

‘The oldest showman in England’: Gloucestershire’s John Bellamy (1808-1893)

by Steven Blake

Among the more unusual entries in the parish registers for Westbury-on-Severn is one recording the burial, on 20 January 1893, of 85 year old John Bellamy, who, according to an annotation in the actual register, ‘for many years past has travelled the Country with Architectural Models made of cork and is said to have been the oldest showman in England’.¹

Behind those few words lies the remarkable story of one of Victorian England’s leading travelling showmen, a Gloucestershire man, and the proprietor of the ‘British Model Gallery’, which he toured around the country in a number of caravans from 1837 until his death in 1893 [Fig 1]. This article traces his life story, highlighting in particular his many Gloucestershire connections, and drawing heavily for evidence of his life from his as yet unpublished memoirs.²



Fig 1: John Bellamy, about 1860. Reproduced by courtesy of Mrs Pat Fairfax.

Bellamy’s burial entry records that he was ‘formerly of Stantway’, a hamlet on the east side of Westbury, a parish in which Bellamys are recorded as far back as the 17th century.³ John’s own father, William, was certainly baptized there,⁴ but at the time of John’s birth, on 9 January 1808,⁵ his parents were living in the Cotswolds, at Bidfield Farm, north of Bisley [Fig 2].⁶

Bidfield had been bought for William by his father, another John,⁷ following his son’s marriage, in April 1800,⁸ to Hester, the daughter of Richard Loveridge of Pauntley Court.⁹ In 1809, however, William gave up the farm and moved to Gloucester, having purchased, for £1300, the now-demolished Crown Inn in Cross Keys Lane,¹⁰ although sometime after November 1812¹¹ he moved on again, this time to London, where he opened a grocer’s shop in Southwark, and where he died of typhus in April 1814.¹²

Following her husband’s death, John’s mother (who also had seven other surviving children) sent all but her two youngest to live with relatives.¹³ John was sent to his grandfather Loveridge, who by then was living at a farm

called Llantrothy, in the parish of Grosmont, Monmouthshire.¹⁴ Apart from a few months with an uncle at Walterstone in the Black Mountains during 1819-20,¹⁵ Bellamy spent the next ten years with his grandparents, first at Llantrothy, then at Skenchill Farm, north-west of Monmouth, and finally at their son Robert’s farm at Trap’s Green, near Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire.¹⁶

Bellamy records that much of his childhood was taken up with farm work, or selling farm produce in Monmouth market, or helping to haul goods to and from Birmingham. It is also during an account of his visits to Birmingham that Bellamy first records an interest in travelling shows, noting that he regularly visited Birmingham Fair to see the theatrical booths, menageries, circuses and waxworks that used to show

there, although, as he put it, “I little thought at that time it would ever be my lot to be mixed up with show people”.

In 1823, at the age of 15, Bellamy embarked on a seven year career as a domestic servant, working for a succession of employers in Birmingham, Shropshire and London. The most significant of these for his future life was an ostrich feather merchant named Francis Alven, who lived at Munster House in Fulham, for it was there that he first tried his hand at cardboard model making. He records that having seen the rather poor specimens produced by his employer’s young nephew,



Fig 2: Bidfield Farm, photographed in 1985. Photo: author.

“I thought I would have a try at it...The first building that I attempted to model was a cottage at Grosmont...I now from recollection attempted to model it, but it was only the front of it that I could remember anything about. I completed it in a form which pleased me...A Mrs Haw, a needlewoman who worked at Munster House, was a great admirer of it, said she would make me two or three shirts for it, so I gave it her and she completed the shirts”.

Bellamy then proceeded to make a model of Munster House, which he gave to Mrs Alven, and which, he records, was ‘wonderfully admired’ by all.¹⁷

By 1830, Bellamy was sick of being, as he described it, ‘a flunky’, and he returned to Gloucestershire to stay with his paternal grandmother, Mary Bellamy, who was living at Stantway House, on the east side of Westbury-on-Severn. Before leaving London, however, he had already decided on the next phase of his career, the inspiration for which he records in his memoirs, in which he notes that,

“in the spring of 1830 there was a great wonderment in all the papers about two gentlemen who was then travelling through England for a wager. One of them, it was reported, was a nobleman’s son, the other a Captain Barkley. The wager was for some hundreds of pounds as to which would receive the most money, Captain Barkley by playing the bagpipes and the young nobleman singing and playing the guitar through streets in all the towns in the kingdom within a stated time. As they were said to be sporting characters and that the money they got would be given to some charitable purpose, this made the undertaking the more popular as charitable people would assist. At this time I was at my wits’ end to know what to do...so I decided that I would start off with my guitar and see if I could not raise the wind with my abilities”.¹⁸

Bellamy records that he had already learnt to play the guitar while living in London, and that before leaving there he had purchased a ‘spanish minstrel’ outfit. One evening in June 1830, soon after his arrival at Stantway, he donned his outfit, and in the company of his brother William,¹⁹ who was also staying with their grandmother, made his way to Coleford, where they took a room at the White Hart Inn and, after a glass of brandy and water, he turned out into the streets, where he,

“took the little town by storm. The people rushed out of their houses to see and hear me. I caused quite a sensation among them. Who could I be or what was the meaning of it as I was so respectable, it could not be for want? The best part of it was the money came in pretty fast. I think I

was not out more than an hour before I had done the little town of Coleford and returned with nine or ten shillings in my pocket”.

