

WESTENDER

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2014

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EDITOR

Nigel G. Wood

EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION
ADDRESS

40 Hatch Mead
West End

Southampton, Hants
SO30 3NE

Telephone: 023 8047 1886

E-mail: woodng@aol.com

MEN WHO MARCHED AWAY (5)



No. 10252 Private George H. Harding, 'A' Company, 10th Battalion Hampshire Regiment. Enlisted at Southampton, the son of William and Harriett Harding of Moorhill, West End. George died of wounds and was buried at sea on Friday 13th August 1915, aged 27 years old and is remembered on the Helles Memorial on the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

West End Local History Society & Westender is sponsored by



**WEST END
PARISH
COUNCIL**



THE SPY WHO CAME IN FROM WEST END

By Pauline Berry



MELITA, GERTRUDE & GERTY in the late 1920's



AN ELDERLY MELITA

Further information was recently revealed by the British Press regarding the contents of the KGB files, the profiles of 200 KGB 'collaborators' or spies, which were brought to this country in 1992 by a Russian defector (Major Vasili Mitrokhin). Found in this archive was the name Melita Norwood, codenamed HOLA (also Tina), who was described in one file as "*a loyal, trustworthy and disciplined agent*", who was recruited in 1937 on an 'ideological basis' following the recommendation by the British Communist Party. She was then working as a clerk, then secretary, for the British Non-Ferrous Metals Research Association in London, until her retirement in 1972, aged 60.

You may recall that Melita was officially unmasked as a Soviet spy in 1999 when she was 87 and nicknamed by the Press as 'the granny spy'. It is believed that over a period of nearly 40 years, she passed on sufficient information gleaned from her work to advance the Russian production of an atom bomb by several years. So much valued, that in 1968, the KGB awarded her 'The Order of the Red Banner of Labour' for her service to intelligence over a period of nearly 40 years.

So why should this interest our readers? The late Joe Molloy, who spent his childhood in West End, expressed his shock to me in 1999, on learning that he and his sisters used to go to the local elementary school with Melita and often played together with her at her home, 'The Pines', West End, between 1918 and 1923. They knew her as 'Letty' Sirnīs, who along with her younger sister Gerty, were excused from attending the school assemblies and prayers. The school's admission book shows that Letty did not start school until the age of seven, having had no formal education before that.

The Molloy family, living in Chalk Hill, knew nothing of Letty's extreme left-wing background, and Joe recalled seeing Mrs Gertrude Sirnīs, then a widow, tapping away on an old typewriter and the piano nearby, on which she gave lessons. In the garden of 'The Pines', the Sirnīs family kept chickens and goats, growing fruit and vegetables to feed the household. "*They were a nice family*", Joe said, "*quite ordinary I thought, self sufficient and always concerned about the wider community*".

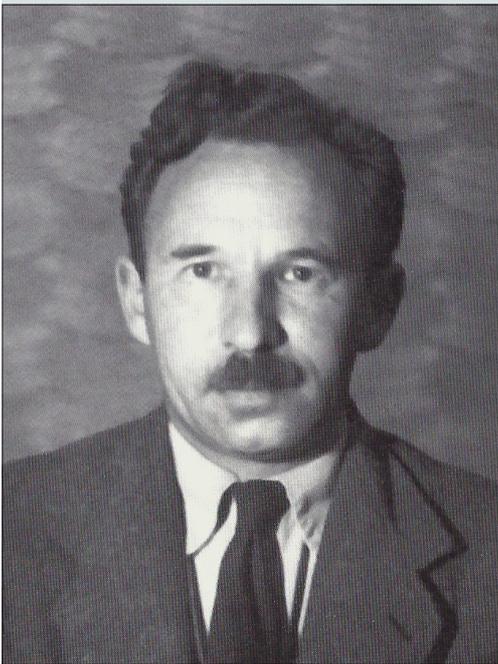
Letty's parents Alexander and Gertrude Sirnīs, first met at Tuckton House, on the edge of Bournemouth, a large house of a Russian exile and a meeting place for Russian political emigres. Here, Alexander, a Latvian émigré, was soon responsible for translating Tolstoy's diaries and other Russian

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

political works, having joined the British Socialist Party (BSP) during the First World War. He developed TB, however, and eventually died, soon after moving to West End in 1918.

