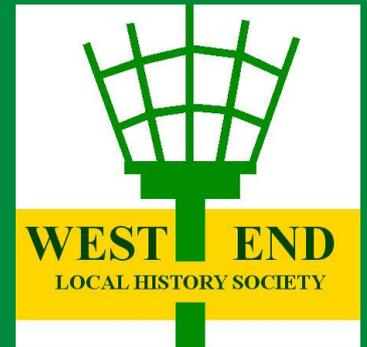


# WESTENDER

Newsletter of the West End Local History Society  
Autumn 2021



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## EDITORIAL NEWS

Sadly, Westender says goodbye to Nigel Wood, who has been editor since the very first issue in May 1999, which was preceded by Museum Update, also edited by Nigel. Thank you, Nigel, for all your hard work over the years. We wish you a long and well-deserved rest.

I am pleased to have been appointed by the committee as the new editor. Articles can be emailed to me at the address below or left at the museum for collection.

After some consideration, Nigel and I agreed that Westender should be published quarterly rather than bi-monthly. The next issue, Winter 2021, will be published in December. It would be helpful to have items for the Winter issue by 15<sup>th</sup> November, please.

Many thanks, Sue Ballard  
suballard@yahoo.co.uk

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**WELHS ... Preserving our past for your future ...**

West End Local History Society & Westender is sponsored by



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## **“The Poor Law & South Stoneham Workhouse”** **by Pauline Berry**

Most Westenders will be aware that Moorgreen Hospital on Botley Road (now Henman House in the Pavilions) was once a workhouse in the 1800s. Being poor, as was common in days gone by, was something of a stigma and I know of at least two residents of West End who would turn their heads away when passing this dreadful building in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such was their fear.

West End’s workhouse, formerly a poor house, was built in 1848 and served the destitute of nine parishes originally (the Poor Law Union). This included Bitterne, Eastleigh, Swaythling, Botley, Hamble-le-Rice and, of course, West End. This red brick building was first built to accommodate 250 paupers and vagrants, at a cost of £7,000 on a 22-acre site to be used for cultivation of useful crops. All this was due to the rise in the number of poor caused by the Agricultural and Industrial Revolution, also the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, etc. Semi-rural areas, such as those in Southern England were badly afflicted by poverty.

Prior to 1834, in the Old Poor Law, paupers who had lost their jobs and homes were cared for by the parish in which they lived or were born. After that date, the Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced and the Poor Law Commissioners would control Poor Relief, its rules, orders, the construction of Poorhouses, the education of children, raising money and appointment of officers, etc.

The new Poor Law of 1834 phased out ‘outdoor relief’ for those in need and replaced it with accommodation in their local workhouse to those who applied. Their lives would be more regulated than those living outside the Institution fending for themselves. Residents would include the elderly, orphans, pregnant women and the insane.

Our South Stoneham Union Workhouse, as it was called, was run and directed by a Board of Guardians, elected annually by local ratepayers, and was a mixture of the local gentry and small businessmen. As a child, I met the elderly grandfather of a schoolfriend, who I later learned had been a local Guardian in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another Guardian in the 1890s was George Wiltshire, a West End shoemaker, who is referred to in Irene Pilson’s book ‘More Memories of Bitterne’.

These venerable men discussed workhouse business at weekly or fortnightly meetings which involved finance, stores, children’s education, the dispensary, supervision and even punishment to be meted out. The Relieving Officers were responsible for admitting or refusing paupers to the workhouse. The first master and matron to the Institution were Samuel and Mary Gane. The late Bob Moody recalled the posts were occupied by Mr & Mrs Woods in the early 1900s in his book ‘I Remember’. Clergymen, such as the Rev. J.T.W. Baker (grandfather of Richard St. Barbe Baker, the Man of the Trees), would receive a small stipend for their services as Chaplain. In the late 1900s, clerks, treasurers, school teachers, medical officer and skilled handymen were employed to assist the staff.

