NEWSLETTER of the WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

WESTENDER

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WELHS... preserving our past for your future....

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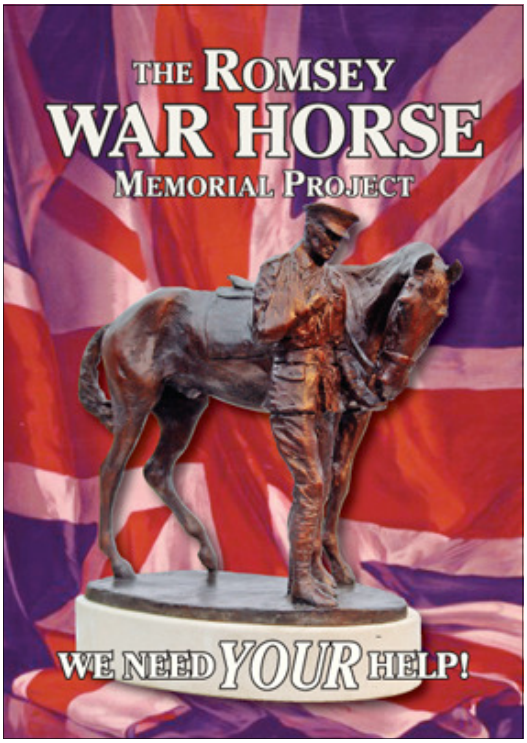
MEN WHO MARCHED AWAY (2)

Our picture this month is of Corporal Reuben Fray, one of three members of the Fray family to serve during the Great War. He volunteered in December 1915 and was sent to France the following June seeing much severe fighting. He served in the 12th Battalion Devonshire Regiment and is believed to feature in the famous IWM footage of a soldier carrying a wounded comrade through the trenches towards the camera. He was demobbed in February 1919 on his return from France. Corporal Fray lived at Bank Cottage, West End. *(Information taken from The National Roll of the Great War Section IV Southampton)*

THE ROMSEY REMOUNT DEPOT

A review by Stan Waight



Photograph taken at the Romsey Remount Depot

For the uninitiated, the Army Remount Service was the body responsible for the purchase and training of horses and mules for the British Army between 1887 and 1942.

The Romsey depot belonging to this service was described in some detail by Phoebe Merrick at our February meeting, she denied any association with either the army or with horses, saying that she was 'just a historian'. However, I have known Phoebe for many years, both as a colleague in Customs and Excise and in connection with many local history projects, and can vouch for the fact that she is indeed a first-class historian. She is also a fluent speaker and her talk lasted a full hour.

Horses had been used traditionally by the army for transport, no more so than in the 1914-18 war (less so in WW2, by which time mechanisation had almost completely taken over). In the 1880s it was decided to centralise purchasing and training and the Remount Service was set up with its HQ at Woolwich. Only the cavalry was excluded.

The first challenge came with the Boer War, when over half-a-million were sent to South Africa. Of these, a very large proportion died from the effects of the journey or the conditions they faced at the end of it. Lessons were learned from this and future movements were attended by extremely careful supervision by the Veterinary Corps.

In the lead-up to WW1 preparations were made and 14,000 animals were identified , categorised and values agreed. The number of depots was greatly increased and the Romsey depot was set up in 1915 (there were also 10 cavalry squadrons on a separate site). During the course of the war it received many of its animals from America, using the ports of Devonport and Southampton; the operation was sympathetically supervised but was very lengthy - around four months overall. On arrival of a shipment the narrow streets of Romsey were overwhelmed and children had to change schools to avoid the danger posed by exercising horses. Apart from the exercising and training of the animals, all the normal veterinary operations were carried out; mules required special treatment and had to be hobbled and laid