At the age of eleven, in 1923, Letty and her family moved a couple of miles away to live with their widowed mother's sister, Theresa Valois, in Thornhill Cottage, Thornhill. Here they all enjoyed a similar lifestyle, cultivating a large garden and orchard. This was also convenient for Letty to attend the nearby Itchen Secondary School (where she became head-girl) and later, Southampton University, where she never completed her studies in Latin and Logic.



HILARY NORWOOD c. 1953

After a spell in both Paris and Germany, which only compounded her socialist ideas, the Sirnis family moved to London. Letty and her sister became communists and she was recruited into the Russian Secret Service in 1934. She met and married Hilary Norwood (formerly Nussbaum, the son of a Russian Jew) in 1935, settling in London.

Melita Norwood (Letty) was never prosecuted as a spy by the British Government, which was aware of her existence, probably owing to her age, 87 years in 1999. She died at Bexleyheath in June 2005, aged 93 years old.

This unlikely traitor, who still read *The Morning Star* newspaper and drank tea from a Che Guevara mug, always maintained that she declined her pension of £20 per month from the Soviets, *"I did not want money I just wanted Russia to be on an equal footing with the West"*, she commented in 1999.

NOTE: The rest of Melita Norwood's story can be found in David Burke's book, "The Spy who came in from the Co-op", published by Boydell Press.



LEFT:

Group photograph of pupils at St. James' School, West End

Photograph taken c.1922

Melita Sirnis later Norwood is seen in white circle

BOOK REVIEW BY ALEC SAMUELS

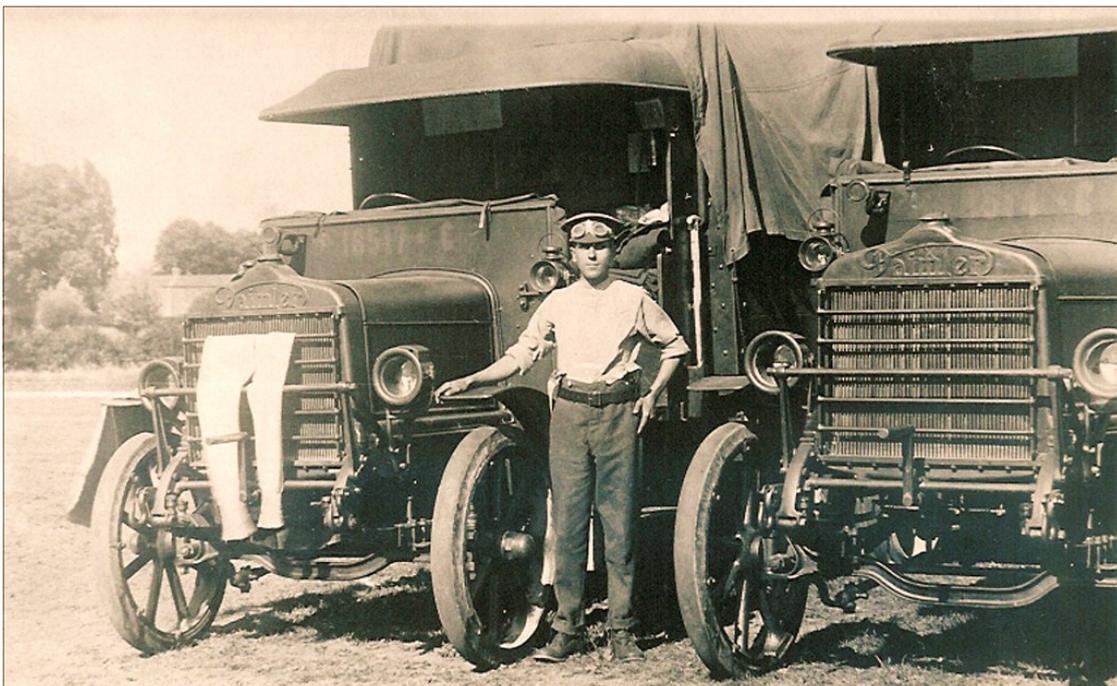
“Bitterne and West End through time” Bitterne and West End Local History Societies, Amberley Publishing, soft covers, 2009.