Within ten years of the Poor Law Unions being established in 1834, 300 new workhouses were built in the country. At first, men and women were lodged separately, families broken up and children, except babies, removed from their mothers. Sleeping in dormitories, there was also a workyard where paupers would break stone and pick apart oakum (old ropes) to earn their keep. The vagrants or tramps, who slept in the two lodges next to Botley Road, would wait for admittance. This, the late Joe Malloy recalled, seeing them

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in 1920 sitting in the hedgerow with their billycans, opposite West End School waiting for 4p.m., when they would be admitted to the workhouse for the night in return for a little work.

In 1869, the Poor Law Board recommended that able-bodied inmates should have 7 ounces of bread and 1½ pints of porridge daily. Their diet was dull and monotonous, except at Christmas or special celebrations, when they might be treated to beef and beer. As in West End, local dignitaries sometimes visited and brought either small gifts or provided entertainment. West End's South Stoneham Workhouse, fortunately, had a better reputation than some, e.g. Alton Workhouse, in Victorian times.

By the end of the C.19<sup>th</sup>, conditions slowly improved generally and many of the poor received out-relief, costing less and was more humane. By 1905, a Royal Commission recommended Poor Law Unions should be abolished, but this did not happen until 1929. Finally, in 1948, the Welfare State was introduced and fear of workhouses vanished forever. Formerly the West End Institution, the building became Moorgreen Hospital, then Henman House recently (2019).

N.B. For more information, read 'Half a Loaf' by Eric Raffo and the Guide from the Public Record Office.

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## **Population Changes in West End – Part Two: Interpreting the 1841 & 1851 Censuses by Sue Ballard, PhD.**

For the first time, in 1841, the census recorded each individual by name together with their relationship to the head of household, their age and their occupation or source of income. From then onward we can start to look at census data in more detail and get a fuller picture of the population, beyond a mere head count, and consider changes through time by comparing the 1841 and 1851 censuses.

The 1841 census provides evidence of a shifting population at West End, with several shared houses, of two or more households in a single dwelling. It was common in this period for poorer families to rent a few rooms, rather than a whole house and to move on when they could not pay the rent. Unusually for the 1841 census, the enumerator for West End specified where individuals in a household were lodgers. Four of these were women, only one of whom was recorded as being financially independent, although no occupation is recorded for any of the others. The majority of the male lodgers were farm labourers, with a brickmaker, a carpenter, a wheelwright and a papermaker. Several "excavators" (diggers), apparently single men, lodged in Moorgreen and Allington, close to where the railway ran. They were probably working on the construction of the Gosport branch of the railway and of Botley station, which opened in December 1841 and reopened in February 1842 after a land slide. In 1841 there were six people who were recorded as "inmate" living in the homes of apparently unrelated families: a man aged 75, a woman aged 47 & four children. These may represent orphans and elderly or disabled adults placed by the parish because the workhouse was full. There was only one person who was classed as a pauper but not living in the workhouse. This was Charlotte Moon, a lone woman, presumably a widow, with three children and a baby. The only person aged 65 or over who was not in the workhouse was 80-year-old Charles Arnot, who was born in Ireland and was financially independent.

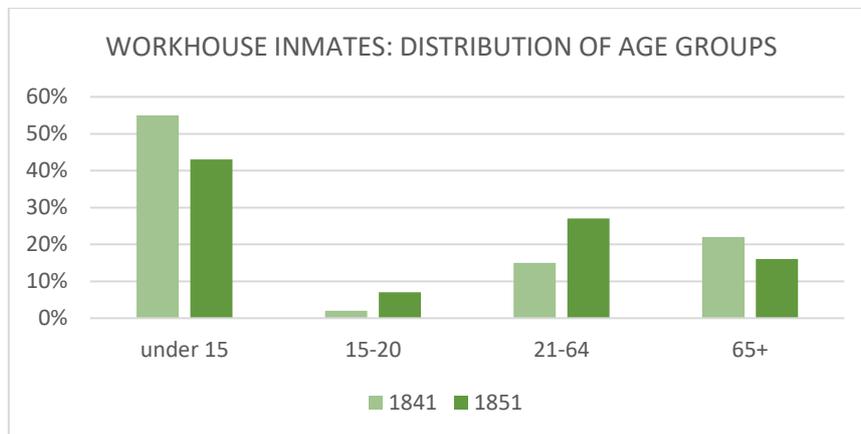
The workhouse population in 1841 totalled 100 persons including the master and matron, John & Elizabeth Bates, with their two teenage children and a school mistress, Hannah Mullins – that is, there were 95 pauper inmates. In 1841, 97% of the workhouse population claimed to have been born in Hampshire, the only exceptions being the master, the schoolmistress and a seven-year-old boy who did not know where he