Continued on page 3

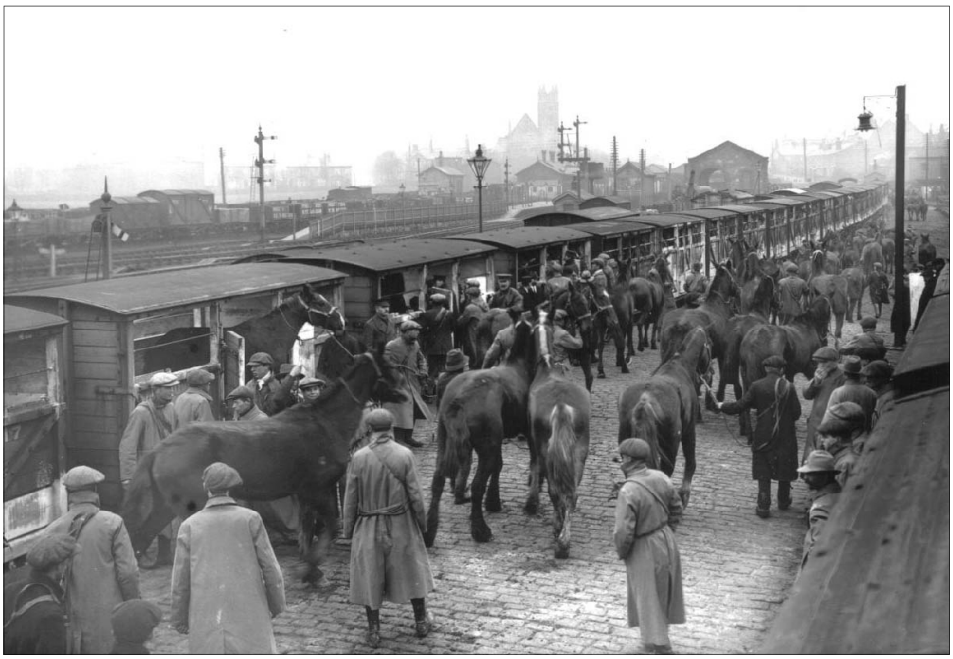
Continued from page 2

down for shoeing to be done. Feeding was frequent but carefully controlled. Animals required for overseas operations were mainly shipped from Southampton, similarly supervised as in their arrival. Another remount depot was set up in Swaythling, but there was no training there. In June 1917 there were 460,000 horses and mules in France, but there were massive losses due to disease or enemy action.

At the end of the war most of the horses were sold off and the buildings also sold or broken down into hardcore.

The final part of the talk was devoted to the men who served in the Remount Service. The officers and ranks were fully trained for every aspect of the task of caring for equines, and there were also a few well-known names among the high-ups. Our own Richard St Barbe Baker got a mention, but the most famous person was Lionel Edwards. Edwards was a noted artist, second only to Munnings for painting horses. When Edwards volunteered for the army he was called in to lead the Romsey Remount Depot because of his knowledge of the animals.

It was a good talk and, I'm sure, was enjoyed by all present.



Above:
Cap badge of the Army Remount Service
Left:
Moving Army Remounts by railway

A SIMPLE MAN'S INTRODUCTION TO COCKNEY RHYMING SLANG

By Stan Waight

Almost all of my Waight ancestors were born in and lived in the Southampton and Eling areas of Hampshire, at least as far back as the mid-1600s. My gt.gt.gt.gt.gt. grandfather, John Waight, was a shipwright at the Belvidere Shipyard in Northam, and was buried in the Hill Lane cemetery.

When shipbuilding in Southampton became depressed in the early 1800s, John's son Charles went off to seek work in London. Charles set up as an engineer on the banks of the Thames in Poplar, where his son, Thomas, was born. His grandson was later born within the sound of Bow Bells in Bethnal Green. So, my grandfather Will, born in 1872, was a Cockney and this is why I took an interest in rhyming slang.

The actual origins of the slang have not been established as fact, but it is known to have been in existence at least as early as the mid-1800s. It has been suggested that the idea was to create a language that could only be understood by those in the know. An understanding of its organisation can perhaps best be obtained by a little Cockney song that goes:

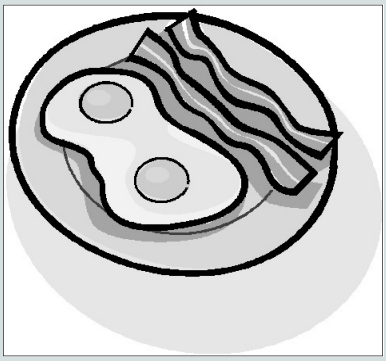
Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3

Up the **Apples and Pears (Stairs)**
and across the **Rory o'Moore (Floor)**
Back to me dear old **Trouble and Strife (Wife)**
Upon the **Cain and Abel (Table)**
nice to see
A pair of **Jack the Rippers (Kippers)**
and a cup of **Rosie Lee (Tea)**

What could be better than this,
a bit of a **Cuddle and Kiss**
Out in the yard in the pale moonlight.
A little **Tommy Tucker (Supper)**
and off to **Uncle Ned (Bed)**
Blow out the **'Arry Randle(Candle)**
and a jolly good night instead.