Comparing a photograph from over 100 years ago with a contemporary photograph of the same scene is a fascinating pastime. It is surprising perhaps how much is still recognisable. The fire station looks much the same though now the museum. A few of the shops are still there, though usually engaged in a very different trade. The Haines family, builders, working from a yard where the Post Office now stands, built much of West End. Their family home is still there, on the other side of High Street, now Pearsons estate agents. Other buildings still standing are Moorgreen hospital, once a workhouse, and the White Swan (still being regularly flooded). Quob farmhouse, belonging to Fred Woolley, is now converted into flats, as has so often happened. Gaters Mill was rebuilt after a fire, though not as a mill. Hatch farm and Hatch grange remain as well known local geographical locations. The schools have gone, and most of the pubs have gone; though the West End Brewery has survived. St James Church tennis courts have become a car park. The Church choir survives. The amateur dramatics have gone. The Old Burial Ground and the War Memorial retain their timeless character. Perhaps the biggest change has been the end of the tranquillity of West End. Then there were no cars and people stood in the middle of the unmade roads. Now constant traffic dominates our lives.

Pauline Berry, Nigel Wood and Peter Wallace made a significant contribution to this pleasing glimpse into the past.

NOTE: This book is available from our society bookshop at the reduced price of £7.50 excluding post and packing. An excellent Christmas present - buy now while we have stocks.

CAN ANYONE HELP IDENTIFY THIS MAN?



Can anyone identify this man? Possibly Army Service Corps and believed to be West End's first taxi driver before the Great War. He was presumably a Motor Transport driver ASC. We have another picture of him driving a car outside what could be South Western Hotel in Southampton. Any information please contact the Editor (see front page for contact details).

THE FLETCHERS OF HATCH GRANGE

By Nigel Wood



Mr & Mrs Fletcher and Hatch Grange house in 1928



Mr Ralph Warneford Cresswell Fletcher was the owner of the 277 acre Hatch Grange Estate in West End between 1872 - 1928. He was born in Gloucestershire in 1851 and was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge. Prior to his marriage he was Captain of the 8th Hampshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. As sole heir to his father's estate, the "Manor of Hatch Grange" was acquired for him in his youth. Upon his marriage in London to Frances Mara Lovekin in 1872, the couple moved into Hatch Grange house, previously known as Grange Farm and became members of the local gentry. The estate consisted of 277 acres of mainly arable and pasture land, extending from the High Street in the south, Chapel Road then to Quob Lane in the east and Allington Lane comprising the northern and western boundaries. The 200 plus acres of farmland was managed by a tenant farmer occupying Hatch Farm (now the location of Larch Close off Barbe Baker Avenue). This area is largely covered by housing today, with the exception of Round Hill which is still grazed. Mr and Mrs Fletcher soon created attractive gardens, shrubberies and rockeries around their house that looked out over the remaining acres of undulating park land which we know as present day Hatch Grange. Beech, oak and Corsican Pine trees were planted nearby and the magnificent avenue of lime trees was created about 1874. This avenue with its entrance at Hatch Lodge on the High Street, provided an impressive drive for the horse-drawn carriages which arrived for social gatherings in Victorian times. Fortunately most of these trees still exist. The coat-of-arms for the Fletcher family was created for them in 1900 and includes two red squirrels holding an arrow aloft, above the inscription 'Droit comme une fleche', (as straight as an arrow) relating to the true meaning of Fletcher which was "arrow maker". Mr Fletcher enjoyed boating, hunting and shooting with music and reading providing quieter past-times. He commanded the Botley (Militia) Volunteers for 12 years, served as a JP and a church-warden at St. James' Church, helping to raise funds for the new church built in 1890. He was also a member of the Parish Council and was its Chairman in 1901-2 and 1905-10. They raised two daughters, Esme and Hilda, who were well known locally. Mrs Fletcher commanded the Hants 138 Red Cross (South Stoneham) Division and held regular Red Cross classes for local girls in the dining room of Hatch Grange house. Mr and Mrs Fletcher ran the Hatch Grange estate for 56 years until their deaths in 1928. They were both buried in the family plot in the Old Burial Ground, West End. Their deaths led to the gradual break-up of the estate, and although the house burnt down whilst standing empty in 1938 after its purchase by the Parish Council, it is fortunate that over 30 acres remain today as a public open space owned by the West End Parish Council. It is the jewel in West End's crown.

