

# WESTENDER

IN OUR 20th YEAR OF PUBLICATION

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This month our image shows "The Blacksmiths Arms" as it looked in 1971, it is situated in West End High Street on Alford's Hill. Today the Pub is a private house as seen in the smaller image taken in 2008. Recognisable but with some slight alterations and the roadway somewhat higher than in the main picture.



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## DEFENCE OF THE REALM 16th. CENTURY STYLE

A review by Roy Andrews

Regular visiting speaker Dr. Cheryl Butler produced another well researched talk at the November meeting based around the defences of Southampton. Prior to 1338, the town was defended on the two landward sides by a stone wall and double ditch but nothing on the two seaward sides. Consequently, in that year, and to launch the start of what became known as the 100 Years' War, a fleet led by the French attacked the town from the sea and it took three days for the population to drive them off. Incensed, Edward III ordered a wall to be built around the remainder of the town and although it would take 40 years to be completed, by incorporating the merchants' houses on the beaches into the walls, it was able to include the latest defence technology into the walls and the Bargate in the form of keyhole gun slots for the recently developed weapons.



GOD'S HOUSE TOWER, SOUTHAMPTON

Henry V had Gods House Tower built at the south east corner of the town which had large cannons on its roof. Later the Long Gallery was built between the Tower and town wall specifically to take more big guns as the French were an ever present menace. The Wars of the Roses saw Southampton's moment of glory when the Mayor of the town arrested fugitive Perkin Warbeck who had claimed to be one of 'the Princes in the Tower'.

Henry VIII came to Southampton visiting Tudor House the then home of Sir John Dawtrey who was Controller of the King's Ships. His duties included the acquiring timber for said ships and it is thought he acquired some of the timbers from the 'Mary Rose' for a rebuild of Tudor House. He did also find time to improve the town's defences.

For decades, the Longbow had been the weapon of choice for foot soldiers and every Sunday all males between the ages of 16-60 were required to practise the weapon outside the Bargate or Gods House Tower but over time guns came to the fore. Cheryl described many of the hand-held weapons and cannon with exotic names like Halbert, muskets and Culverin which had replaced bows by 1590. Professional gunners, some from The Low Countries, were employed by the town to maintain and fire the cannon; when they were not so employed they followed other trades such as glaziers in the town.

The threat from the Spanish Armada had seen the muster of 9000 men to defend Southampton and 3000 for the Isle of Wight. The town was only able to provide two ships for the English fleet, one of which, 'The Angel', was used as a Fire Ship against the Spanish. Most of the well known sailors such as Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher were regular visitors to the town but after Henry VIII had made Portsmouth his main naval port, the importance of Southampton and the need to defend it declined, as did the upkeep on the walls and guns. The town later regained some glory when it became a Spa town.

## WITH THANKS TO WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

By Sue Barnes

I have always held an interest in history and am fascinated to visit different places and learn about their origins. However, it is only relatively recently that I have taken an interest in discovering more about those closest to me and their experiences in more recent history.

During August, as my husband and I were preparing for a visit to Portsmouth with his choir, I decided to spend the choir's rehearsal time finding the grave of my Uncle Stanley Pook. In 1988 my mother was contacted by Alan White who was researching for his publication "Unsung Heroes – A story of a wartime incident in the Cotswolds".

I browsed on the West End Local History Society website because Alan White says in his paper that "Stan lies at rest in the Church of St James West End Southampton". To my amazement I came across an article in your Westender Newsletter of March- April 2008 entitled "One of the Few" by Pauline Berry. In that article Pauline briefly tells the story of Uncle Stanley and asks "Can anyone tell us more.....?"

Whilst the choir rehearsed I caught the train into Southampton, caught a bus outside the Civic Centre and arrived in West End.

I was born in Bitterne and moved to Woolston at a very young age where I lived until I was 10years old. We then moved to the Midlands, but despite leaving the area so long ago Southampton has always felt like home.

I do believe that my generation, born soon after the end of the Second World War, have been most fortunate. My brother and I were given snippets of what had happened to family members during the war, but we were clearly sheltered from the grim realities. It is only relatively recently that we have become aware of the full detail of close family war experiences.

St James Church yard was my destination. As a family we spoke of Uncle Stanley but it wasn't until my own children were studying World War Two in their history lessons and our contact with Alan White that the details of his story began to emerge. I searched for Uncle Stanley's grave that day in the churchyard, but could not find it.

I knew that the West End Local History Heritage Museum opened to the public on a Saturday. I was so near, yet clearly so far from visiting Uncle's grave, so I set off to walk to the Heritage Museum. It's quite a long way on foot especially after my route march up Hedge End Road from the bus stop!!

I cannot believe how fortunate I was to arrive at the Museum at the same time as Pauline Berry. She invited me inside and we began to talk. I quickly discovered that she was the author of the article about my Uncle. I had bought with me the Alan White's booklet.

It was lovely to share this information with Pauline and show her some family photographs of my mother Kathleen, my Uncle Stanley and my Auntie Isabel together with a couple of photos of my Grandparents William and May Pook. Grandad is wearing his local Defence Volunteer uniform. The family lived in Thornhill Park Road Bitterne and my mother, uncle and auntie went to school in West End.

Ironically, after 30 bombing operations over Germany with 115 Squadron based at Marham, Norfolk my uncle, a wireless operator and gunner, died on a training flight over the Cotswolds. He had volunteered to

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train new crew members during a break from active service. Unfortunately, his plane (Wellington L7818) was in collision with a spitfire also on a training flight.