Cuddle and Kiss is just a touch vulgar so I'll leave it to you to work it out for yourselves.



Bacon and Eggs (Legs)

Other examples include:

Dicky Bird for Word
Mice Pies for Eyes,
On your Tod Sloane for On your Own,
Tea Leaf for Thief,
Plates of Meat for Feet,
Would you Adam and Eve it? for Would you Believe it?
Half-Inch for Pinch (steal)
Joanna for Pianah (Cockney pronunciation of Piano)

Boat Race (Face)

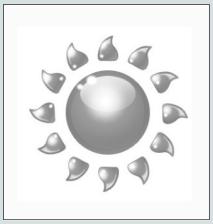
Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

But, not content with inventing these sayings, Cockneys were prone to making them more confusing by shortening them. Thus:

'He's on the Dog' means 'He's on the Dog and Bone' i.e 'He's on the Phone',
'Take a Butchers' means 'Take a Butchers Hook', i.e. 'Take a Look'.

I wonder whether anyone saying 'Use your Loaf' realises that they are using Cockney Slang? - 'Loaf' is short for 'Loaf of Bread' - therefore 'Use your head'.



Currant Bun (Sun)

It would rather going over the top of me to give more examples at this point. After all, this is merely intended as an Introduction. But, if you are interested, there are many web pages with lists online and several books on the subject.

FREDERICK UPSON

By Ray Upson

Left: Pte. Frederick Upson in peace-time scarlet uniform of the Hampshire Regiment, picture taken before 1914
Above: The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in Belgium during the Battle of Mons in 1914

My father joined the Hampshire Regiment prior to the Great War, he was a corporal by the time war broke out, consequently, he was among the first men to face the Germans in Belgium at the Battle of Mons.

He never talked very much about his experiences during that conflict, only when we visited a friend of his who also had served in that conflict, then the stories came out. Trench warfare was not the best situation to be in, and within days of being in the front line you were flea bitten and up to your knees in mud. When you were relieved, you were sent back to the rest camp where your uniforms were burnt and

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

L/Corp. Frederick Upson, 1st, Battn. Hampshire Regiment on extreme left of picture taken in camp before 1914

Above
The Hampshire Regiment cap badge in use during the Great War

replaced with new but within a couple of days of being back in the front line trenches, you were flea bitten and covered in mud again.

The Germans used poison gas and our lads initially had no gas masks, all they had was a piece of muslin tied around their nose and mouth. On one occasion my father led his platoon into a German trench which they has just taken over. The trench was filled with poison gas and they were all left for dead. A medic was checking them over when he said, *"here this one's still alive"*. Fortunately, this was my father, otherwise I wouldn't be writing this.

Again, on taking a German trench, he said to a young lad who had lied about his age to get into the army (this often happened), *"brew up a cup of tea, lad"*, so he lit a fire in the dugout, just behind the trench. My father went round to see how he was getting on, and putting his head over the fire said, *"nearly boiling, lad"*. No sooner had he got back into the trench than there was a terrific explosion. The lad had unfortunately lit the fire on top of a pile of hand grenades that had got buried in the mud! My father said that the soldiers of the Gurkah regiment used to go out at night and creep into the German trenches whilst they were asleep. To be sure that they were in a German trench they would feel for their boot laces. The Germans crossed their laces whereas the British did not. If the laces were crossed they slit their throats. Unfortunately, nobody had told them that when the Americans joined the war they crossed their laces as well! One night they killed a platoon of Americans - the fortunes of war!

Before the men went 'over the top', they were issued with a tot of rum, and on one occasion the man who collected the platoons issue of rum, drank the lot himself. He was so drunk, that not knowing what he was doing, he grabbed a couple of hand grenades, went over the top and blew up a German machine gun nest that had been holding them up for days! An officer witnessed the action and on his recommendation the man was awarded the Victoria Cross. No one was more surprised than the man himself, because he couldn't remember anything about the incident!