Flushed with his success, Bellamy spent the next six months travelling through southern England, singing and playing in his ‘spanish minstrel’ outfit, and apparently doing well out of people’s mistaken belief that he was the nobleman’s son! By November 1830 he was at Lymington in Hampshire, and although he ‘turned out’ to sing a couple of times, it was soon too cold to continue. So in order to amuse himself, he returned once more to model-making, producing cardboard models of houses in and around Lymington, and then offering them for sale to their owners – and although Bellamy was to ‘take to the road’ again with his guitar during the summer of 1834, it was by making, selling and eventually exhibiting models that he was to make his living for the rest of his life. It was also at Lymington that Bellamy first considered using cork as a material for model-making, having been shown a cork model of a church that one of his clients had purchased in Italy, and it was to be cork that he used increasingly as the years wore on.

In the summer of 1831, Bellamy returned once more to Stantway, where he made a number of models of Flaxley Abbey and parish church for members of the Crawley-Boevey family.²⁰ He also visited his cousin Mary, who had married a Dursley ironmonger named James Harding,²¹ through whom he met the daughters of the Uley cloth merchant, Edward Sheppard. On learning of Bellamy’s model-making talents, the Misses Sheppard invited him to make a model of their house, The Ridge.²² This proved to be a most significant commission for Bellamy, for among their friends was Lady Harriott Bloomfield, whose husband was one of King William IV’s courtiers. Lady Bloomfield invited Bellamy to model her residence, The Stud House at Hampton in Middlesex, which he did during 1831-2. While there, Lord Bloomfield suggested to Bellamy that if he made a model of King William’s former residence as Duke of Clarence, Bushy Park House, he would show it to the king. Bellamy duly produced his model, which was shown to King William and Queen Adelaide during a break in a cricket match at The Stud House. Lord Bloomfield later told Bellamy that the king,

“went down on his knees and turned the glass case round to examine every part of it and said it was very correct and beautifully made”.

King William did not offer to purchase the model, but he did give Bellamy the right to work under Royal patronage, following which Bellamy records that he had cards printed, announcing himself as ‘Professor of Modelling to King William IV’.

The presentation of the model to King William took place in the summer of 1832, and Bellamy spent the next two years making and selling models in Surrey and Hampshire. By 1834 he was at Southampton, and it was there that he held his first ever exhibition of models, the centrepiece of which was a cork model of Netley Abbey, to which he added Bushy Park House (known by then as The Queen’s Lodge) and a number of models borrowed back from clients in the Southampton area, including James Ede of Ridgeway Castle. On 8 March 1834, the *Hampshire Advertiser* carried an advertisement announcing,

‘Under the immediate patronage of their Majesties the King and Queen, and the approbation of members of the Royal family, and on this occasion that of James Ede Esq., Mr Bellamy, Professor of Modelling, informs the nobility, gentry and public of Southampton that he has now exhibiting at No. 4 High Street (late Royal Repository) a complete model of Netley Abbey, Queen’s Lodge Bushy Park, Ridgeway Castle etc., etc. Open daily from 10 to 6. Admission one shilling’.

Bellamy’s exhibition at Southampton lasted about two weeks, after which he spent several more months as a wandering minstrel, before spending the winter of 1834-5 with relatives in Birmingham. Then, early in 1835, he moved to Cheltenham, where he gained a number of commissions, including models of ‘a new arcade of 20 shops for a builder’, and of Brockhampton Park, to the east of Cheltenham, the home of Fulwar Craven, one of Cheltenham’s leading sporting characters. It was also during 1835 that Bellamy made the earliest of his models to have survived - a cardboard model of the Pittville Pump Room, which is

now in Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum [Fig 3]. For some reason, Bellamy's Pump Room model gained the attention of the local press, for on 25 May 1835, the *Cheltenham Journal* noted that,