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had been born. Within the 1841 workhouse population, adult inmates were generally over the age of 50, (except for one aged 48) and children were under 15 years old. There were no inmates in their later teens or twenties, with the exception of two young women aged 20 & 26 – and a separate group of 7 girls and young women ranging in age from 16 to 30. The 1841 census had carefully listed all the men before the boys, followed by the women & girls, with the school mistress and the 7 young women at the very end, suggesting that they had a different status to the other females, although they were still listed as paupers.

In contrast to 1841, the 1851 census shows that there were now 251 people aged 65 or over who were not living in the workhouse, many of whom were still working. These included several agricultural labourers, a general labourer, three farmers, a baker, an innkeeper, a market gardener, a carpenter and the vet. There were now 28 people receiving parish relief outside the workhouse – 4% of the general population. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had the specific intention of reducing costs by replacing “outdoor relief” (payments from the parish to paupers living at home) for the able-bodied poor with union workhouses, although outdoor relief was still available to the sick and elderly. Again, we see child lodgers, presumably orphans being fostered out by the parish.

Within the workhouse itself, aside from the master and matron (now Samuel & Martha Gane) with their two children and the school mistress, there was now also a school master and his son. In contrast to 1841, only 28% of the workhouse population in 1851 were born in South Stoneham (none specifying West End), although 81% were born in Hampshire. There were 33 more pauper inmates than ten years previously and the age range had broadened from that of the 1841 census, which had then included mainly children and the elderly. In 1851, only 16% of inmates were aged 65 or over, while 27% were aged 21-64 and 7% were aged 15-20. Taken together with the outdoor relief for the sick and elderly, this would seem to suggest that the workhouse was now being used primarily for the able-bodied poor, as originally intended. However, 43% of inmates were children under the age of 15, suggesting its primary role was still as an orphanage.



Many families disappeared from West End between the 1841 and 1851 censuses but 92 clearly identified families appear in both, some of whose names are still familiar to us: the Gaters, the Owtons and the Moodys, for example. Addresses in the 1851 census are still vague, but the recording of relationships allows us to make more sense of the households. By now there were only three houses in which more than one household shared a single dwelling – although many households consisted of extended families which included nephews or nieces, adult siblings, step-children, grandchildren or in-laws. Few specify West End as their birthplace, but many cite South Stoneham. It would make sense to cite South Stoneham as one’s place of birth as it was the Union responsible for carrying out settlement examinations and providing or denying parish relief on that basis. The most common places of origins outside of West End or

South Stoneham are Botley (5% of the general West End population), Bishopstoke (3%) and Romsey (1%). It is reasonable to expect that the majority of incomers would come from those towns and villages that were nearest, especially as agricultural labourers tended to move from farm to farm within a limited area where they were known and more likely to find work. The 1851 census also shows that half the wealthier classes in the area were not born in Hampshire (only 7 were born in South Stoneham and 3 in Southampton). Many of their live-in servants were also from elsewhere; only 24% were from West End or South Stoneham, while 44% came from other parts of Hampshire and 32% from outside Hampshire, so local people were not always benefiting from employment by wealthy incomers.