The most surprising event was on Christmas Day, the land between the trenches known as 'no man's land", was filled with Germans and British soldiers exchanging Christmas presents, and on Boxing Day you often had international football matches. The day after Boxing Day they were shooting hell out of each other again!

After the war was over my father was invalided out of the army with 'Trench Feet', a case of severe frost bite. I remember as a child seeing him put his feet almost into an open fire, they were so lacking in feeling, however, in spite of this he lived to the age of eighty.

On reading a book on the history of the Hampshire Regiment recently, his name was mentioned, He

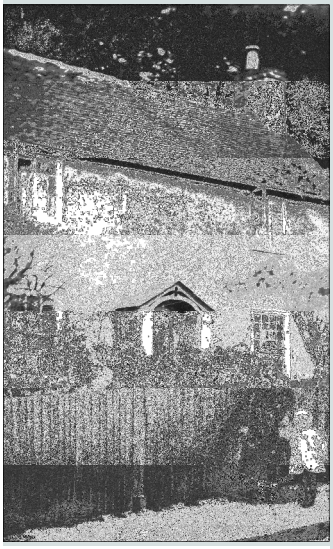
Continued on page 8

Continued from page 6

had been promoted to Sergeant in the field and his name was 'mentioned in despatches' for leading night patrols in order to locate German field gun sites. This was something he never mentioned to me.

CLIPPING FROM THE "WEST END NEWS" COMMUNITY MAGAZINE 1985

Local Historian C.M.Sillence wrote in July 1985 .....



Mrs Sillence & daughter Myrtle outside "Fir Tree Cottage" around 1920

"Soon will be the time for Cherry and Merry picking, although most people prefer to spend their time picking strawberries.

In the old days, prior to the middle of the last century when bananas, pineapples and other exotic fruit were unheard of by ordinary country folk, cherries were so much regarded that Merry or Cherry fairs or feasts were held, mostly on Sundays. My old father and grandfather loved cherries and even in West End there were quite a few, it was possible to scrump a basket or two when the fruit was ripe enough.

Chalk Hill was earlier called South Road, but another knick-name for it was ragged road, mainly because of its winding nature, but also due to the merry trees which used to grow on either side of the road, and when they were out in full bloom provided a picture of winding ragged beauty.

One early cherry tree, which tempted some of the more adventurous schoolchildren, was the lovely tall tree growing in the middle of the old West End School playground, later the Parish Hall, now demolished. I was told by several old people how my father used to climb this tree and throw the children down handfuls, at the same time feasting on them himself. Old Mr Elliott, the Headmaster, gave him many hidings for his misbehaviour, but each year when the cherries were lusciously red and juicy, he would forget the cane and shin up for just another feed. The last time he was caught he refused to get down when called, waited until the rest of the children had gone into lessons, then came down and played truant for the rest of the day, only to get a beating from his father when acquainted of his son's transgression.

Many years later, when my father married and moved into Fir Tree Cottage (now the site of the Memorial Garden), which stood opposite Shirley Cottages, the row of terraced houses between the Old |Blacksmith's Shop and the Blacksmith's Arms pub in the High Street, a gardener brought him a young cherry tree and said, *'here you are Charlie, this is a graft off the old school cherry tree that caused you so much pain. I thought you might like one of your own'*. My father was delighted, and later on when he had a son, so was he. To keep the birds at bay, we used to stick up a scarecrow and a bell with a long string up to my father's bed and he used to give it several pulls to frighten the birds as early as 6 am.

After the cottage was demolished for road improvements, the old tree was left but gradually died of canker, but I believe the stump is still there. The Hatch Grange Lodge also had a large merry tree growing in the middle of the lawn at the side of the avenue, and just behind in the Park was another very tall one; the smaller tree still growing by the two oaks is probably a seedling from the previous one.

Merry feasts were held in a village not far from West End, but owing to the drinking and noise that ensued, so shocked the local Vicar that he bought the Merry Orchard and promptly put an end to the feastings.

Cherries keep much better in a deep freezer that strawberries and make a lovely dessert during the winter months.

WANTED

Wanted - anything relating to West End men who fought in the Great War, photographs, documents, artefacts, in fact anything, either to borrow and scan and return or as a donation to our archives. Contact the editor details on front cover. Many thanks Ed.

BIGGLES AND WEST END

Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth

By Alec Samuels

No.1 Sqdn. RNAS pilots, St. Pol, France 1915 - A.W.Bigsworth 2nd from left.