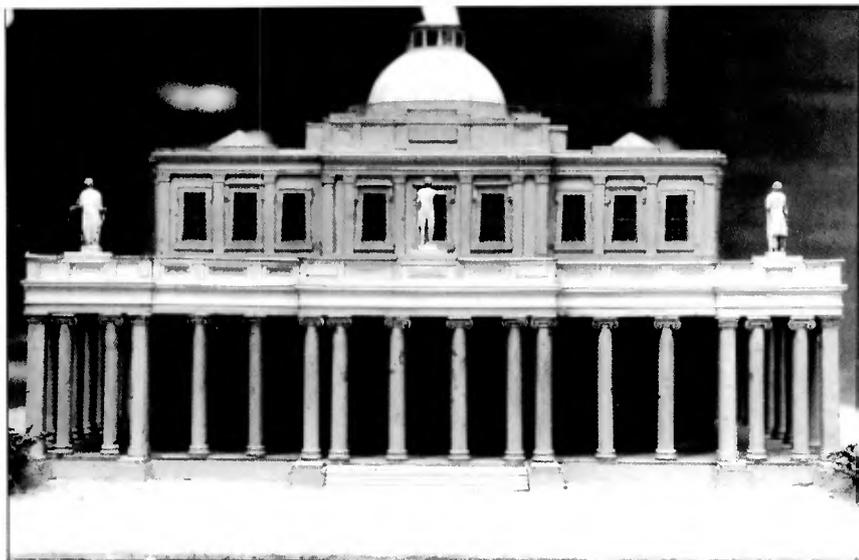


Fig 3: Bellamy's model of the Pittville Pump Room, 1835. Reproduced by courtesy of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum.

'A model of this spacious and magnificent structure has been completed by Mr Bellamy, an artist of great ability and of rising celebrity, who is now engaged in preparing, on a similar scale, an exhibition of the principal buildings throughout the kingdom...the model has elicited the unqualified approbation of the numerous fashionable families by whom the Pump Room is...frequented and is entitled to the very highest commendations'.

The other models to which the *Journal* referred included the abbeys at Flaxley and Fonthill, which Bellamy had made in 1834, and Tintern Abbey and Raglan Castle, which he had made in 1835, and it was on 23 June 1836 that he opened an exhibition at Cheltenham, placing advertisements in the local press [Fig. 4]. He wrote that,

"I took a room at the Philosophical Institution at three pounds per week, admission one shilling. I had quite a fashionable attendance every day, but the expenses of the room and printing swallowed all. The third week I was there the proprietor commenced building a portico in front of the building, which closed my business. I then took an empty shop at a low rent, but could do no good there, the gentry took no notice of it...I was about to shut up when Mr Seymour, the proprietor of the Pittville Spa, made me an offer of one pound a week for the models for three months. I was glad of this offer as it would set me at liberty to increase my collection of models. I now moved them to the Pittville Spa, where they remained during the winter".²³

Bellamy's next undertaking was to model Berkeley Castle, the home of Lord Segrave, and by the spring of 1837, that model, along with one of the adjoining church, had been added to the collection; for many years, a framed testimonial from Lord Segrave, confirming the model's accuracy, hung next to it in the exhibition.

During 1836, Bellamy had tried to find another suitable venue in which to exhibit – he tried Clifton, Ross and Monmouth, but without success, so he arrived at another, and for him a momentous, decision, which was, "to have some vans built to convey the models and to fit up for exhibitions". Two such vans were built for him during 1836-7 by Josiah Coleman, a builder at Chaxhill, near Westbury, and they could be brought together to form an exhibition room 24 feet long x 16 feet wide. Part of one of the vans was adapted as a lodging for Bellamy, and he appears to have lived there for the rest of his life. On 5 May 1837, 'Bellamy's British Model Gallery' opened in the New Cattle Market at Gloucester, with both an advertisement and an editorial comment in the *Gloucester Journal*, which described it as 'one of the most pleasing exhibitions we have visited for a long time'.²⁴

Bellamy's exhibition remained at Gloucester for three weeks, and then moved on to Stroud, Tewkesbury, Worcester, Leamington and Birmingham, covering a little over 100 miles in eight months.²⁵ Early in 1838 he returned to Leamington, where he spent the remainder of the year, and where he was living on 30 January 1839 when he married a relative, Eliza Palmer, at Littledean church.²⁶ Eliza was the daughter of Thomas Palmer of Flaxley Mill and his wife, Elizabeth (née Cadle), but following their early deaths, she had been brought up by her cousin, John Palmer of Temple Farm, Littledean, who was also Bellamy's cousin.²⁷

In the spring of 1839, John and Eliza moved on to show the exhibition at Stratford, Evesham, Hereford, Ross, Monmouth and Chepstow, before returning once more to Gloucester, where it stood in the Cattle Market again for three weeks from 31 July onwards. It then moved on to Cheltenham, where it spent around two months at the Promenade entrance to the Well Walk. By then the collection had grown to a total of 12 models, Bellamy having added the castles of Dudley, Goodrich, Kenilworth and Warwick since 1837. By 1839 he had also gained further Royal patronage, from the Duke of Cambridge, and from the future Emperor Napoleon III of France, who had visited the exhibition at Leamington.

