



WESTENDER

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LOCAL LEGENDS (4)

CAPTAIN SIR ARTHUR HENRY ROSTRON



CAPTAIN SIR ARTHUR HENRY ROSTRON

Arthur Henry Rostron came to live in West End in 1927, just before he retired from the Cunard-White Star Line as fleet Commodore. His moment of glory came on the night of 14th/15th April 1912, when as Captain of RMS Carpathia, he rescued over 700 survivors from the ill-fated White Star liner RMS Titanic.

Whilst on a normal journey, his radio operator happened to tune in and hear the CDQ/SOS message from Titanic which had earlier collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic. Despite the danger of ice floes, he immediately turned his ship around and raced to the rescue of the Titanic passengers, carrying out the rescue in a most

exemplary manner. He was honoured with a knighthood, and feted by both the American and British Governments and the survivors. He came to live in a house built by Haines Brothers at the top of Chalk Hill in West End and on his death in 1940 was buried in the Old Burial Ground. There is also a joint memorial to Captain Rostron and Seaman James Jukes (a crew member of Titanic who lost his life in the sinking of the liner) in the museum. He was indeed a hero and a legend! Come and read more about him in the museum.

West End Local History Society is sponsored by



**WEST END
PARISH
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A CUCKOO IN THE PHEASANT'S NEST

A Review by Stan Waight



SOUTHWICK HOUSE

Was it the fact that Madeleine Selby was the speaker, or was it the quirky title she had chosen that drew an audience of more than fifty to our April meeting? Whatever, it was the highest number we have had for some time and included seven non-members (who knows, they may decide to come again). It was a fine Spring evening and there was an air of expectancy as we assembled. We were not disappointed, for here was Madeleine at her witty best.

We first heard a brief history of Southwick House up to the time of World War II. Augustinian monks had established a priory within the castle at Portchester in 1150, but soon decided to move to their benefaction at Southwick, possibly to get away from the bustle of an army barracks and the visitations of the Royal Family. They built a new priory, which, sadly, has almost disappeared, and stayed there until Henry VIII rudely shattered their peace almost 400 years later.

Following the Dissolution, Southwick came into the hands of the Wriothesleys, but Thomas, first Earl of Southampton, later sold it to his steward John White. The Whites and their descendants the Thistlethwaytes built and extended their grand house, and were to hold the estate for almost another 400 uneventful years.

It was during World War II that John Thistlethwayte invited Admiral Sir William James to Southwick for a bit of pheasant shooting, as a relaxation from the stress of the attacks on Portsmouth and its Dockyard. James - known as 'Bubbles' because he had sat for the famous Pears soap portrait as a child - got to know Southwick well.

Wartime Portsmouth had become too hot for its School of Navigation, and in 1941 it was moved to Southwick, which became known as H.M.S. Dryad. Admiral James was largely responsible for the move, and thus became the 'cuckoo' in the Thistlethwayte nest.

But Southwick's principal claim to fame was yet to come. Amid great secrecy, the house and estate were chosen as the headquarters of the team which masterminded operation 'Overlord'. It was here that the great military leaders Bedell-Smith, Bradley, Eisenhower, Leigh-Mallory, Montgomery, Ramsey and Tedder plotted their strategy for the invasion of Nazi-occupied Europe that was to take place on 6th June 1944. In her inimitable and dramatic way, Madeleine gave us a great deal of detail of the build up of the operation - the planning, the subterfuges to deceive the Germans, the assembly of two million men and half a million vehicles and the anxiety about the weather.

I have done my best to convey our Speaker's enthusiasm and depth of knowledge, but if you weren't at the talk - you should have been!