Arthur W. Bigsworth standing beside the Avro 504B he used to attack German Zeppelin LZ39 on 17th May 1915

(Both photographs are copyright of Imperial War Museum)

William Earle Johns 1893-1968 (he called himself Captain) was a famous and prolific author, the creator of Biggles, the subject of many Biggles books, starting with The Camels are Coming. He had no connection with West End.

However, Bigglesworth or "Biggles" is believed to be based at least in part on Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth born in Anerley, South London, 27 March 1885. The two men met in 1922 whilst they were both at the time serving in the Air Ministry. As a lad Bigsworth lived with the Saunders family at Firgrove in Moorhill Road in West End, and is recorded in the 1901 census, described as a boarder, perhaps because his father lived in Australia. Both he and his father carried the name Arthur Wellesley in honour of the much admired Duke of Wellington. In 1901 Bigsworth started as a cadet in the Merchant Marine. Interested in the new invention of flying, he became a pioneer aviator, trained at the Central Flying School and by January 1913 was a qualified pilot, and joined the Royal Naval Air Service RNAS.

In WWI Bigsworth was involved in two memorable events. On 17 May 1915 at night he damaged a Zeppelin by dropping bombs from above, for which he was awarded a Mention in Despatches. There is a colour litho by Joseph Harold Swanwick 1866-1929 in the Bridgeman Art Library, in "Deeds that thrill the Empire", Hutchinson 1920. Then 26 August 1915 off Ostend and under heavy enemy fire he bombed and sank a German U-boat, for which he was awarded a DSO, and later when Wing Commander in 1917 a bar to his DSO for bombing and reconnaissance work in the Mediterranean. Both the incidents appear in Biggles books.

In 1920 Bigsworth transferred from the Royal Navy to the Royal Air Force and spent the rest of his career in service in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and later the Air Ministry. He retired as Air Commodore in 1935, CMG (2 January 1919), DSO and Bar, AFC.

Wing Commander Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth appears on the Roll of Honour in the West End Parish Centre. He is believed to have continued to live in West End after his marriage in 1920, finally moving to Essex. He died in 1961.

See Westender - Local Legends (2) Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth.

EXTRACTS FROM St. JAMES' CHURCH MAGAZINES (1929 - 1930)

By Pauline Berry

The year 1929 began with a letter from the incoming vicar of St. James' Church, the Revd. Richard H. Babington, MA, who introduced himself as *'a moderate churchman'*. He and his wife and young son arrived from Banstead in February and settled into St. James' vicarage for the next 13 years.

The Nursing Association was soon formed, charging local subscribers 4 shillings per annum to use the availability of a nurse. The Girls Friendly Society (GFS) held a dance and a jazz band, organised by J.M.S. Synge (Tower House), and entertained everyone attending.

In March the vicar wrote a humorous letter in the church magazine stating that he intended to take Mondays off. He referred to the hard winter just passed and the many illnesses in West End.

The Choral Society performed 'Merrie England', led by Mr Bulley the choirmaster and Miss Winifred Moody was one of the sopranos. The church choir visited TS Mercury, the Training Ship at Hamble, run by the cricketer C.B. Fry and his wife Beatrice, and sang in its unusual gothic style theatre on the shore.

There was a rearrangement of services by the vicar, including the introduction of a Sunday afternoon Kindergarten at the vicarage and a 'Children's Corner' near the font in church. He also proposed a bowling green in the grounds for senior choir members and expressed a need for a cricket ground in the West End area! The scout troop was to be revived with new uniforms and Bob Moody as the Assistant Scout Leader. An appeal was sent out for more choir boys to replace those whose voices had broken and a suggestion for a ladies choir was put forward.

The church itself was spring-cleaned by willing volunteers and Haines Bros cleaned the roof. There was no money to pay for a male curate but a lady curate, Miss Wright, was willing to come (and she did) for £150 per annum. Revd. Babington also expressed his intention to visit all homes in the Parish by the end of the year (He later apologised for not achieving this promise).

A report on King George's health was issued and a Thanksgiving Service was held in London for his recovery. The vicar commented on the number of Europe's Royal Families who were dead or exiled.

A 10th Itchen Scout Camp was held at Hickley Farm (now the Ageas Bowl) in the summer of 1929 where *'splendid views were enjoyed all round and a jolly time was had by all',* thanks to Bob Moody and Mr Fray for his loan of a bell tent..

