



GREAT WAR 100

# WESTENDER

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## FROM OUR ARCHIVE



IVY LANE, WEST END

Our cover photo this edition is from a Rood Bros postcard, it shows what we believe to be the corner of Swaythling Road leading into Ivy Lane. On the right is the rear of Emmans the Bakers, and on the left the picket fence where in the 1950's F. Brown ran a petrol pump from his front garden. Note that the road is just compacted dirt and has no coating of tarmac, indicating this is quite an early image, probably around 1920.

Rood Bros were a well known Southampton firm of postcard publishers in the early 1900's and produced some of the finest images of the area.

If anyone has more information about this photograph or an approximate date please contact the editor.

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**WEST END  
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## **THE LITTLE GREEN CHAPEL (Barbe Baker Hall)**

**By Peter Sillence**

Corrugated iron was first invented in England in the 1820's and galvanising later in the 1830's. By 1851 several companies were producing catalogues of prefabricated buildings and these were exhibited at the 'Great Exhibition'. Religious groups like the Methodists and Baptists started to make use of this latest technology to build chapels and churches quickly and cheaply in the Victorian religious revival. They were known as 'Tin Tabernacles'.



In about 1803 Rev. Richard Baker moved from Norfolk to become Rector of Botley. His son John Thomas Wright Baker also joined the church and became curate of Botley and Sholing and later Chaplain to the South Stoneham Union (the Workhouse) now Moorgreen Hospital. In 1865 he had moved, with his wife Harriet and only son John, from Botley to live in Firgrove House, Moorhill Road in West End. The Rev. John Baker, a keen Christian was a gifted evangelical preacher. However the evangelistic approach was not welcomed by the local Bishop and he was frequently in trouble with him. In fact over a prolonged period his evangelical attitude so incensed the Bishop that he sent an extremely curt note to Rev. John Wright Baker. On reading the note John, being of a highly sensitive nature, was so shocked that he collapsed and died. He was buried in West End churchyard, the year being 1876. His son John Richard Baker (later builder of the hall) was left, in his teens, in financially reduced circumstances with his mother to support. John, like his father, was interested in trees and decided to establish a Forest nursery on land behind Firgrove House bordering Beacon Road, this gave him an income. He sold Firgrove House and had a smaller house built in Beacon Road, 'The Firs', still there next to the Hall. The house was built by the Haines Bros., the well-known West End firm, around 1880.

John was also an evangelical Christian like his father but had been unable to follow his father into the ministry. At 17 he became interested in evangelical revival and influenced by Miss Mary Trench, niece of Archbishop Chevinix Trench, he started to help her with mission work in the area. They were assisted by Charlotte Purrott who lived in Clifton Villa in West End; he was later to marry Charlotte. By 1878 John was preaching to packed congregations in the Reading Room in West End on Sunday afternoons and evenings. John also found time to make several missionary trips to S.France and on return from one of these realised that West End needed an independent evangelical chapel that he could use to carry on the Lords work. He asked the Haines Bros to put up the flat-packed hall in the garden of his house, the West End Evangelical Mission Hall. The date was about 1885, the land was mentioned in the deeds in 1884. The Hall was certainly there in 1886 as Haines records show they insured it, and its contents, for 10 shillings.

The first sermon preached in the hall was given by Col. J.W.F. Sandwith, a very active and evangelical preacher and secretary of the Naval and Military Bible Society. He was also a supporter of the Army

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Scripture Readers Soc. And had been a missionary in India.

### West End Mission Hall

Interdenominational, Non-Sectarian  
Christian Work Inaugurated 1878

#### SUNDAY

Sunday School	10.15 a.m.
Morning Service	11.00 a.m.
Gospel Meeting	6.30 p.m.

#### MONDAY

Christian Endeavour	6.30 p.m.
Bible-Reading and Prayer	7.30 p.m.

ALL ARE WELCOME

*The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad.*  
— Psalm 26, 3.

This leaflet shows the services which were held in the early days of the hall. The Christian Endeavour meeting being for the young folk.

Charlotte Purrott was helping in the hall at this point and John proposed marriage soon after it had been built. She refused at first but agreed later and they were married in 1886;

At some point before 1887 John had added St. Barbe to his name, the St. Barbés being another branch of the family from Romsey. So they became Mr and Mrs John St. Barbe Baker.