THE GHOST OF LADIES WALK?

By Pauline Berry

For many years Ladies' Walk was a winding path created to pass through the triangle of woods, belonging to the original Thornhill Estate of Victorian times, which lay between Thornhill Park Road and Moorhill Road, finishing at what is Thornhill Roundabout today. It was a short-cut running from the approximate site of the old Thornhill Post Office to where Haselfoot Gardens emerges today.

The iron gates were originally opened only on Sundays to allow the ladies of the Thornhill Mansion (and later all Bitterne folk) to walk through in order to worship at either St. James' Church or John St. Barbe Baker's Mission Hall in Beacon Road.

Mr Ron Pattinson came into our museum recently and asked if we had heard of the ghost of Ladies Walk? It was a story handed down the generations, he said, concerning the daughter of the landowner Henry Dumbleton, who resided at Thornhill Mansion in the mid 1800's. She apparently fell in love with the coachman, her father objected and the man lost his job. The heartbroken daughter used to meet her love in Ladies Walk until her father 'paid him off' and he promptly left for good. As a result, the distraught young woman took her own life and her ghost was said to haunt Ladies Walk thereafter. We have never heard this story before, but if you have, please let us know!

SOME KEY DATES OF WEST END'S PAST

1785 John Gater of Swaythling took a lease of the Corn Mills at Upmills (later known as Gater's Mill)). He purchased the mills in 1857.

- 1799 William Gater bought the manor of Townhill.
- 1815 Shamlehurst (alias Townhill) Enclosure Award.
- 1824 Great and Little Allington Enclosure Award.
- 1834 Poor Law Act - South Stoneham Union formed. Poor Law Institution (now Moorgreen Hospital) built in 1848 for £7,000 and enlarged in 1887 and 1898.
- 1838 St. James' Parish Church built (early English style, in white brick with dressings. Seating for 611)
- 1838 First elementary school built in West End. (West End National School on the site of In-Excess)
- 1840 Ecclesiastical parish of West End formed.
- 1871 Moorgreen Infants School built with financial aid from benefactress Harriet Haselfoot.
- 1890 West End Church re-built to the design of Mr Blomfield.
- 1891 The Civil Parish of West End formed.
- 1903-4 West End Church of England School built and enlarged in 1914.
- 1911 Population of West End was 1,599
- 1938 The Parish Council bought Hatch Grange.
- 1951 Population of West End was 5,714
- 1954 Harefield transferred to Southampton County Borough.
- 1955 West End transferred to the Eastleigh Parliamentary constituency.
- 1961 Population of West End was 5,064
- 1965 West End Community Association formed.
- 1996 West End Local History Society formed.
- 1997 West End Local History Museum & Heritage Centre founded.
- 2002 Population of West End around 11,000 - 12,000

THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

A review by Stan Waight



WILTON LODGE



GENERAL JUAN MANUEL DE ROSAS

THE ARGENTINIAN DICTATOR

Of the 57 members and visitors who attended the meeting, the regulars expected a good talk by Jake Simpkin. His 'Carlton Crescent and Rockstone Place' did not disappoint them.

It was intended to illustrate the architecture of the two streets and the characters who inhabited them at one time or another. The scene was set by a historical and graphical overview of Southampton in its heady days as a spa town, followed by a statement about the loss of so many of its great houses.

The development of the two streets was initiated in the 1820s by Samuel Toomer on open fields to the north of the city. The first house he designed was the present Wilton Lodge, which is actually in Bedford Place. Many more followed, all characterised by the elegant and beautifully proportioned Regency style which was copied by other architects and gives the area its typically grand appearance.

Jake gave details of many of the buildings, accompanied by some excellent slides; he even deviated from his main theme by talking about the complex that was occupied by the Ordnance Survey head offices which were transferred from London after being burned down. A rather cynical note was struck by reference to the Rockstone Place Park, donated by the Toomer sisters and now a car park!

