



GREAT WAR 100

# WESTENDER

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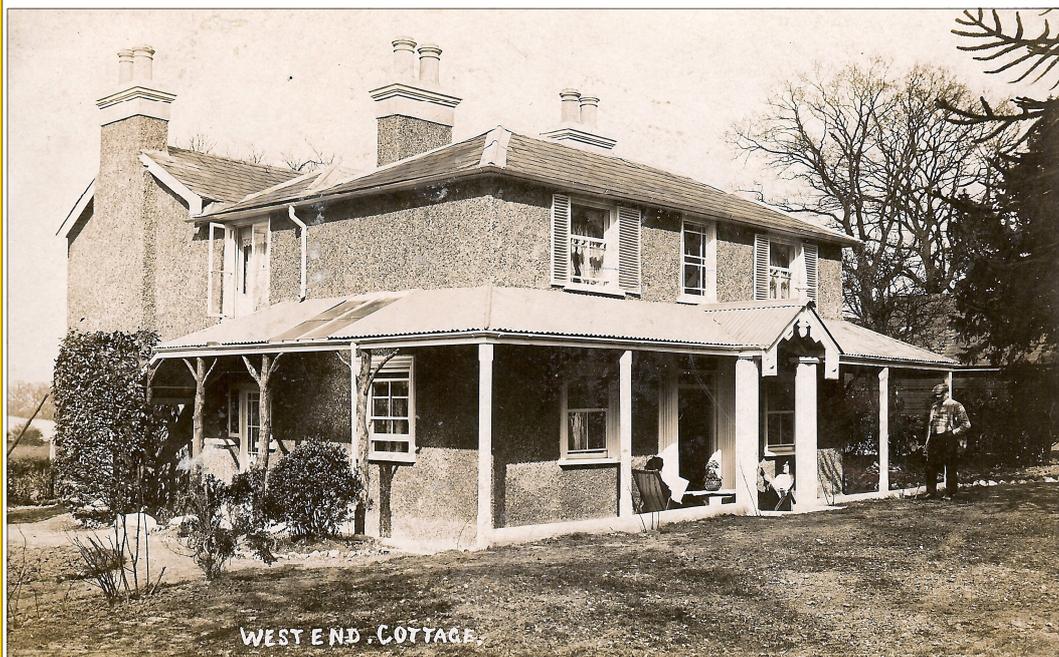
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## FROM OUR ARCHIVE



“WEST END COTTAGE” c.1910

Our picture shows “West End Cottage”, photographed around 1910. Alas, long gone like so much of our heritage here in West End it stood next to Dunfords premises which was situated next to the boundary of Hatch Grange Estate.

The picture on the right is of the same cottage taken in 1955 and now renamed “Wellswood”.



“WELLSWOOD” c.1955

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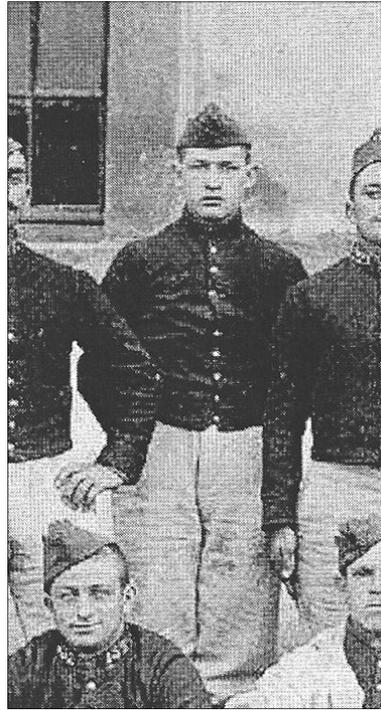
## A FRENCHMAN'S WAR ON THE WESTERN FRONT 1914-18

### Part 2

By Pauline Berry



Above: French Army signaller in the Great War. Centre: Private Claude Laboisses in centre. Right: The war memorial at Les Eparges.



Soon after the declaration of war in August 1914, there was a run on the banks in France. Long queues formed to withdraw their money and a shortage of gold and silver developed, since paper money became valueless and could not be cashed. Exports of grain and flour officially stopped and newspapers shrank in size to save paper. Most of the young men had been conscripted into the French Army and had departed across the chaotic countryside to the Western Front, which mostly stretched from the English Channel to Switzerland.