Pauline was able to find documents in which my family are mentioned, but best of all the Museum has a large map of the Old Burial Ground the existence of which I had not realised. There was Uncle Stanley's grave marked on the map. Armed with the plot number I determined to walk to visit the grave and the war memorial.

How fortunate was I that Pauline kindly decided it was too far for me to walk and offered to take me in her car?! When we arrived at the graveyard, which is a fair stride from the Centre! I was so glad that Pauline was with me. From the map I was expecting defined rows and straight lines of plots but clearly over the years nature has worked it's best to naturalise the area. Pauline remembered visiting Uncle Stanley's grave during her previous research and so we found him relatively easily. There shining white, clearly cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, was his grave "903242 Flight Sergeant Stanley William Pook Wireless Operator/Air Gunner Royal Airforce" He died on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1942 aged 21 years.

I spent a few emotional moments at the graveside and at the War memorial contemplating the story of such a brave uncle that I was never able to meet and who's story had been kept hidden from me and my brother for so many years.

Thank you Pauline and all your colleagues, for keeping records so carefully and helping me to find my Uncle's grave. I will come again and bring my brother with me. This time I will be able to act as a guide for him.

### **Two fascinating "war stories" in one family**

My Uncle Stanley Pook had war experiences that he sadly didn't live to retell himself. Had he survived he would have had a brother-in-law who also had a story to tell. However my father never spoke about his experiences bar telling us in an almost light hearted way that he had "walked up a beach on Malta in his stocking feet."

As a result of the wonderful experience I had back in August when I was helped to find my uncle's grave I was inspired to revisit my father's war story.

My parents Kathleen Pook and Arthur Butterworth from Rochdale married in October 1946. They had met during the war at HMS Collingwood having both signed up to serve.

Around my father's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday he was watching a television programme about the discovery of a shipwreck off the coast of Malta. He calmly announced that this was his ship – HMS Southwold. His grandsons and I tried to get him to tell us more about how the ship had sunk but he was not forthcoming and at that time efforts to research what had happened drew a blank.

Several years later my husband and I holidayed on Malta and discovered the ship's bell in the Maritime Museum but there was no information other than the date on which HMS Southwold had been sunk by a mine – a British mine that had been placed to protect the harbour. The date of the sinking was 24<sup>th</sup> March 1942, just two weeks before the death of Uncle Stanley.

We spoke with the member of staff on duty that day who happened to know the group of divers who were exploring the wreck. That member of staff kindly rang our hotel to share with us some of the information he had gleaned from the divers.

The history and last voyage of HMS Southwold is now well documented on the internet -

<http://www.divesystemsmalta.com/about-malta/dive-sites-southwold/>

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The sinking of course was one moment in time but the Southwold was fully involved in the three day sea battle now known as The Second Battle of Sirte.

After enduring the battle my father and his uninjured shipmates were ordered to abandon ship and had to swim nearly 2 miles in dangerous waters to reach land. Hence, "walking up the beach of Malta in stocking feet". The Southwold had a crew of 168. Miraculously only one officer and four ratings were killed as the mine exploded. All the other crew members survived. The five who lost their lives are remembered on the Portsmouth War Memorial.

I can't help wondering how my father would feel if he knew that you can now dive to the wreck of HMS Southwold as part of a diving holiday.

There must be so many families with similar stories to ours but I feel humbled and proud to be so closely related to two heroes.

Thank you again to the West End Local History Society and Pauline in particular for showing such an interest in my family's stories.

Sue Barnes - nee Butterworth  
Ledbury, Herefordshire

## **WHEN WEST END WAS A VILLAGE**

**By Ray Upson**

I was born in West End in 1936, it was then a very rural area. The house I was born in was a cottage at the bottom of Chalk Hill next door to what was then Scaffolding Great Britain. The office block was a big house which originally belonged to the Woolley's of Quob Farm, it has now been replaced with a block of flats. Our cottage was the Coachman's House. Most of the cottages in West End were owned by the local farms. There were a number of big houses at the top of Chalk Hill, Church Hill and the Telegraph Woods area. A big house where Midlands Estate is now, was burnt down and the estate was enclosed by a metal fence.

Where the Co-op is now was a shop belonging to the Fray family. What a shop it was! A grocer's, a butcher's, a fish mongers and a green grocer's. There was a very large garden at the rear where there was a very large greenhouse where they grew tomatoes and lettuce etc.. and a pig sty where they bred pigs which he slaughtered himself, so good fresh pork was to be had.

It was a very close community, everyone knew everyone else. I can remember being pushed up to the village centre in my pushchair and my mother spoke to everyone she met, it took ages!

I was three years old when World War II broke out, that certainly brought the community even closer together. There was a large anti-aircraft gun site in Quob Lane that made more noise than the enemy aircraft flying overhead. Barnsland Estate was then an open field where they set up a Barrage Balloon site. The Wilderness, which was then a big estate, was used as an Army Camp and the large house was used as accommodation for Army Officers.

When I started school I remember walking up to Hilldene, which was then an Infant School, watching the Spitfire aircraft from Eastleigh Airport, which was then an RAF Base, chasing off enemy aircraft who were taking aerial photographs.

Chartwell Green was then part of Lord Swaythling's Estate, his house is now Gregg School.

I remember during the war having days off from school during the harvesting period, picking potatoes

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behind a tractor under the supervision of Land Army girls. We were paid, if I remember rightly, 6 pence a day.

