Image 1 = All Saints’ Church, Brenchley, Kent.

https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/KEN/Brenchley/AllSaints, downloaded 16/02/21

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Image 2 = Title Page *Minnows from Brenchley Brook* (photo: J.Stamp 2020). Have emailed her for JPG.

**Revd Francis Storr (1808-1888).**

Married twice (1) Caroline Storr, née Holland, 1814-1856; (2) Cecilia Grantham Storr, 1816-1896 (widow of Storr’s predecessor as the incumbent of All Saint’s, Brenchley and remembered on her gravestone as ‘wife of Richard Davis’). Children:5 sons, 3 daughters,3 step-sons, 1 step-daughter.

**Francis Storr (1839-1919):** author, biographer and translator.

Married: Rose Storr, née Lloyd, in 1872 (daughter, Erica Violet Lindsay, née Storr, 1877-1962).

**Brenchley, near Tunbridge Wells.**

Anthology of verses and other miscellaneous writings, 1861.

My first is yourself, gentle reader,

My second the name of a goat,

My third is a great Latin leader.

If without one dissentient vote

You agree in your answers all round,

My whole will be speedily found.

‘Conundrums’\*

*Minnows from Brenchley Brook[[1]](#footnote-1)* includes a poem on *‘The Death of Horsa*’[[2]](#footnote-2), which tellsthe story of the Battle of Aylesford, in 455CE, when Saxon invaders, led by brothers Hengist and Horsa, defeated ‘Great Vortigen’ on “Aylesford’s open plain’ and “Horsa’s death that bloody day, / A noble victory bought’*.*

The nod to Kent’s early history is, however, just one of the charms of this eclectic and enthusiastic miscellany of writings, compiled for the entertainment of its writers and their readers. The tantalising use of authorial initials, rather than names, presents another riddle besides those printed in its pages.

The anthology begins with a poem addressed from ‘F.S., Jun.’ to ‘Mr. Editor’, asking him to ‘Please … excuse / For this number at least my appearance’ because the writer is suffering the after-effects of a ‘soirée’ attended the previous evening with ‘the élite / [o]f Brenchley’, at which ‘Youth, Harmony, Fashion, and Beauty’ prevailed, and the recollection of which might ‘make our fair hostess to blush’.

‘F.S.’, or Francis Storr senior, provides the next poem. Entitled ‘Address’, it is a salutary tale of a moth burnt by flying too close to a flame; a warning to ‘the youthful authors … / Intent on fame and glory’ to heed ‘[t]heir sober mentor sage’ lest, like the moth:

‘Your muse in manuscript may bask

On desk in album lying;

’Twill soon, if printed wings it ask,

Be found the flames supplying.’ (p3)

’Conundrums’, on page 24, asserts that its answers will be ‘in our next’, but it seems that no ‘next’ was ever produced. This indicates again a project pursued purely for amusement - like the sports ‘on the field in front of the Vicarage’, which ‘presented a very gay scene’ and provided ‘a great deal of harmless fun.’[[3]](#footnote-3)

‘A Lay of Modern Brenchley’, on pages 8-11, recounts the ‘battle’ of two football teams, one drawn from local men and one from incomers to the village. The latter team is led by no other than ‘Mr. Bigsby” - editor of the anthology - and his team includes: “Thomson, of the Borders’; “Francis Parker - / Now *Taffy* called was he’ (so, presumably, of Welsh descent); ‘Jerry Leycester - / Of Chester’; ‘Freddy Cross of Suffolk’; and ‘Rose of Buckingham’. In a game where handling the ball was completely acceptable, the village team, under the leadership of ‘William Hayne of Brenchley’ and therefore known as ‘the Haynites’, is defeated but, as the ‘Lay’ concludes:

… oft as by the fire we sit

In days of wet and rain,

Or on the cheerless winter’s night,

In fancy’s eye we fiercely fight

Our battle o’er again!

A handwritten note inside the scanned volume indicates that the ‘little selection of unpublished poems’ was given to Rev. Francis John Stainforth, an Anglican clergyman who ‘owned the largest private library of Anglophone women’s writing collected during the mid-nineteenth century’ in thanks for “the great trouble [he had] been to’ regarding some tickets. The note is signed by J. Knight Jennings and sent from 36 Harrington Square, London on 11 June 1861.[[4]](#footnote-4)

\* ‘Enigma’ answer (resolved with the aid of handwritten notations in text): ‘Unanimous’.