Bellamy spent the rest of his life travelling throughout Britain with his exhibition, covering thousands of miles and showing in virtually every town of any size - in market places, on pieces of waste ground, and increasingly from the late 1840s, at pleasure fairs, including Gloucester's Barton Fair. During his travels he revisited Gloucestershire a number of times, and is recorded at Cheltenham, Cirencester, Dursley, Gloucester, Newent, Stroud, Tetbury and Tewkesbury at various times between 1851 and 1868.

As the years wore on, the size and scope of Bellamy's exhibition steadily increased. In July 1836 he had purchased a collection of shell work figures of men, women, animals and birds from a lady who was exhibiting and selling them at Cheltenham, and these, along with examples of seaweeds collected by Bellamy himself, formed 'the magnificent mineral and marine groups' that were included in the exhibition. Then, in 1841, he began work on what would become the exhibition's *tour de force* - a model of Windsor Castle that eventually covered over 90 square feet and had no less than 2128 windows, each individually shown. This model was first added to the exhibition in 1846, but was not finally completed until 1851, in April of which year it was shown to Queen Victoria, at Windsor Castle, following which Bellamy renamed his exhibition the 'Royal Model Gallery'. Six years later, on 9 November 1857, while Bellamy was exhibiting at Windsor, the entire exhibition was moved into the castle grounds for a private showing to the Queen, Prince Albert and other members of the Royal family. An unsigned pencil drawing, possibly by Bellamy himself [Fig.5], depicts the occasion, of which Bellamy wrote,

"I had to meet them at the bottom of the steps and conduct them into the exhibition. I had to walk backwards up the steps and through the passage with my hat in my hand, bowing them in...I felt

FOR A LIMITED PERIOD.



Under the especial Patronage of their Most Gracious Majesties
WILLIAM IV. and QUEEN ADELAIDE,
And H.R.H. the DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE.

MR. BELLAMY most respectfully in-
forms the Nobility, Gentry, and Public generally
of Cheltenham and its environs, that his unrivalled
EXHIBITION OF MODELS
Will be opened on **WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23d, 1836,**
At the **NEW ROOM** of the
LITERARY & PHILOSOPHICAL INSTITUTION,
PROMENADE VILLAS.

The Collection will be found to comprise Models of the
following interesting Buildings, Ruins, &c.—
THE QUEEN'S LODGE, BUSHY PARK,
Near Hampton Court, the intended residence of her Most
Gracious Majesty.

This model has received the approbation of their Majesties
and the principal Nobility—Scale, 1-12 of an inch to a
foot—This model occupied the artist nine months.

THE RUINS OF RAGLAND CASTLE,
Monmouthshire, the property of his Grace the Duke of
Beaufort—Scale, 1-10 of an inch.—Time, 7 months.

That splendid and most magnificent edifice,
FONTHILL ABBEY,
near Salisbury, as it appeared previous to the falling of the
High Tower.—Scale, 1-10 of an inch.—Time, 12 months.

RUINS OF TINTERN ABBEY, near CHEPSTOW.
Scale, 1-10 of an inch.—Time, 5 months.

PITTVILLE PUMP ROOM, CHELTENHAM.
Scale, 1-10 of an inch.—Time, 6 months.

The extensive and much-admired
RUINS OF NETLEY ABBEY, near SOUTHAMPTON.
Scale, 1-12 of an inch.—Time, 6 months.

FLAXLEY ABBEY, near NEWNHAM, Gloucestershire,
the residence of Sir Thomas Crawley Boevey, Bart.

N.B. The above models have been inspected by Sir
Geoffrey W. Attville and Mr. Nash, Architects to the Royal
Family, and are pronounced by them and other scientific
gentlemen to be the most accurate and beautiful specimens
in the kingdom.

Admission—Ladies and Gentlemen 1s. each.
Children, Half-price.—Open from 10 till 8.

Fig 4: An advertisement for Bellamy's exhibition at Cheltenham, from the *Cheltenham Free Press*, 25 June 1836. Reproduced by courtesy of Cheltenham Local & Family History Collection.

very nervous at first...however...they spoke so kindly and so affably in their manners. They inspected every model and enquired what property they represented. I confined my description to answering their questions only, as I thought the less I said the better...On leaving the exhibition, the Queen made a stop at the door and was graciously pleased to tell me she considered it a very beautiful and interesting exhibition, which I had to bow very humbly to”.