The fighting against the German Army quickly intensified and the enemy began making inroads into France, leaving death and destruction behind them. The fear of an invasion of Paris increased as their armies drew closer to Paris and the capital was nearly deserted, even the French Government had decamped to Bordeaux. Fortunately the German Army turned its attention elsewhere and Paris was spared. Its population slowly returned.

My great-uncle, Private Claude Laboisses, was a Parisian and an infantryman in the 132nd Regiment of the Army of Chalon. He was one of the first to be called up and was transported by train to Dugny, his depot just south of Verdun. Losses of men were great, even in that first autumn and a quarter of the French soldiers never returned home. Leave was promised, but rarely happened as time went by. Claude was in frequent combat, and in November 1914 he was wounded.

This was his letter home (translated):

*“ Meuse 19th. November 1914*

*Little Sister,*

*.....Sorry I did not write yesterday, but I was moved and today I have arrived in a village near Verdun. Yesterday a kind woman gave us drinks of hot cocoa. It's not so bad, you see. But now it's not so good, Continued on page 3*

*Continued from page 2*

*Although I am resting under cover, on some straw .... My foot doesn't hurt as much now I have rested it. Send me your news quickly and tell me all. It's cold here in the Verdun area, it is freezing and I feel sorry for my pals in the trenches.... I must hurry for the courier is about to leave,  
Love and kisses from your brother,  
Claude”*

That was only the beginning of a bitter winter, in which the mud was so deep that it got in everywhere that the rats couldn't reach, into the soldiers' uniforms, boots and even their rifles which often refused to fire. I have no more of his letters, but I am told that during those months, Claude was promoted to a Corporal and trained as a Signaller. He was probably helping to fill the depleted ranks left by the thousands already killed. He was also transferred to the 22nd Regiment.

Life became even tougher for him and his fellow soldiers in 1915, owing to the heavy bombardment of Verdun (the main offensive was in 1916). Communication by Signallers between the units became very difficult owing to broken telephone and telegraph wires and consequently many “runners” were killed on duty.

Claude's unit was heavily involved in the fighting close to Les Eparges, a french hilltop village in the Woivre, a few miles south-east of Verdun. The enemy had made inroads into this triangle of land, and was deeply entrenched there. In the frequent bombardments, this village all but disappeared. The Germans' commanding position high on the slopes meant that the French suffered numerous casualties (until this land was regained from them, months later). Unfortunately, my great-uncle, Corporal Laboisses, was one of them.

It is not known how he died, except that it was on March 5th 1915. Was it by shell, machine-gun or sniper fire which made him yet another statistic, thus joining the 1.3 million Frenchmen who died by the end of hostilities in 1918? Mustard gas was not the cause because it was not introduced until the following month, causing further misery to all.

My great-uncle Claude has no known grave, but today there is a tall memorial at Les Eparges, where is engraved these words, *“The 12th Division, to its dead and their brothers in arms who fell at Les Eparges”*.

I am told that Claudes' parents and sisters never got over his death. His sisters emigrated, including my future grandmother, who went to England, and his parents retired to Bonssac, Creuse, when the war was over. A century on, I often wonder about Claude's state of mind, after only seven months in the French Army. Was he spurred on by patriotism and “La Gloire de la France” or was my great-uncle totally disillusioned and fearful of the horrors he had seen, when the end came. I will never know.