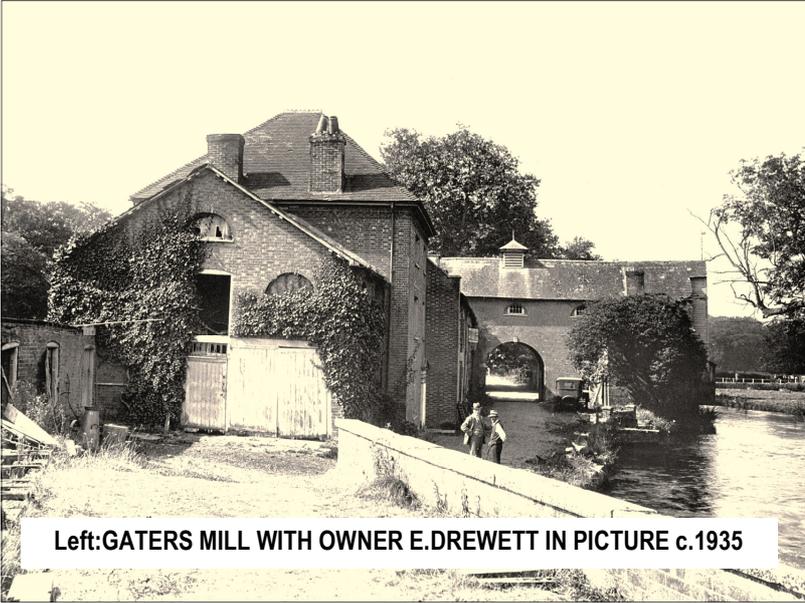
The area is now protected under the 1967 Conservation Act.

Among the characters who lived in the two streets the most prominent was probably General Gordon who was killed in Khartoum. Less well known, but probably more important, was Colonel A.R. Clarke, discoverer and developer of Geodesy (earth science). Most notorious was the barbaric Argentinian general and dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas who, like most dictators, was eventually forced out of office; he fled to Southampton, where he bought a farm on the outskirts of the city.

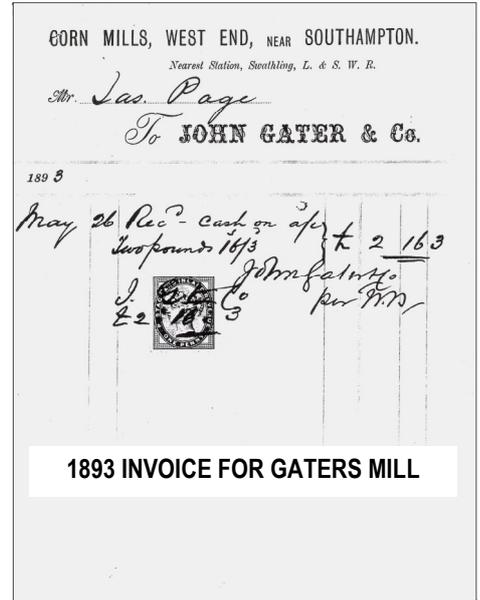
As always, it was an excellent talk, and we look forward to Jake's next visit.

A SHORT HISTORY OF GATERS MILL

By Nigel Wood



Left: GATERS MILL WITH OWNER E. DREWETT IN PICTURE c.1935



1893 INVOICE FOR GATERS MILL

Gaters Mill is a water mill that stands on the banks of the River Itchen near Mansbridge, it has had many names in its long and sometimes distinguished life; known variously as South Stoneham Mill, Up Mill, Mansbridge Mill and Westend Mills as well as more recently Gaters Mill. There have been various mills (powered by water) on this site since the 13th and 14th centuries. Fulling mills (a process in the manufacture of woollen cloth) occupied the site until 1685, when a paper mill known as Up Mill and belonging to the Company of White Paper Makers was established, and was granted a royal charter by King James II to manufacture white paper. The Company was composed mainly of French Huguenot refugees who moved to England to escape religious persecution. By the 1690's an inventory lists four mills each with two wheels, three workhouses, three warehouses, drying lofts, lodgings and a brewery etc.. quite a large operation. The Company of White Paper Makers appears to have ceased trading around 1697 and to have been succeeded by either Daniel Roussillon or Gerard de Vaux who continued paper making at the mill.