Charlotte was naturally musical and for more than 25 years she played the harmonium and led the singing with her beautiful voice. For 50 years she superintended the Sunday School and during that time there were an average of about ninety children.

Over the next 10 years John and Charlotte had six children. The first, Charlotte died at only 13 months. The next 5 children attended the Sunday School and the popular Saturday children's gatherings.

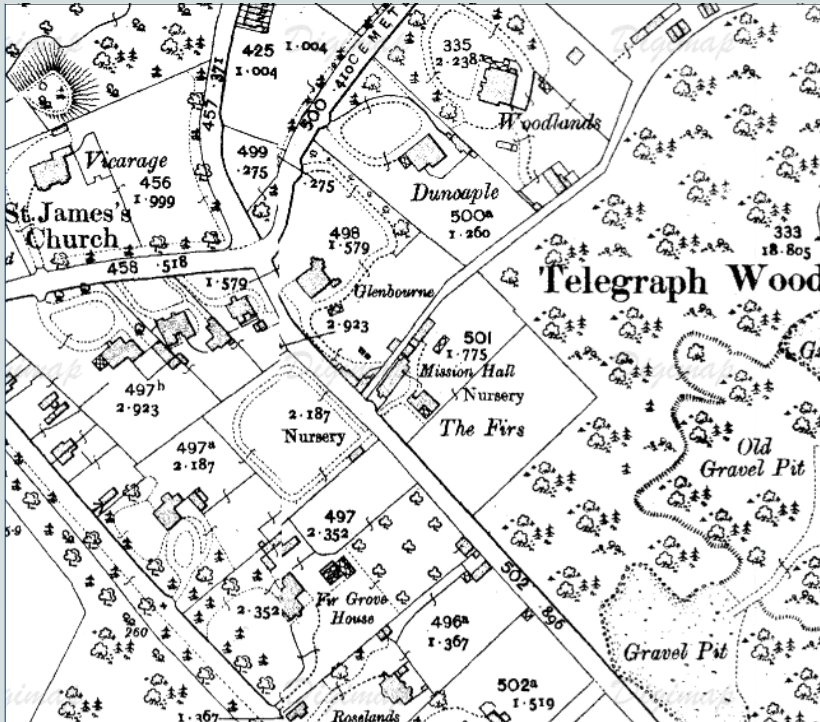
Her eldest son Richard was born in 1889 and was later to become the famous forester, ecologist, author and founder of 'The Men of the Trees'.



**The Barbe Baker family in the early 1900's, John and Charlotte centre, Richard standing behind.**

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This OS map from the late 1890's shows Firgrove House the first Nursery behind and the later expansion next to 'The Firs'. The Mission Hall is shown in the garden of 'The Firs'. Lady's Walk is shown running down towards the High Street next to the Hall.

John was an enthusiastic supporter of the famous American evangelist D.L. Moody and met him in Southampton. He bought many missionaries from different countries and world famous preachers to the Mission Hall in West End. Among them was General William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army in 1878.

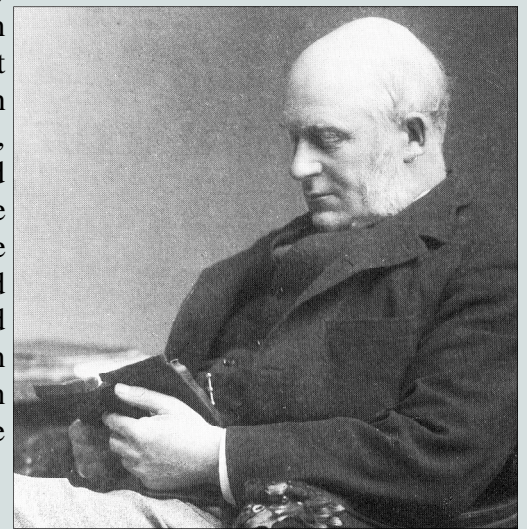
Richard St. Barbe Baker remembered his father having a debate with Booth about backsliding and forgiveness. Booth maintained that backsliding could only be forgiven twice, but John pointed out that God was able to forgive until seventy times seven.



