, usually plants or flowers, but occasionally something I had knitted or sewn. Whatever it was, Annie was always grateful. She died in 1969, still in the same nursing home.



Kilndown Churchyard (Lynda Shepherd)

*First two pictures from the Goudhurst Coronation Book 1937*

Written by Lynda Shepherd, a member of the Society