*Grateful acknowledgement to:*

*Beatrice Arroue*

*Ian Summer (“The French Poilu”)*

*Philip Gibbs (“The Soul of War”)*

*And of course my late uncle and great-aunt.*

## A BIG THANK YOU

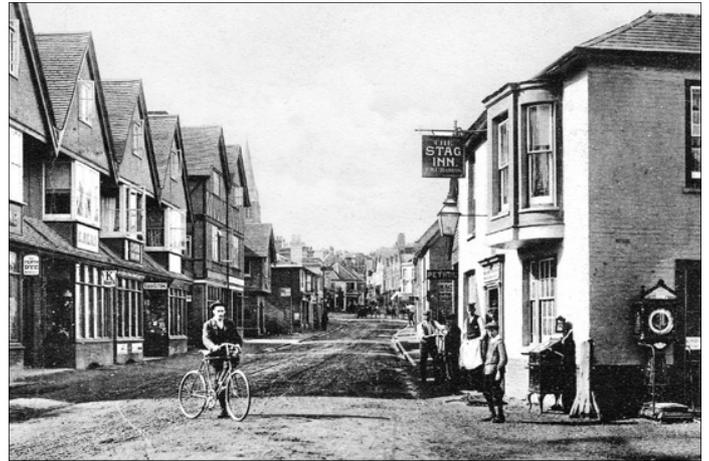
**Y**ou will have noticed that we have a new Meeting Reviewer, Roy Andrews, who I am sure you will agree from his last two reviews is an excellent successor to Stan Waight. Our sincere thanks go to Stan for all his excellent Reviews over the last few years (doesn't time fly!), they have helped make Westender so popular with our readers. Ed.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF LYNDHURST

A Review by Roy Andrews



LYNDHURST HIGH STREET c.1910



LYNDHURST HIGH STREET c.1900



LYNDHURST TODAY



LYNDHURST HIGH STREET c.1949

The speaker at the February meeting was Peter Roberts who has studied the history of the whole of the New Forest for many years and this talk was based on a book he had written on Lyndhurst, having discovered that nobody else had bothered to collate the history of the town.

The New Forest was established as a Royal hunting ground in 1079. 'Forest' was a legal term used to protect any area of woodland, heath land or moorland for hunting and with the King's hunting lodge being at Brockenhurst, this was the early centre of the Forest. However the location where five main roads converged from Southampton, Beaulieu, Christchurch, Brockenhurst and Cadnam became the one street village of Lyndhurst that soon became the pre-eminent settlement in the Forest. The first mention of Lyndhurst, which means 'Lime tree on a hill', was in the Domesday Book. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Verderers' Court, which looks after the running of the Forest, was established in the village.

The settlement was divided up into Copyholds of the manor, the boundaries of which can still be traced to this day in the village. For the best part of eight hundred years not much happened of note: the one-street settlement remained unchanged not having its own church even until the 1860's, Minsted Church having sufficed until then.

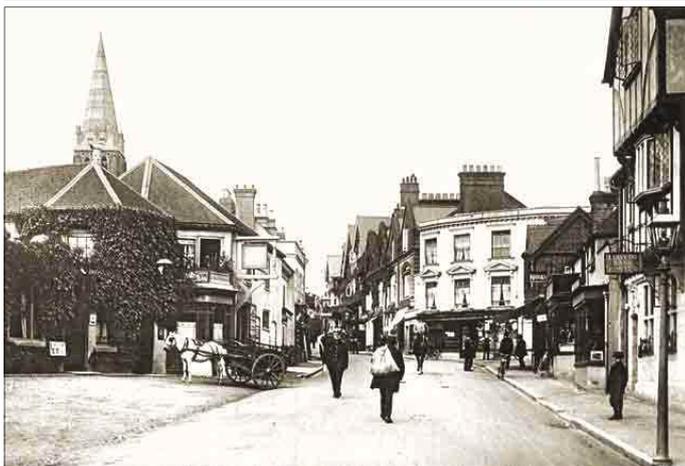
It was the mid-Victorian period when the town began to expand beyond the main street becoming more cosmopolitan but even in 1899, most of the population turned out to witness the rare sight of twenty cars passing through on their way to Bournemouth. And yet only eight years later, the residents were complaining of too many cars in the village and on that point nothing has ever changed since!

*Continued on page 5*

*Continued from page 4*

Upon reaching the Victorian Period, Peter was able to display slides of village notables of the time, their businesses and premises. There were also early slides taken from the tower of the new church showing the infilling of Victorian buildings among the medieval in the main street and the early surrounding development. Brusher Mills, the renowned snake catcher, was mentioned and it appears that much of his fame was as the result of him dropping a snake in the vicinity of tourists, and then appearing to make a great show of catching it, before being suitably rewarded for his bravery!

At the end of his presentation, in any questions, Peter was able to give in-depth answers to two members who had asked somewhat obscure questions relating to other parts of the Forest so much so that he was able to joke( I think) that he had planted the questions - which goes to show the knowledge a lifetime study of a subject can produce.