**General Booth in 1884**

John Wood one of the founders and the secretary of The Evangelisation Society (TES) also preached at the Hall.

Lord Radstock (3rd Baron) who lived in Mayfield House in Sholing was another speaker at the Hall. A humble man, with links to the Plymouth Brethren, Lord Radstock had experienced a religious awakening while recovering from a fever in the Crimean campaign. He devoted his time to philanthropic and evangelistic work, both to high



**Lord Radstock**

society and the poor. He started a great religious awakening in Russia in the 1870's and was expelled from the country by the worried authorities.

John continued to preach the Gospel at the Mission Hall, also locally and further afield for 60 years. It seems from deeds that he even owned the Bitterne Gospel Chapel, on the corner of Commercial Street and Marne Road, from 1905-1933, and services were also held here.

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**An early picture of the interior of the West End hall. The metal plate for the stove flue is still in place on the ceiling and the gas supply for the gas lighting is capped but still present.**

The original hall was 40 feet long, John soon realised it was not long enough and had it lengthened by 20 feet. He also added the small room at the back. Much later a brick built lobby and toilet block was built on the side in 1975. This replaced the old outside toilet.



**John St. Barbe Baker outside the church possibly c.1920's**

A local paper in 1913 recorded a message from John at a meeting in Portsmouth thus - *“Mr St. Barbe Baker, in an ardent and spiritual address insisted on adherence to the spiritual truths of the Bible which he*  
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*continually illustrated from his own experience..."*

John continued his father's links with the South Stoneham Union, visiting and providing gifts for the inmates and holding magic lantern lectures using Bible stories. These latter were also held at the Mission Hall.

The Nursery had been expanded from opposite "The Firs" to a plot next door. He was generous to the poor and out of work, and was able to provide jobs for them in the Nursery and a small adjacent Gravel pit, in the difficult years before and after the Great War.

The Mission Hall and Sunday School were well attended by the villagers of West End and Bitterne. Two of the members of the Sunday School in the 1920's were John Ives and George Bennett. George later served as Church Treasurer in the 1980's. Both had fond memories of those early days. A resident of Bitterne recalls seeing a steady stream of people ascending Thornhill to attend the church, at least one wearing clothes that had been donated by Mr Barbe Baker.



*The Mission  
Hall, Sunday  
School.  
Beacon Rd.  
Leader was  
Miss Vessey.  
c. 1951.*

*KEITH ALAN  
UPSON UPSON*

*DAVID LUCAS.*

John St. Barbe Baker died in 1944, he is buried in the Cemetery (The Old Burial Ground), quite near to the War Memorial. The Mission Hall and The Firs were passed on to his son Richard. Richard and his mother continued to support the Hall, but Richard was seldom in West End. He was by then Farming in Dorset, and running a Forestry School as well as travelling the world promoting the work of "The Men of the Trees" (now The International Tree Foundation). His first short marriage was also in the 50's.

At the end of the war the West End boy George Tarrant returned to the village having finished his service in the army. George became Pastor of the church, and with his wife Winnie carried on God's work faithfully during the difficult post-war years. George loved the youngsters and encouraged the Sunday school which flourished so that there were over 100 children attending. George had a good voice and members of the church enjoyed his 'ministry of song' when joining Winnie in duets.



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In 1954 Charlotte St. Barbe Baker died, and Richard returned to 'The Firs', although he was frequently busy elsewhere in his worldwide work. In 1959 Richard informed the Church that he was emigrating to New Zealand, intending to get married there. He sold 'The Firs' to Geoff Poulton. Geoff still lives in the Bungalow behind the Hall and has been a good friend to the church in recent years.



Richard St Barbe Baker

Richard tried to sell the Hall to the Baptist Union, but they were not interested at that time. The congregation raised the money and the hall was purchased from Richard. He continued to visit occasionally when he was in the country.

The church continued under the leadership of George Tarrant and senior members of the fellowship, Henry Bruder and Alfred Mustchin. In the early 1960's there was a feeling that the fellowship should join the Baptist Union. In 1965 a constitution was drawn up with the help of Mr Alfred Joy a Baptist minister. Elections were held for Secretary, Treasurer and for Deacons. At another meeting the name of the church was changed to the West End Free Church (Baptist). Free meant adult baptism was not obligatory for membership. In 1966 the deeds of the Hall were transferred to the Baptist Union, although no money changed hands.