The Organ Fund went from strength to strength that year and the entertainment 'Christmas in Olden Times' was performed successfully in December and January (see 'Westender' issue dated November-December 2013)

Miss Hilda Sharpe (a nurse living at Glenbourne Cottage) continued to collect toys and children's books in 1930. They were donated to the Hollybrook Home for Boys (in Shirley). A Girl Guide troop was to be formed by Miss Jordan and a much needed scout hall was to be erected in the vicarage grounds that year.

Ten children were appointed to the Church Council (surnames Upson, Sillence, Mullins, Mattison etc..) reflecting the vicar's determination to involve all members of the community. Another concert was

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

given by the musical Miss Winifred Moody (Kenilworth House) and a Bridge Drive held at Ardullie Lodge (Moorhill Road) raised more funds for the organ repairs.

In March 1930, a bus was offered for loan by Mr Haynes (or Haines) of Allington Lane. It would have transported worshippers to the church from outlaying districts but this 20 seater bus was unfortunately destroyed by fire soon afterwards.

June saw the birth of a second son to Revd. and Mrs Babington. A Fete was held soon after in the Vicarage Garden (6 old pence per entry). It was successful, raising £60, *'despite measles and hard times'*.

During the summer, the 1st West End Guides enjoyed their outing by bus and train (where Princess Mary was in attendance), the Sunday School sang all the way to Milford-on-Sea in their charabanc and the cubs held a camp at Andover.

The vicar admitted acquiring a car and becoming *'a motor maniac'!* He added, *'Days are evil, business is bad, unemployments awful and times are hard'* in the magazine.

Mr and Mis
s Synge (Tower House) bought the spare land next to Kirkstyle on Church Hill, for both a Church Hall and a Tennis Court (for a new club) to be erected. This generous brother and sister had already paid for the outside lamp over the church door. Finances were still hard stretched and an appeal went out for funds to maintain the Burial Ground next to the school, £21 was soon raised by willing contributors in West End.

(to be continued)

THE MARCH MEETING

A review by Roy Andrews

St. Swithun's Church, Headbourne Worthy

For the second time in three months, John Pitman was our speaker for the evening and as with his first visit he did not disappoint. His talk was of the village in which he had grown up during the 1940's and 50's, Headbourne Worthy, to the north of Winchester. Then it was very much an agricultural village but now, he pointed out, it has become the home for bankers and stockbrokers.

John lived with his parents and two older brothers in a small cottage where only three rooms had

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

electricity i.e. one light socket in each, water was obtained from a 30 feet deep well and, with no main drains, the lavatory was the usual small building down the garden. The cottage had no bathroom until John was nine years old and until then the family used the "bath in front of the fire" routine.

His father worked on the 2,000 acre farm and appeared to be able to turn his hand to whatever was required and still grow much of the family food in his garden. Money was tight and nothing was wasted. The Co-op butcher called every week providing the cheaper cuts such as offal/kidneys/hearts and many a rabbit graced the family table, shot or trapped by John or his father. Once a week, John's mother travelled to Winchester with the pelts of the animals caught to sell to a Furrier.

Many were the anecdotes that we were regaled with, from acting as a beater at the local shoot for sixteen shillings (80p) a day - a lot of money then - through the village's moment of fame when a horse trained in the village, Lovely Cottage, won the 1946 Grand National at 25-1. We heard about Sunday School outings, when John travelled further than he had ever travelled before, to Ryde on the Isle of Wight and of collecting birds' eggs and butterflies.

As his story unwound, the fond murmurs and chuckles from the audience showed that John's story was reminding others of similar memories. The groans when he was describing the killing and skinning of animals perhaps indicated that some had not experienced some of the more rural ways of life.

He told of the only bomb that dropped on the village during WW2 that killed an RAF Officer home on leave and the most famous resident of the village, for a short time, the actor Laurence Olivier. Radio programmes, the cinema and the arrival of TV were all covered. John even managed to cover a current topic by mentioning that in his youth the numerous springs and streams in his valley were well managed and controlled by sluices. Today, no longer managed, floods have resulted.