LYNDHURST c.1912



THE STAG INN, LYNDHURST IN THE 1930's

## CLIPPING FROM THE "West End News" COMMUNITY MAGAZINE FROM SEPTEMBER 1985

*C.M. Silence wrote ....*

### "EARLY DAYS

A contrast to the weather we have had lately, June 1903 South Stoneham Highways Committee - The Guardians or Counsellors were told that Bitterne and Netley urgently need water carts to keep down the dust and there was a proposition that every village should supply their own. They were quite a common sight before the roads were tarred, local contractors with horses were hired to draw the two wheeled oval tanks around the main roads in the villages. The carter usually managed to finish around 12 noon outside one of the village pubs - it must have been quite thirsty work.

Since early days, fire precautions at the Workhouse were always being discussed either by the Guardians or the local Fire Brigade and representations were often made to the Village Council. As early as 1900, Firemen demanded a pump to enable the hose pressure to reach the high roof and third floor adequately, but always it was denied on economic grounds.

It is interesting to know that at the time there were 8 men in the Brigade, 6 hydrants in the district, a stand pipe and 200 feet of leather hose. The South Hants Water Company stated the water pressure was maintained evenly day and night.

It was recommended that several more lengths of canvas hose be purchased in place of leather ones and two iron staircases should be erected at each end of the building to allow children and old people to escape. These stairs are, I believe, still in existence.

Later another 15 hydrants were ordered to be fixed in various parts of the village, 150 feet of canvas hose purchased, together with an extra branch pipe and hose reel. The first trailer pump did not appear in the village until the beginning of the 1939-45 war."



## THE REAL "BIGGLES"

By Nigel Wood

(Originally published in "The Partnership" newspaper in 2010)



Left

**ARTHUR WELLESLEY  
BIGSWORTH  
IN RNAS UNIFORM**



Right

**BIGSWORTHS PHOTO  
TAKEN FROM HIS  
1913 PILOTS  
LICENCE**

Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth was born at Croydon, London on 27th March 1885, the son of Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth Snr. and Kate Box. Educated by private Tutor, he received training as a Merchantile Marine officer and entered the Royal Naval Reserve as Midshipman in 1903, promoted to Acting Sub-Lieutenant in 1909 and Acting Lieutenant in 1911. He learned to fly on a Bristol biplane on Salisbury Plain and attended the Central Flying School on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1912, graduating from the first course held at the CFS (Central Flying School) in April 1913, having gained his RAeC Certificate (No 396) on 21 January 1913. Appointed Flight Commander of No.1 Squadron at Calshot Naval Air Station on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1913 he carried out some early night flying experiments on 28 June 1914 in a Sopwith Bat Boat (No 118), using two 4V lamps attached to the aircraft which he had designed himself as a crude night sight. Having joined the Royal Naval Air Service he went overseas in September 1914 after the outbreak of World War One. In March 1915 he was commended for good work, notably an attack on German troop concentrations and for locating a heavy gun at Leffinge.

On 17th May 1915 he became the first officer to succeed in dropping bombs on a German Zeppelin airship AT NIGHT! This particular Zeppelin airship LZ.39 had been raiding the East Coast, and on her return journey was intercepted at 10,000 feet over Ostend by eight British naval aeroplanes from Dunkirk. Flight Commander Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth, who was piloting one of the machines, an Avro 504b, rose 200 feet above the airship and dropped four 20-pound bombs onto the airship's envelope one of which penetrated and burst, exploding five hydrogen gas bags in her compartments, sending her home to Evere severely damaged and with one crewman killed. For his skilful and daring achievement he was promoted from Flight Commander to Squadron Commander.

On the morning of August 26th 1915, Squadron Commander Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth was reconnoitering, alone in a Farman F27 biplane (No. 3623), to the seaward side of Ostend. Suddenly he saw a German submarine and at once decided to attack it. Swooping down to 500 feet, he checked the speed of his aircraft and then manoeuvred in circles over the vessel despite heavy anti-aircraft fire both from shore batteries and the submarine and dropped his bombs with a most destructive accuracy. The first bomb burst a hole in the submarines decks, and being unable to dive, she was compelled to travel on the surface.

*Continued on page 7*

*Continued from page 6*

Before she could reach Ostend harbour and safety, however, she filled with water and sank like a stone. For his conspicuous gallantry and skill Squadron Commander Bigsworth was awarded the DSO. He had become the first officer to destroy single handed a German submarine!