George Tarrant continued as Pastor of the church until his death in 1979. Winnie continued as Secretary for many years. The church continued in the 1970's and 80's with smaller numbers and with the support of Lay-preachers. The Women's Fellowship, which met on a Tuesday afternoon, was the mainstay of the church and well attended since the 1960's. In 1990 Malcolm Fowler was invited to become Church Treasurer and Dennis Bray Secretary. Dennis had been involved taking services since he joined the church in the late 1950's.

As the ages of faithful members increased it was becoming harder to keep going and by 2012 the Church was close to closure. The West End Christian Fellowship expressed an interest in helping to maintain The Chapel as a place of worship, Bob Hall from the Fellowship having been a Lay-preacher at the Baptist Hall for some years. Dennis Bray passed on in January 2015 and the remaining members including Malcolm and Enid Fowler kept the Church going in difficult circumstances until 2016.

On the 14th December the title to the West End Free Church (Baptist) Hall was finally transferred to the West End Christian Fellowship.

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**Combined fellowship meeting 1st January 2017**

It is hoped that the combined Churches will continue to carry on at the hall, after its condition has been investigated. At present some meetings are being held there during the week.

## **FROM THE NEWSPAPERS**

**By Veronica Selby**

### **THE SOUTHAMPTON OBSERVER AND WINCHESTER NEWS**

**Saturday 24th August 1878**

*An extract from an article about ...*

**“THE POST OFFICE”**

“When the principal of cheap postage was adopted, we believe it was accepted as a rule for the future, that the department should not be regarded or worked as a source of revenue but conducted by the State for public convenience. This principal was a very good one and we think it a great pity that it has not been carefully and thoroughly carried out.

At present, the Post Office gives a surplus annually of £2,000,000 (*yes two million - VS*) to the state, a very handsome amount and one that no Chancellor of the Exchequer would be in a hurry to part with. Indeed, it is a misfortune for the public and the officials that the sum is so large. Were it less, the Treasury might be more disposed to adhere to the principle we have called attention to and spend the gains of the Post Office in lowering charges and increasing facilities. The question of making a “HALF PENNY” the starting rate is a large one but one that certainly ought to be considered in the public interest. Leaving however this and some other possible reforms to one side for the present, as not to be thought in these times, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer needs all the revenue he can obtain, we certainly think the public have a fair right to require that a larger portion of the Post Office receipts should be spent upon Post Office business. To diminish expenditure, too many duties are heaped upon too few officials. For it is certainly no exaggeration to say one man is often expected and required to discharge as great a variety of duties as three persons could properly attend to. This is false economy and unjust.”



## **‘OLD KATE’ and NUMBER SIX ALLINGTON LANE**

**By Pauline Berry**

This is the third and last in a series summarising the interview between Mrs Laura Morant and George Rowe in 1993.

In 1928 Laura Skilton married Frank Morant who was an electrician and a Southampton man. Before her marriage she had lived in No.4 Allington Lane (now Romill Close) with her family for several years. Frank was the son of Morant & Bros who were contracted to do the stonework of the new Civic Centre (circa 1930). Since he had never worked at nearby Gaters Mill, they lived in Bitterne for a year or so. Their home was not big enough for a growing family however and fortunately No.6 Allington Lane became vacant and Laura, having worked for the Gater family (owners of the 10 cottages), was allowed to take it over and rent it for ten shillings (50p.) per week in 1929.

The original leaded, diamond shaped panes to the windows of their old cottage were so difficult to maintain, that layer upon layer of years of paint went onto the complicated frames. During the Second World War, the bomb damage caused eighteen panes to crack and when the ‘War Damage People’ visited after the War, they measured up one pane and ordered eighteen new ones. But being so old and handmade, only one actually fitted properly, since the panes were all different sizes!

Mrs Morant made her own bread in the cottage’s bread oven and washed clothes in the ‘copper’ (wash boiler) in the shed. *“We had a lovely walk-in larder which I miss terribly”*. She said her home was about the only one that had not been altered inside, only outside where a bathroom was eventually built.