Then the Americans arrived, there were several camps set up in the area to accommodate them. We used to wait outside the public house waiting for the Americans, Yanks as we used to call them, to come out. We would ask, 'Got any gum chum?' Sweet's being on ration getting some chewing gum was out of this world. I was fortunate for when I told them my birthday was the 4<sup>th</sup> July, I got more gum than anyone else.

Just after D-Day the village was full of Army lorries waiting to go across to France. They were parked everywhere, the one parked outside our house was there for two weeks. The driver and his mate slept in the cab. My mother used to take them breakfast and hot water to wash and shave. My brother and I looked in the back of the lorry and it was full of ammunition. If West End had been bombed during that period it would have been no more!

When the war ended, wow, street parties and bonfires everywhere and sweets off ration, wow, I was sick that day!

Everyone had big gardens to grow their own vegetables those days and there were rabbits everywhere, so rabbit was often on the menu. We had a tom cat that used to catch rabbits and bring them home. I have a feeling he'd rather have his cooked than raw.

During my teens, West End was divided into two halves, the bottom end and the top end. The dividing line was the Blacksmith's Arms, which is now a private house below the Old Fire Station. We used to have football matches against each other using what was then West End Football Clubs ground in Hatch Grange. It's obvious we used to end up in the Blacksmith's Arms after the game.

Bonfire Nights were something else. The top end had their bonfire in Orchards Way and the bottom end had their bonfire on Barnsland. We used to start building our bonfire during the summer school holiday so you can imagine how big they were by Bonfire Night. In fact, we used to have a guard posted in case the top end lads came down to sabotage.

Those days of course we had a local Police Station which is now a Dentist and Car Sales in the centre of the village. The local policeman joined local organisation's so he was very much part of the community. Local vandalism was very rare because the local copper knew almost everyone and only had to drop a hint.

I remember the local bobby was treasurer of the Cricket Club and they had a charity match with the Hampshire Second Eleven. The bobby was going around the crowd selling raffle tickets. He came up to one lad and said 'Are you going to buy a quid's worth of these raffle tickets?' To which the lad replied 'Get lost'. The bobby said, 'Alright if you buy a quid's worth of these raffle tickets I won't ask to see the tax and insurance on your motor bike', to which the lad replied, 'Alright I'll have five quid's worth'. The next day he had his bike taxed and insured.

I grew up in this village when it was a village. What becomes of it in the future nobody knows. All we can do is to do our best to keep it as a close community.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE**

For those of you who haven't paid your subscriptions for 2019 they are now due, the present subscription is only £12.00 per year per person, excellent value for money with ten first class speakers per year, talking on a variety of historical subjects, a Social Evening with free refreshments at the museum and a Christmas Social Evening at the Parish Centre with Raffle, Buffet and entertainment/quiz.

## PEVSNER

By Alec Samuels

**P**evsner, the Buildings of England, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, by Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, Penguin 1967, has long been our “bible”. Now we have The Buildings of England, Hampshire South, by Charles O’Brien, Bruce Bailey, Nikolaus Pevsner and David Lloyd, Yale University Press, 2018, the new “Pevsner”. Every building of architectural or historical interest is skilfully and professionally described; and many are beautifully photographed.

West End may be a modest village, but receives attention. The Church of St James has a hammerbeam roof, a C15th font and some good stained glass.

Haines the builders made a significant mark in West end, and Mr Haines lived in The Tower in Upper New Road, the house with the Italianate prospect tower.

The Hilldene Centre was built by Gutteridge, a well known local architect who built a number of the University buildings.

Herbert Collins, the well known “garden city” architect, built Orchards Way for the Hampshire Rural Cottage Improvement Society, leading up from our own WELHS museum (formerly the fire station).

Early in C19th was built the Workhouse, which in due course became Moorgreen Hospital, and recently has been partly demolished and partly refurbished, to form very comfortable apartments.

Finally we have the modern Ageas Bowl (formerly much more pleasantly described as the Rose Bowl), a huge amphitheatre with surrounding club house and hotel, a test match venue.

**Note:** The new Pevsner is fully revised and expanded, indeed there are now two volumes, the north and the south of the county.

## HENRY DUMBLETON OF THORNHILL PARK

By Paula Downer

**H**enry Dumbleton was born in 1782, the son of Charles Dumbleton esquire and Sarah Buxton of East Horsley Manor in Surrey. Like many sons of the landed gentry in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Henry Dumbleton entered the Civil Service of the Honorable East India Company, this was often seen as an opportunity to make serious money. Thereby, by appointment from the Directors of the Honorable East India Company, Henry Dumbleton set off for Bengal in India as a Writer (clerk). A year after his arrival in 1799, an academic centre for Oriental Studies was established at Fort William College in Calcutta. Henry Dumbleton soon became fluent in the Persian language winning a medal and a prize of 1000 rupees, he needed to be able to communicate with Indian officials and rulers. Persian was the official language until 1837.

Henry Dumbleton’s role as a Writer entailed assisting the Export Warehouse Keeper, within five years Henry had progressed to being in charge of collecting revenue and from then on further progression called for judicial duties. Henry Dumbleton stayed in India until 1819 when he ‘proceeded to Europe’ (ref. General Register of the Honorable East India Company’s Civil Service). In 1820 Henry Dumbleton married Ellen Norris from Hughenden House in Buckinghamshire. Her father John Norris esquire had inherited from his father, also John Norris, property and land in Buckinghamshire, Hampshire, Warwickshire and London which included two manors, Hawley Place in Hampshire and Hughenden Manor in Buckinghamshire.