His Citation for the award of the Distinguished Service Order reads:

*“Squadron Commander Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth, R.N.*

*For his services in destroying single-handed a German submarine on the morning of August 26th, 1915, by bombs dropped from an aeroplane. Squadron Commander Bigsworth was under heavy fire from the shore batteries and from the submarine whilst manoeuvring for position. Nevertheless, displaying great coolness, he descended to 500 feet, and after several attempts was able to get a good line for dropping the bombs with full effect.”*

(London Gazette – 13 September 1915)

For these and other acts of bravery he was awarded the DSO in 1915 and a bar to his DSO in 1917 and later the AFC in 1919. In 1920 he married Kathleen Eleanor, widow of Major E. Gardiner, R.E. and continued to live in West End. He was promoted to Air Commodore in 1930. Later he became Director of Equipment at the Air Ministry from 1931-1935. He was placed on the retired list in 1935.

It was whilst working at the Air Ministry that he met and worked with Capt. W.E. Johns who wrote the famous Biggles books. Capt. Johns based his hero “Biggles” (Bigglesworth was his surname in the books) on Arthur and his wartime exploits and it is rumoured his work for military intelligence.

Arthur whose father was also named in honour of the Duke of Wellington (both his father and grandfather were great admirers of the Duke) was a resident of West End for many years; as a young man at the age of 16 years he is listed as living at Firgrove House in Moorhill Road. His name and wartime details appear on the West End Roll of Honour that is situated in West End Parish Centre. He passed away on 24th February 1961.

## 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

NB. At the last meeting all the honey that was on show sold out quickly.

## A BIG THANK YOU

A big “Thank You” to Mary Abraham for the kind donation of J.C. Ives Builders of West End building board which will grace our museum as well as the opportunity to copy many Ives family photographs for our archive. Mary has also written about the Ives family, the first instalment of which is in this newsletter.

## ROMSEY - NOOKS AND CRANNIES

A Review by Roy Andrews



The March meeting was attended by fifty nine members plus ten guests to hear a talk by Phoebe Merrick, as the title implied, on some of the out of the way places in Romsey.

Her slide presentation began with WW2 anti tank 'Dragons Teeth' just outside Romsey at Greatbridge, almost buried now in undergrowth. Much of her talk then was based around the many water ways criss-crossing Romsey, a map of which looked very much like that of the London Underground. She started with the water course called Fishlake, 'lake', in Saxon, meaning 'slow moving stream', as it flowed through King John's Garden. This and other streams were used to mark the boundaries of the Borough of Romsey which was established in 1607. The boundary survived until 1875 when the area outside of this, into which the town had expanded, was incorporated into the borough becoming Romsey Extra.

In Middlebridge Street, a small off-shoot of the main stream which runs alongside the road is called Chavey Water and is believed to be part of the original Borough boundary. Also in the railings bordering the street and stream is a glimpse of days gone by, an opening and trough from which passing traction engines could replenish their water supply. Also in this street is Bath House, a fine example of a stonemason's skill who took it upon himself to replicate the architecture of the city of Bath.

There are only two flint buildings in the town, one being the police station and the other now a private house but originally built by one John Nowes as Nowes Charity School for twenty boys and incorporating a master's house. Elsewhere, the Boys National School is a fine example of the Arts and Craft s movement designed by William Eden Nesfield (1835-1888).

Back to the streams and in Church Street an innocuous door incorporated between two buildings was required to gain access to Fishlake stream running behind the buildings to enable any clogging of the stream to be cleared to prevent flooding. And alongside Abbey Water is the Congregational Church, an architectural gem which costs a fortune to maintain.

A canal was built through Romsey, opening in 1791, which survived until 1860 by which time the railway which had arrived in 1846 bought out the canal company and used the canal north of Timsbury as the route of the railway.

The Fleming Arms Pub in Alma Road, it was explained, was named after the family which owned large swathes of land in the area as did Lord Palmerston of Broadlands Estate. To prevent competition the two sides agreed that the Flemings would concentrate on the East and North of Romsey and Palmerston on the South and West.