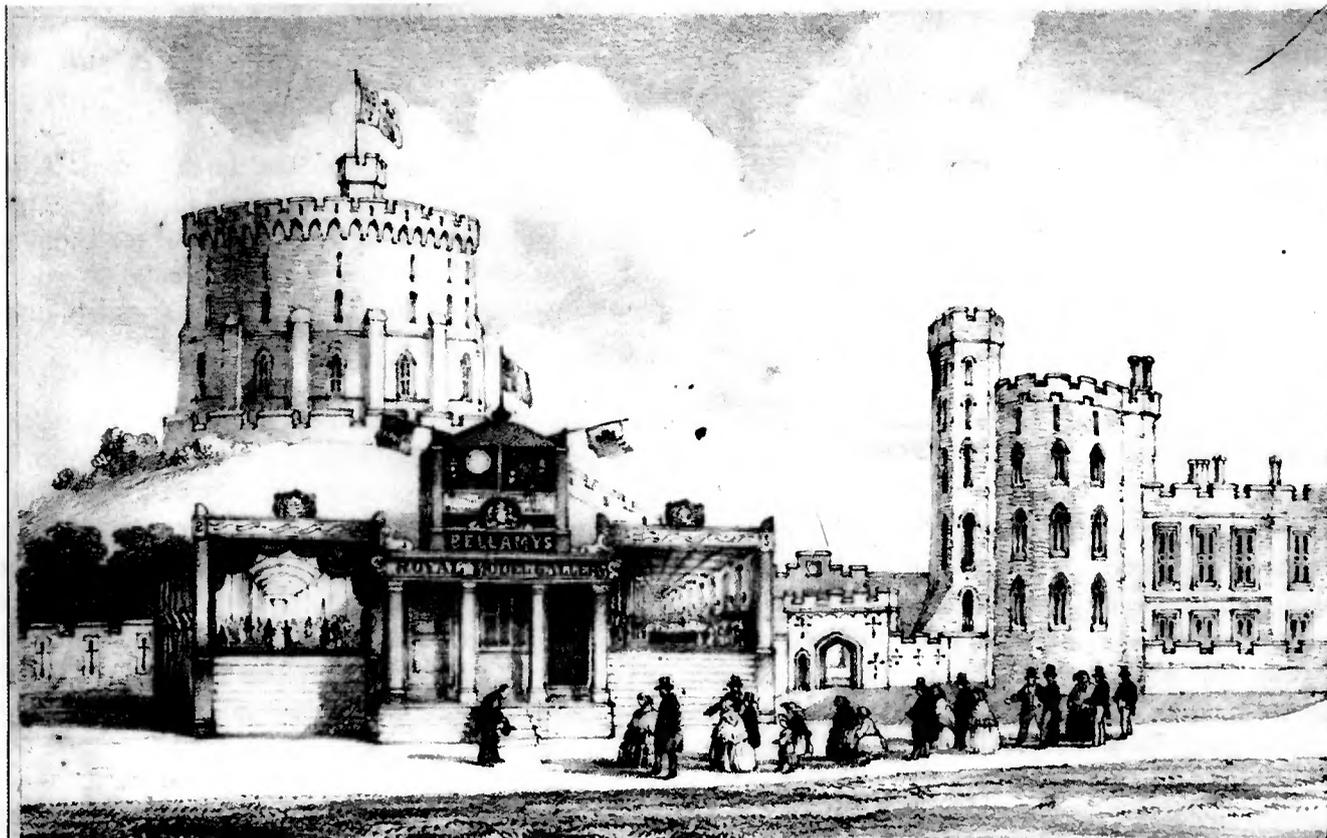


Fig 5: A pencil drawing of Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and other members of the Royal family visiting Bellamy's exhibition at Windsor in 1857. Reproduced by courtesy of Mrs Pat Fairfax.

In addition to the model of Windsor Castle, the exhibition also included 16 painted 'Cosmorama views' of its state and private apartments, which Bellamy had commissioned, possibly from a theatrical scene-painter, in 1851. These were, according to one report, 'seen through the medium of powerful magnifying glasses, and present in a great degree a life-like appearance'.²⁸

Between 1848 and 1873, Bellamy added a further 13 models to the exhibition, including the castles of Brougham, Chepstow, Corfe, Egremont and St Andrews, the abbeys of Kirkstall and Melrose, and a model of Stonehenge.²⁹ Apart from his very earliest models, they were all made on the same scale, so that 'the spectator can form a correct notion of the relative size of any of the interesting buildings in the exhibition'.³⁰

At its height, the collection travelled in a total of nine caravans, which could be brought together to form an exhibition gallery 70 feet x 40 feet. The caravans were originally horse-drawn, needing up to 16 horses each time the exhibition moved on, but in 1860 Bellamy had them adapted for transport by rail, so that he could move more rapidly from one venue to another.