MUSEUM OPENING DAY 9 YEARS AGO



FOUNDER MEMBERS from left to right: Derek Amey, Rose Voller, Bill White, Pauline Berry & Ray Upson



THE RIBBON IS CUT BY MAYOR OF EASTLEIGH Cllr. DON HORNE (right) and Cllr. RICK WHINERAY (Chairman WEPC) (left)



WELHS FOUNDER CHAIRMAN STEVE BROOMFIELD EXPLAINS EXHIBITS TO MAYOR DON HORNE



MAYOR OF EASTLEIGH Cllr. DON HORNE AND HIS WIFE MAUREEN SIGN THE VISITORS BOOK AT THE MUSEUM

The above pictures by Bruce D. Williams - 01489 786865

On a bright sunny day nine years ago our Museum here in West End was officially opened. On 12th April 1997, the then Mayor of Eastleigh Don Horne and West End Parish Council Chairman Rick Whineray cut the ribbon that officially opened our Museum. Small displays and exhibits set out in the old Fire Station were viewed by Mayor Don Horne and his wife Maureen, in company with Parish Chairman Rick Whineray, WELHS Chairman Steve Broomfield, Parish Councillors and members of the Society. The Museum has over the years gone from strength to strength and has just had its latest refurbishment both inside and out (see pictures on page 4 & 5).

Over the years many members of the Society have given freely of their time and skills to get us to where we are today, but without the generosity and thoughtfulness of many local residents who have donated or lent photographs, maps, documents and artefacts we would not have succeeded. A big "Thank You" to you all, including the likes of Bob Moody (our late President) and Gordon Haines, both of whom are sadly no longer with us and many others too numerous to mention who have generously donated items for the Museum archive and collection and who have shared their memories with us to record for posterity. At least West End may look a lot different in years to come, but the history and heritage of our village will not be lost - so why not join our Society and come along to our Museum, it will surprise you to learn just how much history has been made in the little sleepy village of West End!

IT'S ALL CHANGE AT THE MUSEUM!



As can be seen from the pictures on these two pages our museum has undergone a complete transformation. Thanks to the Parish Council the exterior of the museum has also been totally redecorated and refurbished. This acted as a prompt for the Society to put into practice some

Continued on page 5



Continued from page 4

improvements which had been on the books for some while. Thanks to the excellent workmanship of our Treasurer and Assistant Curator Peter Wallace, we have a purpose built research area with three work stations, complete with comfortable seating. The design of the museum is now more open and spacious and more space has been set aside to allow visitors to carry out research. So far all our visitors have reacted very positively and appreciate the improvements.

NEW IMAGES FROM THE ARCHIVE



QUOB FARM - "BURNMOOR" FARMHOUSE WHEN OWNED BY FRED WOOLLEY *(Photograph courtesy of John Woolley)*



THE BLACKSMITHS ARMS IN WEST END HIGH STREET circa 1900 *(Photograph courtesy of Mike Ballem)*

MORE OF BOB MOODY'S MEMORIES....

Continuing our extracts of the late Bob Moody's book "I Remember, I Remember"...to commemorate his 100th birthday which was on 9th April 2006.....

....."I left the choir when I was about thirteen and I became a server. I well remember the visit to West End of the Kensit Preachers. They were a body of men whose object was to rid the Church of England of its Roman practices,. They would come into Church and take the candlesticks off the altar and put them underneath. They would also stick notices on various books saying there are illegal in the Church of England. They came to the services and interrupted them and they held open air services in the village, at the "New Inn", the Parish Hall yard, and at the Post Office, which was then at the junction of Upper New Road and the High Street where Lloyds Bank (*now the Toy Shop*) is today. The Chapels were on their side so, with their supporters and representatives from the Church, these meetings got very lively indeed. The meetings would often lead to "fisticuffs" especially if the meeting was near a pub. Tolerance was a rare thing in those days amongst the churches. Thank God we have moved a long way since then. I remember one Sunday evening the Reverend Neville Stiff was coming to preach at the Parish Church putting the Church's case for High Church and to answer questions put by the Kensits. He was a very powerful preacher and a very powerful man physically. If I can give some idea what he was like I would liken him to the Reverend Ian Paisley both in looks and physique and a very similar voice. Anyway, he came and the church was packed. The Kensits were there too and sat at the back. Mr Stiff started off by saying that he understood that *"my friends at the back are going to take down all I say in shorthand"*, and with that he started to talk as fast as he possibly could for several minutes, then he slowed down and said *"Write down what you like. I believe everything I say and I know the Vicar and the people who attend this church believe it as well"*. Neville Stiff by the way was the Vicar of St. Agnes, the tin church that was in High Road, Swaythling and is now the Parish of St. Albans in Burgess Road.".....