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Henry Dumbleton and his new wife may have lived at Hawley Place for a short while, their first son being born in 1821, (incidentally, Ellen Norris was born at Hawley Place) before moving to Shirley which was then described as a rural area lying two miles outside Southampton. Initially, they lived at Shirley Villa, between 1823 and 1829, a daughter and three more sons were born. By 1831 the family had returned to the village of Hawley, settling in Hawley Place where another two sons and four daughters were born. The district of Hawley needed a larger church which was built in 1837, its foundation stone can be found by the north door; the inscription reads:- The Foundation Stone of this Church Dedicated to The Holy Trinity was laid July 28<sup>th</sup> A.D. 1837 by Mrs Dumbleton of Hawley House. The 1841 Census for England show the family had moved again and were then living in Milland, a village on the border of Hampshire and West Sussex.

Henry Dumbleton and his family eventually settled at Thornhill Park. In 1843, James Barlow Hoy of Thornhill Park died and his estate was put up for sale. James Barlow Hoy had been heavily in debt, Thornhill Park was difficult to sell, it was offered for sale privately and put up for auction without success and, for good measure, involved the Court of Chancery. For sale was a large country estate situated about 2 miles to the east of the Town of Southampton; a colonnaded mansion built of white bricks sat high up on a hill, with a view of the surrounding area of South Stoneham, Bitterne Village lying to the west. Thornhill Park was eventually sold to Henry Dumbleton in 1846.



Thornhill Park House c.1910

Image courtesy of Bitterne Local History Society

In 1848 Henry Dumbleton was appointed Land Tax Commissioner for the County of Southampton. Names of wealthy landowners were put forward by Members of Parliament of each County in England. For Henry Dumbleton this entailed an unpaid role of assessing and collecting taxes due from the local landowners and property owned by businessmen, the rate of tax being set by the government based on the value of land and/or property.

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The Census Returns of England and Wales show that the Dumbleton family employed a number of servants to look after them - Housekeeper, Lady's Maid, Housemaid, Under Housemaid, Cook, Kitchenmaid, Butler and a Footman. Two long driveways led from the road towards the mansion which faced south. A lodge was situated at each entrance. In 1871 their coachman, James Chamberlain, his wife Ann and their two young children were living in one of the lodges. Farm buildings nearby housed estate workers.

Over the years Henry Dumbleton increased his landholding, by 1873 he had a total of 429 acres, 3 roods and 23 perches which included 61 acres of woodland rented from Thomas Chamberlayne of Cranbury Park (nephew of William Chamberlayne of Weston Grove). The woodland area became known as Dumbleton's Copse.



OS 1888-1913 series historic map of Thornhill Park with Dumbleton's Copse to south  
'Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland'

Henry Dumbleton obviously kept a watchful eye on his land, and woe betide anyone who dug up his trees ! A labourer was taken to court accused of stealing a 'stick' from Henry Dumbleton's land. The 'stick' in question was actually a large oak sapling which had to be held up in court by two policemen ! The labourer John Cove was found guilty and sent to jail for a month.

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Henry Dumbleton of Thornhill Park died 9<sup>th</sup> March 1877, aged 94, and is buried in the churchyard of the Holy Saviour in Bitterne

*"IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD"*

Henry and Ellen Dumbleton had eleven children :-

Henry Dumbleton born 1821 Farnham - lived in South Africa in the 1840's, married Clara Marianne Garcia in the town of George - 1850 Henry described as a Justice of the Peace - exhibited 43 specimens of Cape Woods at The Great Exhibition of 1851; awarded 'Honourable Mention' (The town of George was established in the 18th/19th century due to the growing demand for timber) - after a spell in England, Henry and Clara settled in Victoria, British Columbia.

Ellen Dumbleton born 3<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1823 Shirley - 7th January 1851 married Reverend William Mortimer Dyne at St. James' Church, West End, South Stoneham. The Reverend died in June at the age of 30 whilst in service as Chaplain with the Honorable East India Company in Ghazipur, India - Ellen Dyne re-married in 1877 to Reverend George Alfred Frederic Saulez, Rector of Exton, Hampshire.

Charles Dumbleton born 13<sup>th</sup> May 1824 Shirley - 10<sup>th</sup> Bengal Light Cavalry as Cornet - took part in Mahratta War - awarded the Maharajpooor Star (made from the bronze of captured Mahratta guns) - involved in Indian Mutiny of 1857 as Captain - awarded Indian Mutiny medal - 1856 married Elizabeth Reed, daughter of General Sir Thomas Reed G.C.B. (veteran of Waterloo) - promoted to Major in 1864 - Colonel in 1877 - Lieutenant-General in 1886 - General in 1890 - lived in Droxford, Hampshire for a number years - while in India made a series of sketches which are in the National Army Collection.

Son - Colonel Horatio Norris Dumbleton (Royal Engineers) born 1858 was a first-class cricketer for England.

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Arthur Vincent Dumbleton born 30<sup>th</sup> July 1826 Shirley - after 20 years service retired with honorary rank of Major 21<sup>st</sup> Regiment Hussars - married i) Marian Benson ii) Ellen - settled in Tasmania - Arthur Vincent Dumbleton is buried East Devonport Pioneer Park Cemetery.

Edgar Norris Dumbleton born 4<sup>th</sup> July 1829 Shirley/Hill - married Mary Hatherell 18<sup>th</sup> July 1853 at Hatton, Warwickshire, her father James Williams Hatherell was the first incumbent of the church of St.James' in West End, South Stoneham, built in 1838. Reverend Edgar Norris Dumbleton was Curate Newchurch Isle of Wight - Vicar St.Paul's Truro - Rector St.James' Exeter.