The exhibition gallery itself must have been an impressive sight. Initially lit by candles, which were replaced by gas in 1848, it was heated with a stove in the winter, and even included 'a splendid rustic fountain, throwing up sprays of real water, which cools and adds increased beauty to the large apartment'.³¹ Visitors were given magnifying glasses with which to view the models, and Bellamy was on hand to answer any questions the visitors might have, as well as giving 'an historical and descriptive lecture' twice daily.

From 1839 onwards, Bellamy had occasionally hired a band to play at the exhibition, and this became a permanent part of his operation from 1847, as he began to concentrate on showing at the pleasure fairs and needed a band to make as much noise as possible in order to attract potential visitors. In 1866, however, he replaced the band with a 'Grand Promenade Concert – Comic, Sentimental and Instrumental', which was held every evening between 8 and 10 pm, after the exhibition had closed. This comprised at least six singers, dancers and musicians, including a 'negro delineator' and 'an infant of six years old who sings and dances with wonderful cleverness and delights everybody'.³²

The latter was, in fact, Bellamy's nine year old daughter, Eliza Victoria, who had been born at High Wycombe on 25 November 1857, ten months after her 16 year old brother, Thomas Beavan Bellamy, had died suddenly while at school in Taunton, on 3 January 1857. This tragedy was compounded for Bellamy on 18 September 1861, when his wife died at Pontefract,³³ after which he brought up his daughter on his own; Victoria (as she was usually known) later assisted him with the exhibition and played the piano at the evening concert, which continued in one form or another until at least 1873.

By 1878, Bellamy was 70 years old, and in, or soon after, that year he sold 18 of his models, including Windsor Castle, to a Liverpool Alderman named William Bennett, who lived at Heysham Tower in Lancashire. Perhaps Bellamy had decided to retire, and perhaps that is when he began to write his memoirs, possibly at Rowley Regis in the Black Country, where he and Victoria were living, in their caravan, at the time of the 1881 census. However, he clearly did not retire for good, for after his death at Cardiff, on 14 January 1893, his obituary noted that he had 'made a smaller collection and travelled through the West of England, and had been in South Wales for the last twelve months, still travelling, though in very delicate health',³⁴ and he was certainly at Dursley in 1882 and 1890, and at Lacock in 1890. At the time of the 1891 census, he had been back in Gloucestershire again, still in his caravan, at Blakeney, just seven miles from his ancestral home at Westbury.

Bellamy's death did not signal the end of the exhibition. His daughter carried on travelling, and by 1895 she was at Tonypany in the Rhondda Valley, where, on 19 January 1895, she married a Black Country sign writer turned conjurer named Thomas Henry Page, who was known locally as 'Harry the Demon'.³⁵ Thereafter, Harry and Victoria came to live at Abercarn in the Lower Ebbw Valley, where, according to his obituary, Harry Page had first settled in the 1880s.³⁶ It was there that the exhibition stood, perhaps for some years, in the Market Square, Page's obituary recording that,

'his caravan in the Market Square was quite an institution at Abercarn, and he would often attract large crowds by his impromptu orations describing the wonderful models in his show'.

How long the caravan and models remained in the Square is uncertain, for in the early 1900s, Victoria opened a shop at Abercarn, where, according to family tradition, the models were stored. Harry Page died on 15 January 1903, aged 50, and two years later, on 28 September 1905, Victoria remarried, her second husband being a 46 year old widower named Isaac John, who was a timberman at Abercarn's Prince of Wales Colliery. By 1910, Isaac and Victoria had settled at 19 Commercial Road, Abercarn, to which the models were removed after 'Granny John', as she was often known, gave up the shop in the early 1940s. Isaac and Victoria were still living there at the time of their deaths, on 5 March 1950 and 13 April 1954 respectively.

What eventually happened to many of the models is uncertain, although the current whereabouts of four models from the 'smaller collection' is known, including the Pittville Pump Room, which Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum purchased from Isaac John's grandson, Ted, in 1983. Three others, namely St Martin's church at Canterbury, the Abbot's Kitchen at Glastonbury, and Holyrood Chapel at Edinburgh, are still in the possession of family members, and a total of six other models that may be confidently attributed to Bellamy have been located elsewhere.³⁷ Sadly, none of the models sold to William Bennett appear to have survived; in 1882-4 he donated them to Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery, and although the models were audited in 1917, they can no longer be traced and are assumed to have been destroyed during the Second

World War.³⁸ It is however, likely that others do survive, for not all of the models in the exhibition have been accounted for, and Bellamy produced many more as commissions, or for sale or raffle, throughout his career. One can only hope that, in due course, more might come to light, to add further to the story of ‘the oldest showman in England’.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Mrs Pat Fairfax for providing access to, and permission to quote from, Bellamy’s memoirs. I would also like to record my thanks to Mrs Fairfax, and to Mrs Marion Hodson, for access to other relevant material, and for their help and encouragement during my research into John Bellamy’s career. I am also grateful to the staff at Gloucestershire Archives, and to Mr David Evans and Dr John Juřica for advice on various aspects of local and family history. Finally, I wish to record my debt to Mrs Fairfax’s father, the late Mr Ted John (1912 – 1983), for first drawing my attention to John Bellamy and his models, and for encouraging me to research his life and work.