It was all told with a great deal of enthusiasm and humour so that even the vegetarians in the audience, I think, will have enjoyed this presentation.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

WELHS member Alec Samuels writes ……

Dear Editor

Seeing the photographs of the crashed aeroplane on the M27 26 May 1993 reminded me of the M27 public inquiries in the 1970s and 1980s in which I appeared.

Originally the M27 was designed to go right through the Ford factories, which included aircraft work at that time. Fords not surprisingly vigorously objected and so the M27 was moved to the north in a semi-circle shape. One consequence was that the airport runway could not be extended to the south, and anyway could not be extended to the north because of the Eastleigh railway works, and now the proposed new development area Riverside Park. The confined short runway has inhibited the use by larger aircraft, for better or for worse; though it is claimed that the larger quieter aircraft of the future will manage on shorter runways.

At the M27 inquiry it emerged that the proximity of the motorway to the runway did not conform to the rules and regulations. There were suggestions that the motorway should be placed in a deep cut and covered over, a safer but much more expensive alternative. In the end it was said that the chances of an aeroplane coming down on to the M27 were virtually nil, so the proposal went ahead and so we have what is there today. It is surely a miracle that there were no fatalities when an aeroplane actually did come down on to the M27. People living in Townhill Park are very accustomed to low-flying aircraft.

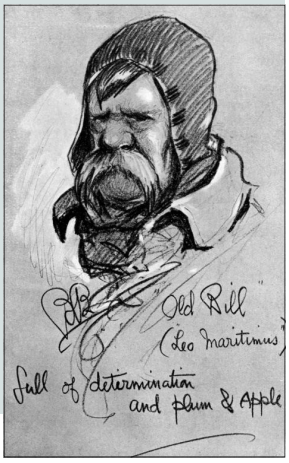
The 1973 inquiry was concerned with the proposed Portswood Link to run from junction 5 on the M27 into the middle of Southampton. The proposal was highly controversial, involving the potential destruction of many houses in the city. The proposal was withdrawn, and eventually replaced by Thomas Lewis Way, which follows the line of the Portswood Link along the railway line but ends in Bevois Valley and involved much less loss of housing.

BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER AND 'OLD BILL'

Captain (Charles) Bruce Bairnsfather (9 July 1887 – 29 September 1959) was a prominent British humorist and cartoonist. His best-known cartoon character is Old Bill. Bill and his pals Bert and Alf featured in Bairnsfather's weekly "Fragments from France" cartoons published in "The Bystander" magazine during the First World War. In 1914 he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and served with a machine gun unit in France until 1915, when he was hospitalised with shell shock and hearing damage sustained during the Second Battle of Ypres. Posted to the 34th Division headquarters on Salisbury Plain, he developed his humorous series for the *Bystander* about life in the trenches, featuring "Old Bill", a curmudgeonly soldier with trade-mark walrus moustache and balaclava. The best remembered of these shows Bill with another trooper in a muddy shell hole with shells whizzing all around. The other trooper is grumbling and Bill advises:

"Well, If you knows of a better 'ole, go to it."

(the above information courtesy of Wikipedia)



Left: Postcard courtesy of Pauline Berry. Right: The 'Old Bill' character

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE....

May 7
WHERE & WHAT IS THAT? Part 2
Jill Daniels

June 4
THE KING'S THEATRE - Past, Present & Future
Ron Hasker

July 2
THE ROAD TO AGINCOURT
Geoff Watts

ON THIS DAY.....

On this day (April 2nd) in……

1725 Giovanni Casanova, Italian adventurer, born at Venice.

1792 The first United States Mint was established at Philadelphia, then the nation's capital.

1801 The naval Battle of Copenhagen took place, in the course of which Nelson, aboard the 'Elephant', put the telescope to his blind eye and so 'did not see' Admiral Parker's signal to break off the fight - the Danish fleet was destroyed.

1805 Hans Christian Andersen, Danish writer of fairy tales, born at Odense, the son of a shoe-maker.

1840 Emile Zola, French novelist, born in Paris, the son of an Italian engineer.

1872 Samuel Morse, American inventor of the telegraphic Morse Code, died in New York City, aged 80.

1914 Sir Alec Guinness, English actor and Oscar winner in 1957, born at Marylebone in London.

1946 The Royal Military Academy was established at Sandhurst in Berkshire, having been at Woolwich since 1741.

1982 Argentinian forces invaded and occupied the British Falkland Islands in the South Atlanic.