Horatio Dumbleton born 1831 Hawley - married Blanche Catherine Robson in 1877 in Parish of *St George Hanover Square*, London - Horatio was a solicitor, retired to Bedfordshire.

Agnes Augusta Dumbleton born 1833 Hawley - married Reverend Charles John Dickinson, Rector of Narraghmore, Dublin, eldest son of the late Bishop of Meath, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1854 at St.James' Church, West End, South Stoneham - Reverend Charles Dickinson residing at Narraghmore at this time.

Rosalind Dumbleton born 1834 Hawley - married Alexander De Courcy Scott (Royal Engineers) 20<sup>th</sup> May 1862 at St.James' Church, West End, South Stoneham. Alexander De Courcy Scott joined Royal Engineers in 1853 - involved in design/construction of barracks and fortifications - 1860's Ordnance Survey Southampton - Madras Public Works Department - 1877 Superintendent of the Revenue Survey Department - 1879 Executive Officer of the Ordnance Survey - 1882 retired from Royal Engineers with honorary rank as Major-General.

Walter Douglas Dumbleton born 1836 Hawley - lived in South Africa 1850's - employed as Land Surveyor - 1866 married Emma Pelly daughter of Sir John Pelly, Governor of Hudson Bay Company - after Emma died in 1885 met Elise Sundt whose parents represented the Norwegian Consulate in London - they married in 1886 - youngest son Bertram, artist, exhibited works at the Royal Academy between World War I & II.

Alice Louisa Dumbleton born 1838 Hawley - married Otto J.C. Striedinger 14<sup>th</sup> July 1868 at St.James' Church, West End, South Stoneham - Otto Striedinger was H.M. Inspector of Factories (factory inspectors were appointed under the Factories Act 1833, to regulate working hours and conditions of women and children).

Mary Florence Dumbleton born 1840 Hawley - married widower John Orsborn 1880 Easthampstead, Berkshire - John Orsborn was a Physician G.P. F.R.C.S. Edinburgh - Medical Inspector under Passenger's Act - Lived in Bitterne for several years (c.1840's-1870's - 1871 Chapel Street - 1876 Brewery Road) when he died in 1883, London Gazette acknowledged John Orsborn formerly of Bitterne, late of Longdown Lodge, Sandhurst, Berkshire.

Ellen Dumbleton did not stay for long at Thornhill Park after her husband Henry died, she moved to Longdown Lodge in Sandhurst, Berkshire - The clock and one of the bells (tenor bell) of St.Michael's and All Angels Church were gifted by Mrs Ellen Dumbleton - 1881 census show Ellen Dumbleton as 'Head of family' at Longdown Lodge with her daughter Mary Florence Orsborn, both mother and daughter described as 'Annuitant'. Ellen Dumbleton died 16<sup>th</sup> August 1884.

Today, Henry Dumbleton is still remembered, there is a 'Dumbleton Close to the left of Pinewood Park from the A27 and a block of flats named 'Dumbleton Tower' adjacent to Bursledon Road near Hightown, erected in 1964.

## ARMING THE HOME GUARD - Part 2 Support Weapons

### By Mike Downer

#### Grenades

##### No. 36 Mills

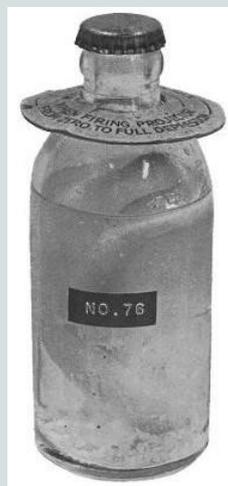
This is the classic pineapple shaped grenade. The segments on the cast casing are designed to shatter on ignition and form a cloud of shrapnel fragments for anti-personnel effect. The grenade is filled with Baratol (TNT and barium nitrate) and has a 4 or 7 second fuze. Incidentally it's practically impossible to pull the pin out of a grenade with your teeth as seen in Hollywood films. For obvious reason they're a pretty tight fit.



##### No. 76 Self Igniting Phosphorous

This was conceived as an anti tank weapon and consisted of a glass bottle filled with white phosphorus and petrol with a crown top like a beer bottle.

It was self igniting and, once alight could not be extinguished with water. It could be thrown but there was a variant which could be fired from a projector like the Northover described below. It was thought that exploding these on the flat rear deck of a tank would lead to the fiercely burning liquid leaking into the engine air intakes and burn out the engine and possibly suffocate the crew. In practice it was found that most armoured vehicles could drive on without any problem. As an indication of how dangerous this grenade was, it was recommended that they be stored under water. The RAF had been offered the weapon for use as an incendiary bomb but threw their hands up in horror with the idea of carrying a highly volatile liquid in a glass bottle on board a plane !



*Image World War II Database Lava Developments LLC*

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#### **No. 74 ST Sticky Grenade**

This is another anti tank weapon consisting of a glass sphere filled with nitroglycerine coated with a resin based adhesive. The whole contraption was carried in a metal clam shell casing which was discarded when the grenade was armed. The idea was that it would be thrown against an enemy tank where the powerful explosive was more than capable of blowing off a wheel or breaking a track. In practice it was discovered that the grenade needed to be placed on the target rather than thrown. Interestingly the Germans had the idea we would use magnetic mines in our home defense and spent a great deal of research into developing an anti magnetic coating for their tanks called Zimmerit, a sort of artex finish applied to the armour. The sticky bomb had the nasty habit living up to its name and sticking to anything and everything including the user. The nitroglycerine was also liable to explode if dropped or jarred making this weapon extremely dangerous to handle let alone use in action. The grenade was deemed a failure for front line use but issued for Home guard use as a 'better than nothing' weapon.