....."I remember the boys and girls that used to come to school from the Workhouse. The girls had short hair and wore long plain blue frocks. The boys had almost shaven heads and wore dark grey rough tweed suits, blue striped shirts with no collars and heavy hobnailed boots.

Most of us wore Norfolk suits that consisted of a belted jacket, knickerbocker trousers and Eton collar worn outside the jacket and no tie.

I remember one morning going to school and when the register was called I answered *"Present sir"* when my name was called, and Sir said to me *"Where's your collar Moody?"*. Instinctively I put my hand up to my neck and was surprised to find I hadn't one on. I said that I was sorry, I didn't know I hadn't one on, so he said *"you had better go home and put it on then and quick about it"*. I felt very humiliated as I never went to school without a collar or in any other untidy way, my mother saw to that. I thought he was very unfair as there were at least a dozen other boys in the class that never wore a collar at any time.

Most boys and girls wore boots, the girls button up ones and the boys hobnailed or ones studded with Boot Protectors. The latter were sold in sets of different shapes on a folded card to fit the soles or the heels. They were known as Blakey's Boot Protectors and were sold at a halfpenny a card".

ONE OF OUR READERS WRITES....

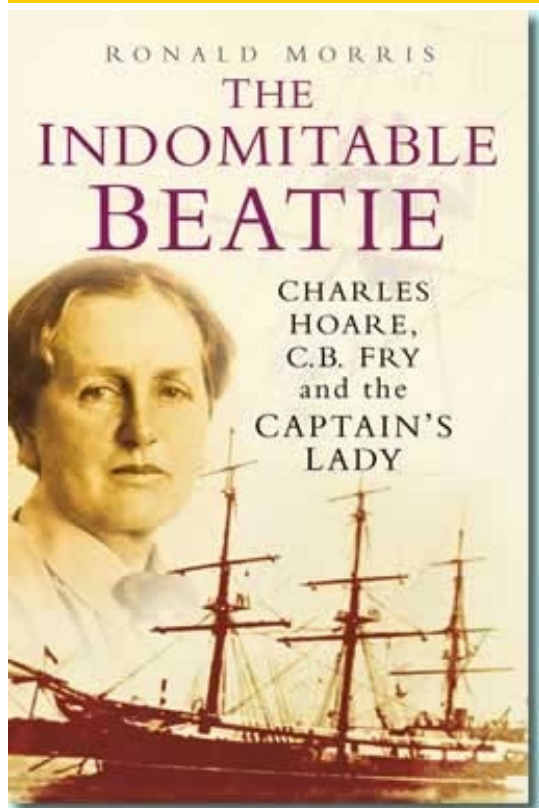
Brigadier General Sir G.H.Gater article in the March-April 2006 edition of Westender:

"Whilst working as House Parlour Maid for a short time at "Winslowe House" 1941-42, I had the honour of meeting this gentleman. I had to address him as Master George when he visited his father W.H.Gater and sister Dorothy. I being only 14½ years old, I did not know then what a distinguished career this gentleman had led. I have happy memories of my time at "Winslowe House". Mr W.H.Gater died whilst I was there and his was the first funeral I had ever attended. Thank you for stirring memories".....

Dorothy Sign

Thank you for your comments Dorothy. Ed.

THE CAPTAIN'S LADY Or The Tale of the Indomitable Mrs C.B. Fry A Review by Stan Waight



**THE COVER OF THE BOOK BY
RONALD MORRIS UPON WHICH
HIS TALK WAS BASED**

This was the subject of Ron Morris's talk at our May meeting. There was a very good turn-out of members and visitors, and I heard several complimentary remarks at the end of the evening. The title was a little misleading, however. Given the Frys' known association with West End we might have expected Ron to expand a bit upon the connection. However, rather more than half the talk was given over to the rigorous routine endured by cadets aboard the Training Ship 'Mercury' at Hamble (you may remember that David Muffet also spoke to us on this topic three years ago).