References

- ¹ Gloucestershire Archives (hereafter GA) P354 IN 1/17. His grave appears to be unmarked.
- ² John Bellamy’s memoirs, which are in private ownership, comprise 179 handwritten pages (totalling around 45,000 words), all written on the backs of handbills for an undated showing of his exhibition at Liverpool. In his memoirs, Bellamy notes that he was writing them in 1881, but the surviving pages end mid-sentence in 1873, so that a part of the document has clearly been lost. In order to assist modern readers, quotations from the memoirs have been punctuated, something that is completely lacking in the original manuscript, and Bellamy’s poor spelling and erratic use of capital letters have been corrected.
- ³ In his memoirs, Bellamy notes that “the Bellamys were farmers and landed proprietors in the parish...for several centuries. On a gravestone on the south side of Westbury church may be traced, as far back as the reign of Charles the First, the name of William Bellamy, who lived at a farm called Cleeve in that parish”. Although that stone cannot be traced, there is, outside the south porch, a headstone recording the burial of William Bellamy of Adsett in 1717, and of his wife Mary in 1679. Bigland’s *Gloucestershire Collections* records an altar tomb to a William Bellamy of Bollow and his family, who died between 1775 and 1797, but I have been unable to locate this.
- ⁴ William, the son of John and Mary Bellamy, was baptised on 9 July 1777 (GA P354 IN 1/3).
- ⁵ Bellamy records his date of birth in his memoirs; he was baptised, at Bisley, on 16 January 1808 (GA P47 IN 1/3).
- ⁶ Bidfield Farm is situated on the east side of the B4070 between Stroud and Birdlip (NGR SO 908105).
- ⁷ William’s father, John, had married Mary Gough, also of Westbury, on 1 May 1774 (GA P354 IN 1/4); he died on 27 November 1819, aged 70, and was buried at Westbury on 2 December (GA P354 IN 1/8). Mary died on 8 August 1836, aged 80, and was buried at Westbury on 12 August (GA P354 IN 1/8). Along with several other family members, including John’s father William (died 1802), John and Mary are commemorated on a table-tomb on the south side of the church, adjacent to which are two plain slabs, inscribed ‘J B 1819’ and ‘M B 1836’.
- ⁸ Bellamy’s parents were married, by licence dated 12 April 1800 (GA GDR Q2/51/50), at Pauntley church (GA Bishop’s Transcripts for Pauntley; the exact date is illegible and the parish register has not survived).
- ⁹ Hester Loveridge was baptised at Dymock on 7 June 1780 (GA P125 IN 1/8). She was the third daughter of Richard Loveridge and his wife, Sarah Rowls of Newent, who were married at Bromsberrow on 17 January 1770 (GA P63 IN 1/3).
- ¹⁰ William Bellamy purchased the Crown Inn from Thomas Okey and Samuel Horseman on 27 September 1809 (GA D3117 Gloucester City deeds no. 4187); he had been admitted as a Freeman of Gloucester on 19 September (Gloucester Freeman’s Roll GA GBR C9/9).
- ¹¹ William Bellamy’s move to London presumably post-dates the burial, at St Mary de Crypt in Gloucester, of his seven month old son, Joseph, on 22 November 1812 (GA P154/11 IN 1/12). Bellamy retained ownership of the Crown Inn, which was occupied by tenants until 30 April 1833, when his widow and son John sold it to Thomas Mann, a Gloucester liquor merchant, for £950 (GA D3117 Gloucester City deeds no. 4187).
- ¹² William Bellamy’s death, ‘a few days since, in London’, is noted in the *Gloucester Herald*, 23 April 1814.
- ¹³ John Bellamy clearly had little contact with his mother thereafter. By 1826 she was running a public house called ‘the Leaping Bar’ in Old Street, St Luke’s, and she is recorded in London directories and census returns as a furniture broker, also in Old Street, between 1842 and 1856. I have been unable to find the date of her death.
- ¹⁴ Although not certain, this may have been the present Blantrothy Farm, 2.5 miles south-west of Grosmont (NGR SO 372218).
- ¹⁵ Bellamy names this uncle as Thomas Beavan Morgan, who had married his mother’s youngest sister; Bellamy records that it was this uncle who taught him “to read and write a little”.
- ¹⁶ Richard and Sarah Loveridge both died of typhus in 1826, and were buried at Churcham, Sarah, aged 74, on 26 September and Richard, aged 80, on 30 October (GA P83 IN 1/6).
- ¹⁷ According to C.J. Feret, *Fulham Old and New*, Volume 2 (1900), pp.192-3, Munster House (demolished 1895) was owned by the Rt. Hon. John Wilson Croker M.P. between 1813 and 1832, so the Alvens were presumably tenants; puzzlingly, Feret records a Mr Francis Alven as living elsewhere in Fulham, at a house called Holcroft’s, between 1827 and 1833, the early part of which coincides with Bellamy’s period of employment with him.