*Image Imperial War Museum*

#### **Northover Projector**

Projectors for firing grenades were not a new idea but this one was designed for Home Guard use by a serving officer as a no frills weapon to give them some measure of firepower. Looking suspiciously like a length of drainpipe on a tripod this smooth bore weapon had a crude breach assembly into which was loaded a black powder percussion cap. It could fire most grenades but was designed specifically to be used with the No.76 incendiary grenade with very optimistic sighting of up to 250 yards. Winston Churchill, ever the champion of the unusual, gave the weapon his full support after witnessing a demonstration. Unfortunately this high level endorsement and upmarket propaganda were not matched by performance. The grenades could explode in the breach, showering the crew with burning phosphorous and the effective range was only ever about 100 yards. Crews claimed that the only useful part of the weapon was the tripod !



*Home Guard with Northover Projector Image IWM via Wiki*

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### **Blacker Bombard**

This weapon design dates back to the 1930's. It was a spigot mortar which meant that the 20lb bomb fired from a steel rod rather than through a barrel with the propellant charge contained within the round. Initially orders were for 14,000 units. The quadrupod mount was found to be cumbersome to set up and was typically discarded in favour of fixed positions consisting of a pit containing a reinforced concrete pillar with a stainless steel pin set in the top. Until recent years one of these still existed outside the Fleming Arms. The idea was to have about four of these in the same area. The crew would fire one round then would pick up the weapon and run (?) to the next firing point before the enemy pin pointed where the fire had come from. The unlikely image springs to mind of Private Godfrey sprinting to the next strong point carrying this weapon weighing around 100lb ! With no armour piercing capability due to its low velocity and with only HE and antipersonnel rounds available, it is difficult to see how this was ever sold as an anti tank weapon. A severe disadvantage was that the reload was in full view of the enemy 100 yards away. Also the weapon could be a challenge to fire as the recoil could make the weapon jump up and strike the unwary gunner on the nose ! Its popularity can be gauged by the comment by the O.C. of a Wiltshire Home Guard Battalion claiming that if he was issued with any more he would use them as landfill ! The one redeeming factor that could be said for the design is that it formed the basis of the highly successful Hedgehog anti submarine mortar developed for the Royal Navy.



*Home Guard with Blacker Bombard on fixed mount  
Image IWM via Wiki*

### **Smith Gun**

Major (retired) William Smith managing director of the engineering company Trianco produced this weapon as a private venture by his firm.

It consisted of a 3 inch smooth bore barrel mounted on large solid wheels with a matching ammunition limber. The whole assembly could be towed by the barrel behind a civilian car. Uniquely, to bring the gun to action it was heaved over onto one of it's wheels. Using the axle as a pivot gave the gun 360 degree traverse.

The Home Guard manual states that at 100 yards it could penetrate 3 inches of armour or blow a 2 foot diameter hole in a reinforced concrete wall which is a pretty impressive performance using a modified mortar HEAT round (if this is true). As always, there were problems - the weapon was criticised as over engineered and complex. As an example, the gun I examined at Fort Nelson had an incredibly fiddly retaining catch on the ready use magazine consisting of three components of spring steel where a simple web strap would have done the same job. The practice of towing behind a car had to be prohibited when it was found that the plain bearings and solid tyres would disintegrate at speed. The innovative idea of using one wheel as a mounting for firing the gun was also a disadvantage as the weapon had no recoil device so could be thrown back onto two wheels unless firmly blocked. Even with these drawbacks the gun was popular with it's crews until redundant 2 pounder guns became available to the Home Guard from the front line.

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*Smith Gun under refurbishment at Fort Nelson*

#### **Anti-Aircraft Z Batteries**

British designers under Professor Alwyn Crow had discarded the development of liquid fueled rockets by Goddard in the US and Von Braun in Germany as interesting but of limited practical weapon use. Instead they plumped for a 3 inch rocket fueled by solid cordite, rather like a large firework. These were initially fired from a single mount with the later multiple launchers firing 128 rockets per battery in a ripple effect. All the rockets would explode simultaneously at a set altitude with the hope that aircraft would be damaged as they flew through the resulting debris cloud. A proximity fuze was later developed in a vain attempt to counter the much faster V1 attacks. Churchill and his scientific adviser, Lord Cherwell, were keen advocates of the idea and some suspected that the test firing results might have been optimistically reported in order to drive the project ahead. The launch sites were sited where the overshoot could fall into the sea or sparsely populated areas. Locally this was West Wood near Netley where they could fire at the bombers using Southampton Water as a guide towards Southampton - bad news for people living on the Cadland Estate (now Fawley Refinery) as a rocket tail fin falling to earth was capable of cutting a man in half.



*Home Guard with Single Mount Launcher  
Image IWM via Wiki*

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In 1942 General Frederick Pile GOC AA Command asked for Home Guardsmen to release trained artillery men for active duty in other theaters. The age limit for Home Guardsmen to work on Z Batteries was set at 60, whereas it was 40 for those posted to conventional anti-aircraft gun and coastal defence batteries, due to the weight of the ammunition. The noise of the rockets firing has been described as an awesome experience, 'rather like an express train passing through your living room, before crashing in the back garden'. Spare a thought for the poor gunner who has to fire this contraption only separated from the smoke and flame by a thin steel sheet. Considering Southampton Water plus Spithead is around 15 miles long and the bomber is travelling at 270 mph it will only be in sight for around 3 minutes 20 seconds which meant in practice there was only time for one salvo at each wave.