In 1702 Henri de Portal, a Huguenot refugee started work as an apprentice paper maker with Gerard de Vaux at Up Mill. In 1711 Henri had completed his apprenticeship and left in 1718 to set up his own mill at Laverstoke. He was later to achieve fame as a manufacturer of watermarked banknote paper and was awarded the Government contract for the Bank of England banknote paper.

The Gater family appear to have arrived on the scene around 1770. John Gater was advertising in the Reading Mercury of 2nd September 1771 ... "wanted, a sober man who was *capable of carrying on the business of paper making*". There appears to have been a partnership between John Gater and William Henry Gater and later Edward Gater to run both paper and corn mills on the same site. By 1851 John Gater at the now re-named South Stoneham Mill was almost alone in manufacturing paper by the vat method rather than by the use of machines. It was during this period that members of the Hatley family in West End appear to have been involved – Lewis Hatley, who was also Receiver of Posts (Postmaster) for Westend between circa 1834- 1854, had *professional paper maker* listed as his profession on his son's wedding certificate on 20th July 1850 at St. James' Church, West End. The manufacture of paper finally ceased in 1865, with the mills rebuilt as flour mills. Joseph Jukes, father of James Jukes, the seaman who perished in the Titanic disaster in 1912 and lived at Moorgreen, was a miller by trade who worked at Gaters Mill and moved to the area from Wincanton, Somerset.

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

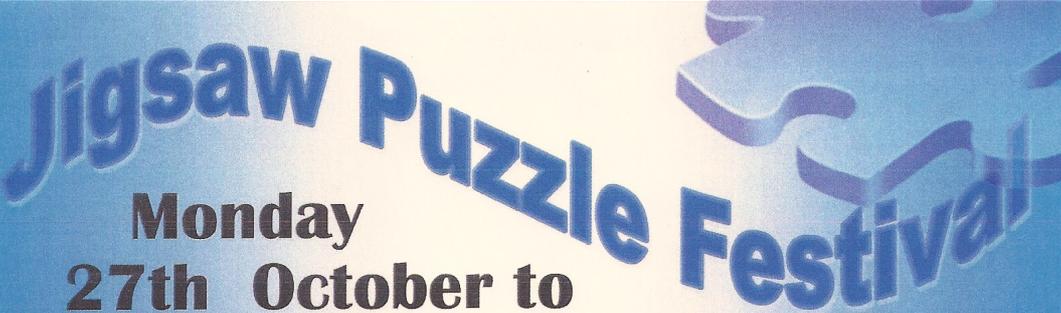
On 10th October 1917, during the Great War a devastating fire at Gaters Mill was reported in the local Press ..*"Many thousands of pounds of damage was caused by a fire which broke out on Thursday midnight at the well-known flour mill of Messrs John Gater & Co. at West End, near Southampton. Our pictures, which were taken before the firemen had actually completed their duty, show the scene of desolation which met the eye shortly after daybreak on Friday"*. It was rumoured that the fire was all the more devastating because the fire brigade could not get sufficient water pressure from the hydrants because of the drain on water supplies by the nearby Army Remount Depot. When the mill was rebuilt, however, it was much reduced in height from the original buildings to be seen in pre-World War One postcard pictures. During World War Two the buildings suffered further damage. After the war the various buildings were used to house a number of small businesses including the Lower Itchen Fishery Ltd.

Today the area of Romill Close, Gaters Mill and Black Farmhouse are protected as a Conservation Area by Eastleigh Borough Council; Gaters Mill was designated a Conservation Area on 25th May 1989, and this was extended to include the Romill Close area on 12th September 1991. Black Farmhouse, a timber framed house dating from the 16th century is designated a Grade 2 Listed building. The connection all these buildings have is of course the Gater family, who owned both Black Farm and the Mill at one time and many of the cottages in Romill Close were occupied by mill workers who where employed by the Gater family. Romill Close is a relatively new name given to the top end of the original Allington Lane when the M27 Motorway was built and cut off the rest of the road. That part of Allington Lane was then re-routed to come out at the Allington Lane roundabout after crossing over the motorway.