After many more titbits of information, Phoebe, unlike the comedian Ken Dodd whose performance goes on for ever, found that she had been talking for rather a long time and wanted to call a halt; "what happened was" the audience insisted on another five minutes of her gems. This speaks volumes about her presentational skills but from a personal point of view not everyone knows the layout of Romsey as she does so an occasional glimpse of a town map highlighting the various locations I felt would have been useful.

**DOROTHY MAY IVES (nee Needle)**  
**10 January 1923 – 8 December 2014**  
By Mary Abraham – John Ives niece



DOROTHY MAY IVES



“Saskatchewan”, 15 Western Road, West End left in 1950

I felt that I wanted to write a few words as Dorothy passed away just before Christmas and the name of Ives family from West End has sadly come to an end. I may not get all the details correct but I do remember a lot I was told, and sadly there isn't anyone left to put me right!!

Her husband, the late John Clarence Ives (affectionately known as Jack) died in 2007 and his story was in an earlier Westender volume 5 number 10. Sadly they had no children but enjoyed a long and successful life together. My mother Joyce Mason (nee Ives) and Jack had lived in the Telegraph Woods area since 1928 when they came back with their grandfather Frederick and mother from Canada, to take over the development business of Telegraph Woods when Alfred Ives (Fred's brother) had died in Toronto.

Dorothy originates from Foord Road, Hedge End where I believe her father had been a baker in the village. They were members of the Plymouth Brethren and deeply religious people. Dorothy was a very shy person together with her sister Hazel, and I am told she worked at the bakery for her father for a time. Dorothy and Jack enjoyed animals and most of their married life had dogs, cats, chickens and even geese to care for. They always enjoyed the rural way of life and a steady slower pace of farming. They continued attending the West End Free Church, always known affectionately by our family as Barbe Baker's 'Mission Hall'.

John (Jack) and Dorothy were well known in the West End area in the early days particularly in the 1950's-1970's when the Ives building 'name' was very prominent. They married in 1950 and held their wedding reception at the Botleigh Grange Hotel. They built their first married home at "Saskatchewan", 15 Western Road, Telegraph Woods brick by brick themselves, a labour of love. They lived there until it was sold in 1964 to the late Mr and Mrs Paul Stanley (Mrs Stanley still lives there) and Jack continued to build next to the house No 17 Western Road after that, with just one labourer.

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

They progressed from dealing with the Telegraph Woods estate and began building in Hedge End as well as West End. They built most of Albert Road in the early 1960's including where we moved to in 1962, near the Albert Road cemetery. Later it was various builds in Alexander Road and then renovated May Cottage and built Walton Flints in Reservoir Lane, Hedge End. Some land was sold at that stage, I think, that continued into the 'Strawberry Fields' area, off Netley Firs Road.

They bought farming land at Lockerley where Jack built up a good farm for beef cattle and grain crops. At the same time his building work was expanding and he built a number of properties in West End, including Telegraph Woods and Littlewood Gardens, West End.

In later years they lived on 2 different farms on the IOW for some years and again enjoyed the rural charms together with the cattle which had always been in Jack's past life in Canada. Together they had a few years in Sussex and finally came back to end their days in Oakvale, off Allington Lane in West End.

In the next edition - Part 2 – The early years in Telegraph Woods estate with Alfred Ives

## THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE.....

**May 6**

QUAKERS AT WAR

*Dr Francis Hurd*

**June 3**

WINCHESTER - Bishops, Buildings and Bones

*Andrew Negus*

**July 1**

QUEEN VICTORIA'S LAST JOURNEY

*Peter Keat*

## ON THIS DAY.....

**On this day (April 1st.) in.....**

**1815** Otto von Bismarck, German statesman and first Chancellor, born at Schonhausen in Brandenburg.

**1875** 'The Times' became the first newspaper to publish a daily weather chart.

**1883** Lon Chaney, American silent-screen actor, born at Colorado Springs in Colorado, USA.

**1893** Cicely Courtneidge, British actress, born at Sydney in Australia.

**1918** The Royal Air Force was formed, by the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service.

**1932** Debbie Reynolds, American singer and film actress, born at El Paso in Texas as Mary Frances Reynolds.

**1947** The school leaving age in Britain was raised to 15.

**1948** Britain's electricity industry was nationalised.

**1973** Value Added Tax (VAT) came into operation in Britain.