All Saints’ Church, Brenchley, Kent.

https://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/KEN/Brenchley/AllSaints, downloaded 16/02/21

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Title Page

(photo: J.Stamp 2020)

**Article by Jacquie Stamp**

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*elder, Francis Storr the younger, and others. Edited by Bernard Bigsby.] MS.notes;*

British Library Historical Collection edition, nd.

# Storr, Francis et al. *Minnows of Brenchley Brook*, London, Richard Barrett, 1861

UK Census, 1861. Online: https://ancestry.co.uk accessed 18/02/21

Wikitree Genealogy website. Online: https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Storr-213 accessed 16/02/21

Other poems in the anthology include:

* + ‘On the Death of Lieut. Anstruther’, by F.S. [Revd Francis Storr]
  + ‘The Fox-Hunt’, by E.F.
  + ‘A Lay of Modern Brenchley’, by F.P. [possibly the Francis Parker mentioned in this ‘Lay’]
  + ‘What the Little Bird Sitting in a Wood Saw, and What He Thought About It’, by A.G.M. [possibly Anne G. Monckton, a resident of Parsonage House]
  + ‘The Flower’, by W.A.H.
  + ‘The Volunteers - A Fragment’, by E.G.L.
  + ‘Nursery Rhyme’, by J.S. [identified in handwritten notation as Julia Storr, daughter of F.S., and aged 11 in 1861]
  + ‘To a Lady, on Giving a Photograph’, by the Editor [Bernard Bigsby]
  + ‘The Soldier’s Mother’, by C.G.S. [identified in handwritten notation as Cecilia Grantham Storr; wife of F.S.]
  + ‘Skating on Duddingstone Loch’, by A.G.M. [possibly Anne G. Monckton, a resident of Parsonage House]
  + ‘To My Mother’, by R.B.R.
  + ‘Home’, by W.A.H.
  + ‘The Travels of a Shade from his Bed to Hades’, by A.G.M. [possibly Anne G. Monckton, a resident of Parsonage House]
  + The Death of Horsa’, by J.M.T. [identified in handwritten notation in the British Library’s original edition as J. Maitland Thomp[sett/son]

Prose contributions include:

* + ‘(To the Editor of the Brenchley Paper.)’, by Richard Stokes
  + ‘What can I do, I am so very small?’, by F.S. [Revd Francis Storr]
  + ‘An Allegory’, by F.S. [Revd Francis Storr]
  + ‘Adventures of Benjamin Carter’, by F.C. [identified in handwritten notation in the British Library’s original edition as Frederick Croft]

Miscellaneous other contributions include:

* + ‘Athletic Sports’, unattributed, but listing ten ‘sports … carried on in a very pleasing manner, and … friendly competition’ on ‘[t]he field in front of the Vicarage, on the 21st ult., … [starting] [a]t two o’clock’.
  + ‘Original Varieties’, unattributed and posing five unanswered comic riddles
  + ‘Conundrums. To be answered in our next’, unattributed
  + ‘Varieties’ - more comic riddles, unanswered and unattributed
  + ‘Enigma’, unattributed.

1. The anthology was edited by Bernard Bigsby - full name Bernard Edward Sulyard Drake Bigsby - who would later move to America, marry, publish a series of seminal texts on the English language and become an eminent philologist, journalist and author. In 1861, however, he was resident with the Storr family at the Vicarage in Brenchley, where the UK Census lists his occupation as Tutor. He was 26 years old, having been born in Derby in 1835, and an Oxford graduate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 22-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. James Knight Jennings (1813-1892), Oxford graduate, clergyman and author of *The Dialect of the West of England, particularly Somersetshire* (1869) is listed at this address on both the 1851 and 1861 census returns. His note to Stainforth draws his attention to two poems in particular: “- one by Mrs Frances [sic] Storr the vicars [sic] wife - the other by her little daughter”. These poems are on pages 19-20 and 14-15 respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)