¹⁸ Despite Bellamy's statement that there was 'great wonderment' in the newspapers about the wager, the only possible references to it that I have found are in the *Bath & Cheltenham Gazette* for 4 and 11 May 1830, which noted that 'the travelling piper' had been at Devizes and Westbury, and that 'he followed his mendicant trade as at other places – soliciting aid of no one, but politely receiving whatever was offered'.

¹⁹ William Bellamy (1803 -76) was John's older brother, who farmed at Stantway (from 1833) and later at Fawley in Herefordshire, where he is buried; I am grateful to the late Mr Jack Parry for information about his ancestor.

²⁰ Cardboard models of the abbey and church, which may be by Bellamy, have survived in a private collection. Bellamy also made a model of the abbey for himself, which formed part of his exhibition from 1836 onwards.

²¹ Mary Harding was the daughter of Bellamy's aunt Mary and her husband, John Palmer of Littledean.

²² The Ridge, which had been built for Edward Sheppard, c.1808-17, was situated two miles south-east of Dursley, on the north side of what is now the B4058 (NGR ST 781961). It was demolished in 1934; see N. Kingsley, *The Country Houses of Gloucestershire*, Volume 2 (1992), pp.141-3.

²³ Bellamy's exhibition was reported in several of the Cheltenham newspapers; the *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 4 August 1836 noted that the 'empty shop' referred to by Bellamy was at 5-6 Montpellier Avenue.

²⁴ *Gloucester Journal*, 6 May 1837.

²⁵ Details of Bellamy's career and travels from 1837 onwards are derived from his memoirs, from advertisements and editorial comments in the newspapers for the towns he visited, and in surviving handbills. One such handbill, for an exhibition of his models at Bath in 1847, is now in the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library in Oxford and is reproduced in my article, 'William Beckford and Fonthill Abbey: a Victorian Showman's Account', *Bath History*, Volume 9 (2002), pp.126-37.

²⁶ GA P110 IN 1/10.

²⁷ Eliza had been baptized, at Flaxley, on 15 March 1818 (GA P145 IN 1/7). Her parents had married at Westbury on 7 February 1805 (GA P354 IN 1/5), but both were dead before she was six years old, her mother being buried on 4 November 1822, aged 47, and her father on 8 January 1824, aged 50, both at Westbury (GA P354 IN 1/8). Eliza's cousin and guardian John (the eldest son of her uncle, John Palmer) was the brother of Mary Harding of Dursley.

²⁸ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 15 May 1852.

²⁹ Information from handbills, and a catalogue of 'Bellamy's Royal Exhibition of Paragon Models', published at Glasgow in 1873, in the family's possession.

³⁰ *Cheltenham Journal*, 9 September 1839.

³¹ *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 21 September 1848.

³² *Tewkesbury Weekly Record*, 22 December 1866.

³³ Bellamy's son and wife were both buried at Westbury-on-Severn, on 7 January 1857 and 23 September 1861 respectively (GA P354 IN 1/16). Bellamy records that he buried his son 'on the south side of the old family tomb', and it is likely that both he and his wife were later buried close by.

³⁴ *Gloucester Journal*, 28 January 1893. Post-1878 newspaper reports and handbills refer to at least nine models that are not included in the 1873 catalogue, which Bellamy presumably made as part of his 'smaller collection'; the largest of these was a model of St Michael's Mount in Cornwall.

³⁵ The marriage took place at St Andrew's church, Llwynypia, which is now part of Tonypany. Details of this, and of later marriages and deaths in the Page and John families are drawn from copy certificates in the family's possession.

³⁶ *South Wales Weekly Argus*, 24 January 1903.

³⁷ In addition to those already mentioned, there are three models in the collection of Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, namely Penrith Castle keep, the Fraternity at Carlisle, and a model of a cockpit. Models of three private houses have also been located – Much Fawley (the home for many years of Bellamy's brother William), The Cliffe at Warwick (which has Bellamy's trade card pasted on its base) and a model labelled 'Horstway House', although no such house has yet been identified. Bellamy's model of Chepstow Castle was purchased for the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art in 1873, but was de-accessioned and destroyed in 1935 (personal communication with the Director of the National Museums of Scotland, 1990).

³⁸ Personal communication with the Director of the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1984.