Gardening was a pleasure hobby for her, with a toilet originally half-way up the garden which was a constant problem to the couple and was called ‘Old Kate’. It was brick built with a slate roof, *“well built”*, Mrs Morant stated. Inside two wooden seats, side by side, a big one for adults and a small one for the children. Somewhere, underneath the wooden floor was a pit and it was emptied (circa 1930) about once a year, with a ‘ladle’, a bucket on the end of a long pole, which everyone borrowed from the farm. The emptying process of ‘Old Kate’ had to be done after 10pm, when everyone was out of the way. Having taken up the floor first, Laura and Frank found a hollow, open space below, which was an old lard (animal fat) barrel. *“Now if we had gone through the floor, we would have fallen in”*. So they had to search for the entrance to the pit and it was found, after much digging in the dark outside the toilet, hidden below a large, square stone.

Frank dug a trench and eventually they were able to empty the dubious contents. *“I can tell you, wet, stinking ... the only time I’ve ever smoked cigarettes ... it ponged, you know .... We left all our clothes out in the shed and we crept indoors in our next-to-nothings and had a good wash, no bathroom then..”* added Laura Morant.

A few years later, the Government brought out regulations including housing improvements and “bucket lavs”, which meant ‘Old Kate’ was concreted in. This new method meant weekly emptying, instead of annually, which was a great bonus for Laura who had acquired that unpleasant job. Proper drainage came in later and no modern toilets until 1953.

In 1934-5, electric lights and a water main was laid on for these cottages, but all ten cottages were requested to pay £100 each to have the sewers installed outside. At that time the Morant family was already paying 10 shillings per week for rent, with the other nine cottages paying 4 to 10 shillings rent each, according to size. Laura collected these rents for the landlord, Basil Gater, for the next 30 years, until the last cottage was sold. During that period, the Morant’s rent crept up slowly to £40 per week in 1993. The landlord sold the cottages one by one, waiting until the tenants moved or died. The prices of these rose from £300 to £80,000 in 1993.

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Unfortunately, during the 1930's, Frank Morant had an accident, not explained, and injured his back badly. Within a few years of his marriage, he was paralysed because he had in fact, fractured his spine. He was in a spinal jacket and he died in an orthopaedic hospital in London in 1945, the same week that Peace was declared in Europe.

Laura, his widow, received a pension of 10 shillings per week plus 8 shillings child allowances (for Barbara and Donald), making 18 shillings in total to live on. This left only 8 shillings per week, after paying the rent of 10 shillings. So she had no choice but '*to work or else go on the Parish*'. Laura went back into service for a lady in West End village, whose maid had left, and thus she said she '*managed quite well*' for 15 years.

Mrs Laura Morant continued to live in Romill Close (formerly Allington Lane) for the rest of her long life and the summary of this interview with George Rowe ends here. If you wish to read the full account, all 25 pages, you will find it in File 11 in our museum archive.

## **SILK STOCKINGS AND SPITFIRES**

**A review by Roy Andrews**

The Society has welcomed many speakers to our monthly meetings some better than others with their presentation abilities but for the pure mellifluousness of his dulcet tones our speaker at the April (AGM) meeting, John Smith, stands head and shoulders above the rest. I could have listened to him talk all night which I thought we might have to, ala Ken Dodd, as he spoke for about one and a half hours.

This was a story of woman pilots in the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) but first John talked of early female pilots. The Wright Brothers had a sister Katherine and she flew in 1909. Harriett Quimby claimed two firsts: she obtained the first USA female pilots licence and was the first female a few months later to be killed in a crash. Bessie Coleman was the first American black woman to obtain a licence albeit in France and was later killed when she was thrown out of her aircraft. Amy Johnson was the first woman to fly solo to Australia in 1930.



At the start of the Second World War, it was realised that there was a need for pilots to fly aircraft around the country from factory to operational airfields and back and forth for repair. As there was a shortage of front line pilots who could not be spared, the ATA was set up using older all male pilots.

Pauline Gower, daughter of an MP who had flown since a teenager and run her own flying business, was aware of the ATA and wrote to the powers that be suggesting that women could do the ferrying of these aircraft. At the time women only held non-operational jobs in the WRENS, ATS and WAAF. Eventually it was agreed and eight women joined the ATA initially.