In 1990 planning permission was granted to selectively redevelop and refurbish all the buildings at Gaters Mill for office use. Today the buildings fully reconstructed and refurbished offer a tranquil setting by the water for office workers, a delightful, peaceful place to work!



ABOVE: GATERS MILL SHOWING ITS ORIGINAL LOOK PRIOR TO 1917 FIRE - THIS PICTURE TAKEN c.1905



Jigsaw Puzzle Festival

**Monday
27th October to
Saturday 1st November 2014**

10.00am to 4.00pm daily
Late night Thursday till 7.00pm

**Bitterne United Reformed Church
(above Iceland),
Bitterne Precinct,
Southampton, SO18 5EF.**

**Hundreds of Puzzles
on Display and to Buy**

Admission £1.50 to include free drink
(Free return during the week)
Accompanied children free

OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we have learnt of the death of former WELHS member Bob Elliot. Bob was also a stalwart member of West End Little Theatre Club before its closure some years ago and attended St. James' Church, here in West End. Bob lost his wife a number of years ago. He was in his mid 80's and he had been in poor health for some time, he died in Southampton General Hospital on Tuesday 9th September 2014.



St. JAMES' CHURCH REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND

THE MEN WHO MARCHED AWAY

The story of the men of West End who went to war 1914-1918

A commemorative weekend, Friday 31st October – Sunday 2nd November 2014

St James' Church, West End, SO30 3LT

Read and hear about the history of the names on our World War 1 memorial plaque.

See the carpet of knitted poppies and floral arrangements as we remember the work of the British Legion.

Teas and coffees will be available in the hall during opening times.

Friday 31st October

6pm – Exhibition opens

7pm – An illustrated talk by Nigel Wood & Peter Wallace, followed by refreshments

Saturday 1st November

11am to 6.30pm – Exhibition open

12.30pm – Lunchtime recital given by Simon Harper (tenor lay clerk, Hereford Cathedral)

4.15pm – COME AND SING excerpts from Karl Jenkins 'The Armed Man'

6.30pm – Performance of 'The Armed Man'. All welcome to come and listen!

Sunday 2nd November

8am – Holy Communion

10am – Sung Eucharist

11.30am to 3.30pm – Exhibition open

3.30pm – Sung Evensong with dedication of WWI plaque

Free entry to the exhibition and all events

Donations welcomed towards the renovation of the WWI plaque and the Royal British Legion

'We Will Remember Them'

WEST END HONEY FOR SALE

Once again as last year our thanks to WELHS members Peter and Kathryn Hatton who live in West End and keep bees and have honey for sale. The honey is actually produced here in West End and sells for £3.50 per jar for 227g (8oz in real weight). They have very generously offered again to donate 50p from the sale of each jar to WELHS funds - so by buying the honey you will have something nice to consume and also benefit the society. Peter and Kathryn can be contacted on 02380 474789 and are happy to deliver to your door here in West End whilst on their travels. They will also bring a quantity to the meetings for sale, so bring your money! Ed

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE....

November 5

MEN WHO MARCHED AWAY

Nigel Wood & Peter Wallace

December 3

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENING, BUFFET AND RAFFLE

plus

"Yuletide Tales" with David Weller & Vera Hughes

ON THIS DAY.....

On this day (October 1st.) in.....

- 1207** King Henry III was born at Winchester in Hampshire, the son of King John.
- 1792** Money orders were introduced in Britain.
- 1843** The English Sunday newspaper "News of the World" began publication.
- 1870** The first official issue of the postcard was made in Britain by the Post Office, together with the introduction of the halfpenny postage stamp.
- 1873** Sir Edwin Landseer, English animal painter noted for his 'Monarch of the Glen'. Died in London and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral.
- 1890** Stanley Holloway, English singer and comedy actor, born in London.
- 1920** Walter Matthau, American film actor, born in New York City as Walter Matuschanskayasky.
- 1924** James Earl (Jimmy) Carter, American Democrat statesman and 39th President, born at Plains in Georgia.
- 1933** Richard Harris, British actor, born in Co. Limerick in the Republic of Ireland.
- 1936** General Franco took office as Head of the Nationalist (Insurgent) Government in Spain.
- 1949** The People's Republic was founded in China, with Mao Tse-Tung its chairman.