Ron was himself a cadet aboard 'Mercury' and certainly knows his subject, and his final comment - 'the story has haunted me for ages' - reflected the enthusiasm with which he delivered his talk. He had brought along copies of his book 'The Indomitable Beatie', which is lavishly provided with photographs and which could have been the source of a few slides.

Mrs. C.B. Fry, popularly known as 'Beatie', was born Beatrice Holme Sumner in 1862. She came from a family with noble, even royal, connections, and was still in her 'teens when her association with married banker Charles Hoare caused a great scandal. The couple were totally infatuated with one another and efforts by Beatie's family to separate them were unsuccessful. Two children were born of the liaison.

Perhaps as some sort of atonement for his rakish behaviour, Hoare founded 'Mercury' in 1885. It was first moored off Binstead on the Isle of Wight but was subsequently moved to the Hamble. Beatie became involved at the outset - a big, handsome woman, she constantly wore a male type of uniform and resolved to become a competent small-boat sailor, which she did. Hoare put C.B. Fry, the well-known cricketer, in charge of the school, but Beatie became the *de facto* Captain, instituting a harsh regime that mainly involved cleaning and polishing, but also a lot of brutality and malice. She hired and fired instructors without consultation.

A performance of 'Parsifal' at Bayreuth moved Beatie profoundly, and her association with Hoare became more restrained. She married C.B. Fry in 1896, and, following Hoare's death in 1908, formally took over the running of 'Mercury'. She led from the front, and had no hesitation in doing by herself whatever she expected of the boys. Despite her past, many notable personages were entertained at the Frys' less spartan house on the Hamble shore, and she was awarded the OBE for 'Mercury's' services to the Royal Navy. When she died in 1946, she was given a splendid funeral which was attended by many notable personalities. Fry outlived her by another 10 years.

LOOKING BACK 100 YEARS AGO

This item appeared in the Southampton Daily Echo on 3rd October 2005, exactly 100 years after it first appeared in 1905:

"A tragic accident occurred at the South Stoneham Workhouse, when a ward containing five elderly men was found to be full of gas. Two of the occupants were dead and three were in a serious condition. Everything in the workhouse ward appeared to be in order when most of the men retired at 9 o'clock but on inspection the next morning the room was full of noxious fumes."

NATURALIST CHRIS PACKHAM VISITS JOHN AVERY & F.O.S.O.C



TV personality and naturalist Chris Packham was so intrigued by the location and work done by WELHS member John Avery's group F.O.S.O.C., that he visited them on 16th May complete with television camera's and crew to make a recording about the wildlife in Southampton's Old Cemetery.

Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery led by John Avery and his colleagues have worked hard to improve the state of the Cemetery, which has an abundant wildlife population.

We look forward to seeing John on TV.

On this day (7th.June) in.....

1329 Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland from 1306, died of leprosy at Cardross Castle, on the Firth of Clyde, and was buried in Dunfermline Abbey under the High Altar.

1778 "Beau" Brummell, English dandy and leader of fashion, born in London as George Bryan Brummell.

1848 Paul Gauguin, French painter, born in Paris, the son of a journalist.

1905 Norway gained independence from Sweden.

1906 The British Atlantic passenger liner 'Lusitania' was launched.

1929 The Papal State, extinct since 1870, was revived as the State of Vatican City, as a result of the Lateran Treaty.

1940 Tom Jones, British entertainer, born at Pontypridd in South Wales as Thomas Jones Woodward.

1950 The BBC radio serial 'The Archers', created by Godfrey Baseley, was first broadcast.

1980 Henry Miller, American novelist, author of 'Tropic of Cancer' and 'Tropic of Capricorn' died.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE

July 5

VITAL SPARKS!

(Women and The Music Hall)

Jean Cook

August 2

A WALK AROUND WEST END'S HERITAGE

(Details to be advised nearer the time)

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