The women were found to be perfectly capable of flying any kind of aircraft - the RAF had 50 types - even with them having had no training or very little in any of them. They would often fly several different types in one day to various locations all over the country, alone and with minimal navigation aids and not permitted to use the radio.

It was not just small fighters but large bombers like the Halifax, Stirling and Lancaster that the women flew

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alone. Normally the crew would include a co-pilot, and on many occasions upon landing the male ground crews would ask in disbelief where the pilot was when a dainty woman climbed out of the aircraft.



ATA pilot Mary Guthrie on a Spitfire Mk VI

Pauline Gower even changed the course of history by getting permission for the women to wear trousers as part of their uniform, as it could be freezing during the flights.

By 1943 the ATA was an international brigade with women from Poland, France, Belgium, South Africa and, even before the USA entered the war, twenty five American women.

The public only became aware of the women of the ATA when one of them, Maureen Dunlop, had a photo published on the front cover of Picture Post (see above) with details inside of their dangerous work.

After D-Day the women continued to fly aircraft into, out of and around Europe and by the end of the war, when the ATA was disbanded, they had flown over 250,000 aircraft, saving the front line pilots millions of hours of flying. Some of the women continued to fly after the war and on into their ninety's. Diana Baranto Walker 1918-2008 became the first woman to fly at 1400 mph when she persuaded the RAF to lend her an English Electric jet fighter for a couple of days.

Today women frontline pilots in the RAF are commonplace as they are flying the large commercial passenger aircraft.

## THE MILLIONTH AMERICAN AND THE 14th MAJOR PORT

**A review by Roy Andrews**

The May talk given by Jake Simpkin was, in your reviewer's experience, what must have been the shortest presentation ever to the society at a little over half an hour. In that time he covered the two subjects in the title.

Back in the late 1990's, Jake had found, among World War 2 photographs held by Southampton Council and taken by an American with the US Army, a picture of a GI about to board a ship in Southampton. He had been marked out as the millionth US soldier to pass through the port, though who the brave soul was who had counted them was not mentioned. The GI, one Paul Shimer, had what appeared to be a cardboard plaque hung around his neck proclaiming his status and apparently had been required to stand before senior officers and local dignitaries while the mayor Mr Rex Stranger gave a short speech. He was then allowed to board his ship still wearing his plaque - what his fellow GI's comments might have been is not recorded.

Fascinated, Jake decided to try and find out what later happened to Paul Shimer and with early practice in the use of the internet he managed to locate in America one of Paul's sisters and established that Paul had come from a small town in deepest Pennsylvania where he had seven siblings, a wife and a daughter.

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At the age of 26, on 19th April 1944, he joined the American Army and after basic training he was shipped, one of two million GI's, to this country landing in Scotland and then travelling by train to Southampton. He arrived on 25th October 1944. Once in France, he must have fought well because within six weeks he had been promoted from Private to Sergeant. On 14th April 1945 he was killed in action, just twenty-four days before the end of the war and is buried in France. On the 27th April 1945 his wife in America received a copy of a newspaper article about this moment of fame in Southampton, just one hour later she received the telegram informing her of his death.



After the Americans took over the running of the port of Southampton, they established that it would be able to handle 440,000 troops for D-Day which required the establishing of large camps around the town. The port quickly became the fifth largest military port in the world, although we were not told where the bigger ones were. As with Paul Shimer, two million American troops were shipped to this country; RMS Queen Mary could carry 10,000 to 15,000 in one crossing. They landed in Scotland and were then transported by train. After D-Day, the port got busy shipping out vast quantities of materials which Jake rattled through so quickly this poor writer could not keep up with but amongst others were:

- 2.5 million tons of stores
- 257,680 vehicles
- 21,000 wagons
- 770 locomotives
- 39 ambulance trains

Coming back the other way were 186,000 German prisoners of war.

After the war there were 60,000 British GI Brides to transport to the USA and RMS Queen Mary managed 25,000 in five trips.

## **THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE.....**

**June 7**

**FROM SILK TO SOAP - the trade & infrastructure of medieval Southampton**

*Dr. Andy Russel*

**July 5**

**SALISBURY - a tale of two cities Part 1**

*Andrew Negus*

**August 2**

**SOCIAL EVENING AT THE MUSEUM  
(including raffle and free refreshments)**