### Conclusion

A popular view is that the Home guard was armed with obsolete or useless weapons but the huge response to the call for volunteers had come as a complete surprise to the government with no real plans on how to arm them. Whilst it's true that a lot of small arms were of WW1 vintage, the front line troops were armed with the Lee Enfield SMLE Mk3 which also dated from 1907. The problems with the support weapons were caused by Britain's lack of manufacturing capabilities. To be fair, the role of the units was to provide sentinels at key locations to prevent surprise attack rather than pitched battles against an enemy in strength. Unknown to the Allies, Hitler had banned the use of mass parachute landings after the *Fallschirmjäger* received huge casualties in the landings at Crete in 1941. Realistically the Home Guard could not have prevented a seaborne landing with the weapons available and therefore training was biased towards guerrilla warfare for which they were better equipped.

*Principle sources :-*

*Thesis : Arming the Home Guard 1940/44 D.M. Clarke*

*Publication : The World's Worst Weapons Martin J Dougherty*

*Website : [www.militaryfactory.com](http://www.militaryfactory.com) WW2 G*

## HATCH FARM - an introduction to Albert Fray's farm diary Part 3 By Pauline Berry

**Extract from Albert Fray's 1895 diary concerning Hatch Farm....**

Winter has arrived on Hatch Farm and the repetitive round of ploughing, carting, tying straw and general repairs continued. Life and death was an accepted fact of life on the 200 acres. Some explanations by me are added in brackets.

December 1st Sunday	Mother's (his wife Augusta) birthday, 39 years old. We went to Chapel in the morning. 'Crystal' calved this morning, a bull calf.
December 2nd	Fine day. Carter's ploughing, men trimming swedes and turnips. 'Darkie' calved this afternoon.
December 3rd	Fine day .... Sheep have begun the turnips on (Hatch) hill ...
December 4th	Fine day .... We have shifted the hurdles onto round hill ....
December 5th	Fine day but very rough wind. Carter's ploughing turnip ground behind the sheep. Mr Blakiston (The Wilderness) had half a ton of straw. Davis and Sid cleaned out the calves pen ....
December 6th	Showers this morning, fine and colder afterwards .... In Town I paid (bills) for oats (£7), cattle cake and rye (£35) ... was paid £21 for 30 sacks of wheat.

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7th December	Fine day but a very cold wind. Carter's have finished ploughing by the orchard ... I and Davis went to Stoneham (Farm) and brought back a cart colt.
8th December	Sharp frost this morning. Went to Chapel (in Chapel Road).
9th December	Milder today and damp. Carter's gone to plough by Quob Farm...I have put up a partition in the lower stable ...
10th December	Fine day. I and (son) James and (daughter) Mary have been to London for the day (Christmas shopping?)
11th December	Frost this morning but came on to rain this evening ... I have killed a big pig this afternoon.
12th December	Dull and wet .... We have closed the sheep up today .... I have cut up my pig and it weighed a little over 17 score (240 lbs).
13th December	Very windy and cold today .... I cared for the sheep.
14th December	Fine morning, wet afternoon ... Father (George Fray) drove over this morning. I paid him for Interest (on loan for farm tenancy), one colt, the wheat, also two pigs for Boyt (shopkeeper). Over £25 all in.
15th December Sunday	Fine day, went to Chapel in morning.
16th December	Heavy showers through the day .... Been to Stoneham (Farm) and killed a pig for Father ....
17th December	Heavy showers though the night .... Davis has not been to work, having a bad arm.
18th December	Colder today .... I picked out two sheep for Giles and one for Boyt (both shopkeepers in West End).
19th December	Fine day .... We have worked the colt for the first time today.
20th December	Fine day .... (Threshing) machine has come this afternoon. I have been to Town, brought home 60 hired sacks (a common transaction). 'Gentle' calved today.
21st December	Frost this morning. We have thrashed 54 sacks of the mow of barley .... We have given the men a piece of mutton for Christmas, having killed a sheep.
22nd December	I have been on duty (on the farm) all day, as Davis is (still) at home, went to Chapel in the evening.

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23rd December	Fine day, but rather cold .... Mrs Harfield paid rent of 10 shillings.
24th December	West most of the day and cold. Men have taken the barley straw rick into barn ... I, Mother (Augusta) and the children have been to Town. I bought a new lamp. 'Fanny' calved this evening.
25th December Christmas Day	Damp and dirty. We have kept it very quiet, went to Chapel in the evening. 'Topsy' has calved today.
26th December	Damp and cold, the wind being in the east ... men at general work for the cattle. Father drove (his horse and cart) over this morning.
27th December	Fine day but dull and cold. Tom took straw and swedes to Mr Boyt.
28th December	Wet a good part of the day. Carter's finished ploughing in Barnsland .
29th December Sunday	Dull and damp. We have been to Chapel.
30th December	Damp. The men have been trimming swedes. Lent 1/2 ton of straw to Mr May (shopkeeper). The big heifer has calved today, she was rather wild.
31st December	A beautiful fine day for the last of the year. (Work continues on the farm). Grandfather Hutchins died today. (His daughter Augusta received the news two days later).

