

A Distinguished Heswall Resident

Brigadier-General Gerald Kyffin Taylor C.B.E.

by Jenny McDonald and Roger Lane



Gerald Kyffin Taylor 1863-1949

In this edition we detail the life and family background of a celebrated Heswall resident, distinguished for his service in the Army, in Parliament and in public office. Gerald Kyffin Taylor was born on 9th March 1863 in the district of West Derby, Liverpool. He was the third son of the Venerable William Francis Taylor D.D., LL.D, later to be Archdeacon of Liverpool, Rural Dean of Walton and Chaplain to the Bishop of Liverpool. William was born in Ireland, probably in Dublin, in 1821. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1847.

At the 1851 census William was lodging in Woodchurch Road, Birkenhead, and listed as official minister of Claughton Church. He married Annie Evans on 2nd October 1851 in Holy Trinity Church, Price Street, Birkenhead. Annie was born in Hindley, Lancashire, the daughter of Rev. Hugh Evans, vicar of Plemonstall in Cheshire and Betws-yn-Rhos in Denbighshire.

In 1871 the census shows Gerald, aged eight, to be living with his parents, five siblings and servants in Newbie Terrace, Everton. His father at the time was vicar of St Chrysostom in Everton. Gerald attended Liverpool College, and later became a lifelong governor.

In 1881, aged 18, Gerald was still living in Newbie Terrace and was listed as a solicitors clerk. Gerald's older brother, William Francis, aged 26, was a barrister and was known as Francis, so as not to be confused with his father, William Francis senior. Another brother, Austin aged 23, was a commercial clerk.

Gerald began work as a solicitor with the firm of Lamb and Taylor in Liverpool and Birkenhead. Later in life he was to be a partner in the firm of Snowball, Kyffin Taylor and Pruddah in North John Street Liverpool and was still in practice aged 78.

In the 1891 census he was listed with his married sister Florence and her husband Francis McPherson and family in Queens Road, Everton. Francis McPherson was a registered physician, surgeon and general practitioner. By this time Gerald was a solicitor and notary public.

On 31st Aug 1892, at Roby in Lancashire, Gerald married Bessie Cope, the third daughter of the late Thomas Cope JP of Huyton. The ceremony was performed by his father, Archdeacon Taylor, and the bride was given away by her stepfather, Sir John Willcox MP, who became proprietor of the *Liverpool Courier* newspaper.

The married couple lived in Heswall from their marriage in 1892, until Bessie's death, 30 years later, in 1922. They had no children. Their first recorded Heswall address was Hillcrest, Thurstaston Road (now Telegraph Road), in 1896, before moving to Lingcroft, in Tower Road North, where they employed a cook and a housemaid. The date is uncertain, but was in or before 1901.



Children in Lingcroft Heswall 1940s

In 1904 Heswall was described in a directory as a pleasant village and township. It had a station on the West Kirby branch of the London and North Western Great Western Railway on Station Road in the Lower Village. The Heswall Sanatorium (Cleaver) had been open for two years. The current rebuilt Parish Church of St Peter had been standing for over a quarter of a century by then. The Reverend Thomas May had been the rector since 1890.

In the Top Village there were three churches along Telegraph Road: the Mission Room of the Good Shepherd, the Wesleyan Centenary Chapel (Methodist) and the Presbyterian (United Reformed), which were all erected in the first years of the new 20th century.

The population of the parish of Heswall in 1901 was 2,347 and the township 2,167.

Top Village was growing and more houses were being built on the heath land. One area of which was Tower Hill, named after the Water Tower erected in 1877 at the highest point in Heswall and the Wirral. Tower Hill was a general term for the area around the Puddydale and Poll Hill Common. Tower Road North was, and still is, divided into two halves by Quarry Road East. The upper half led up to Poll Hill Common. Lingcroft was sited in the lower half of Tower Road North. To complete the picture, Tower Road South drops down from Poll Hill Common to Pensby Road. There were just seven houses in Tower Road North, and Lingcroft was surrounded by acres of land.



The Kyffin Taylors became involved in Heswall activities. When the Heswall Council school opened, Gerald was guest of honour at prize-giving and Bessie distributed the prizes. Bessie became well known as a writer of articles and tales of the supernatural, writing one novel 'From Out of the Silence' and a play 'Rosemary'. She was also a keen angler and motorist.

Gerald was a member of Liverpool City Council from 1904 and was chairman of several committees, including the Liverpool Housing Committee, from 1907-19. In 1910 he became Conservative Member of Parliament for Kirkdale, an appointment he was to hold until 1915. He became the first MP to relinquish his seat in order to take up a military post in the First World War. He arranged this by accepting the office of 'Steward or Bailiff of the Manor of Northstead in the county of York', similar to the better known 'Taking the Chiltern Hundreds', as a means of resigning a seat in the House of Commons.

Gerald's military career spanned 1889 to 1937, mainly involved with the Territorial Army. In 1886 he joined the 5th Volunteer Battalion King's (Liverpool) Regiment as a private. In 1889 he transferred to the 2nd Lancashire Artillery as a second lieutenant and in 1907 he became Lieutenant Colonel of that unit. With the formation of the West Lancs