## FROM OUR ARCHIVE



Opening of the Museum in 1997 with five of the founder members

## RECIPE CORNER - Sue Ballard "WELSH CAKES"

**St. David's Day** (1<sup>st</sup> March) commemorates the assumed date of death in AD 589 of St. David, the patron saint of Wales. St. David was born at Caerfi in what is now Pembrokeshire and founded a Celtic monastery at Glyn Rhosyn, where St. David's Cathedral now stands. Celtic monasteries were different to Roman Catholic monastic houses as the early Christian church in Britain and Ireland at that time was different to that of continental Europe, which tended to follow the practices of Rome. The Celtic Church used a different calculation for the date of Easter, monks had different style tonsures (with the front of the head shaved from ear-to-ear, rather than a circular tonsure on the crown) and celibacy was not compulsory so monks and nuns could marry and raise their children in the faith. Both Roman and Celtic monasteries co-existed in Britain until the Synod of Whitby in AD 644. This was a gathering of all the senior clerics called by King Oswiu of Northumbria, who after hearing arguments from both sides, decreed that the Church in Northumbria should conform to the practices of Rome, which eventually spread to the rest of the British Isles. Although St. David was a leader of the Celtic Church rather than that of Rome, he was canonised by Pope Callustus II in 1120.

St. David's Day is not a national holiday in Wales but is often celebrated with traditional Welsh food and drink, including Welsh Cakes. These would originally have been baked on a griddle over an open fire but modern cooks tend to fry them like pancakes. Welsh cakes are at their best eaten freshly cooked.

Makes 15 or 16

225g plain flour

85g caster sugar

½ tsp baking powder

½ tsp mixed spice

Pinch of salt

50g cold butter, diced

50g lard, diced – lard is used traditionally, but you can use all butter if preferred

50g currants

1 egg, beaten

splash of milk

a little butter or vegetable oil for frying

Sieve together the flour, baking powder, salt & spice. Rub the fat(s) into the flour until it forms breadcrumb-like texture, as if making pastry.

Mix in the currants.

Stir in the beaten egg and a splash of milk to form a soft dough.

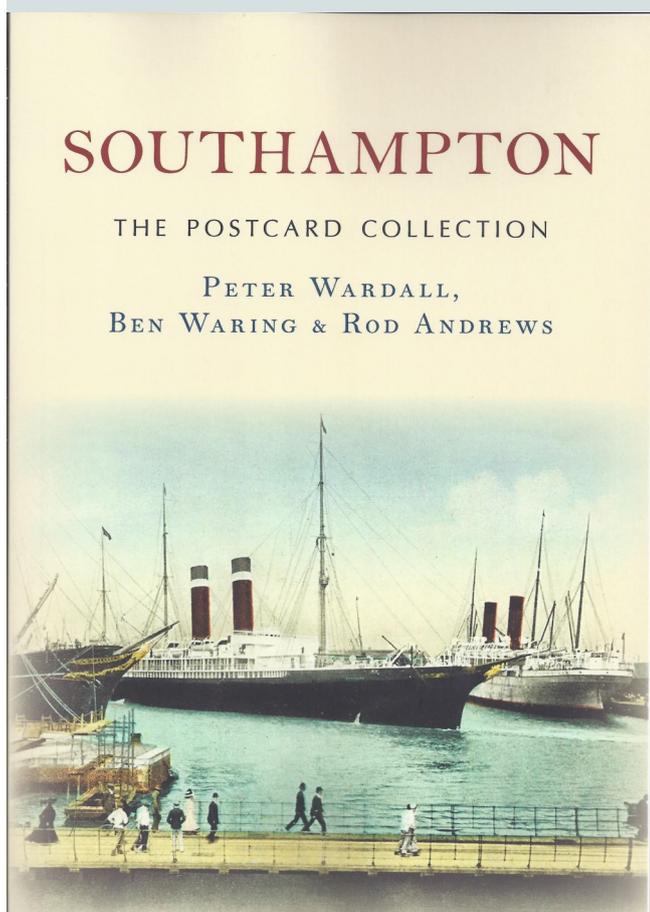
Roll out to about ½ inch (1cm) thick and cut out rounds of about 2 inches (6cm).

Preheat a heavy frying pan and brush lightly with oil or melted butter.

Fry the cakes, two or three at a time, over a medium heat for about 3 minutes each side until firm and golden brown.

Serve warm, lightly sprinkled with caster sugar.

## BOOK REVIEW by Nigel Wood



### SOUTHAMPTON the postcard collection

By

Peter Wardall, Ben Waring & Rod Andrews

As a long-time resident of the area and an ex. postcard collector/dealer, I can say that this is one of the best books of its kind available. Many of the postcards that are featured I have not seen before, the authors are to be congratulated on producing a fascinating collection of images for this volume.

Following a well tried and tested format, this book provides just the right amount of information about each picture. The book is conveniently divided into five chapters dealing with Waterside, The Town, East of the Itchen, Northern Parishes and The Common and the Western Parishes. Some of the very best local postcard producers are well represented, i.e. Brain, Willstead, Rood Bros (incidentally one of my favourites), Mentor, Cosser as well as the ubiquitous F.G.O. Stuart. The perfect present for anyone interested to see what

Southampton and surrounding districts used to look like in the golden age of the postcard.

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**96 pages paperback 240 illustrations**

**Price: £14.99**

**Also available in Kindle, Kobo and iBook formats**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**March 6th.**

**PORTSMOUTH: Harlots, Dung & Glory Part 1**

***Andrew Negus***

**April 3rd.**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Plus: MYSTERY RELIGIONS : Cults & Sects of The Roman Empire**

***Andy Skinner***