For the purposes of assessing the distribution of wealth within the community, I grouped the various occupations into seven categories:

1. pauper (receiving parish relief)
2. unskilled (agricultural labourers, general labourers, excavators)
3. servants (who may be unskilled or semi-skilled, but would have a better standard of living than the labouring class)
4. semi-skilled (journeymen and poorer-paid craftsmen) and mariners – and gardeners, unless specifically recorded as a servant
5. skilled (master craftsmen) – also tradesmen, yeoman farmers and white-collar workers who would be on a par financially
6. professional (clergy, lawyers, doctors, veterinary surgeons, etc.)
7. officers or those recorded as “independent” or “living on private means” (including those living on Army or Navy half-pay and those living on investments or pensions).

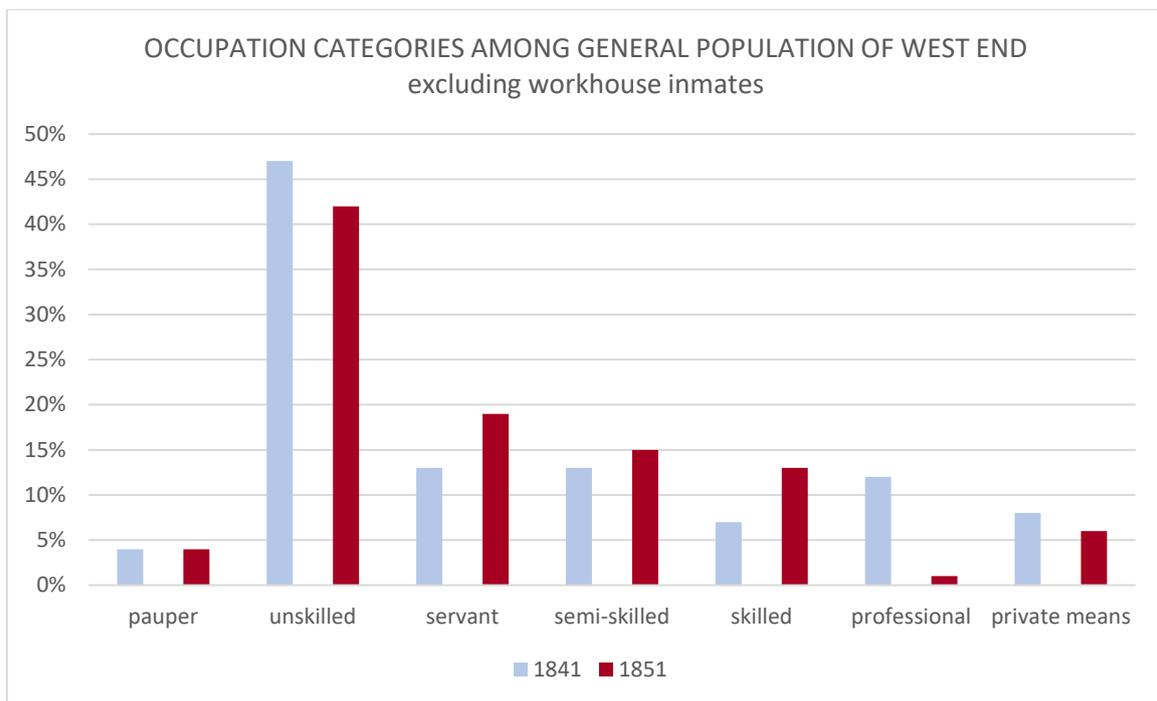
These broad categories simplify the range of occupations to enable us to see the proportions of the population in different broad categories of wealth. “Independent means”, however, can be misleading and does not necessarily denote wealth. In 1841, several of those who were recorded as being independent lodged in relatively poor homes with labourers and probably represent those eking out some kind of pension rather than wealthy investors. There were, of course, no state pensions; Old Age Pensions, for those aged 70 and over, were not introduced until 1908. Army and Royal Navy pensions in this period may also be quite small, dependent upon rank, while one widowed “proprietor of houses” in 1851 had a daughter labouring in fields and a son working as an agricultural labourer, suggesting that the income from rents was not sufficient to support the family.

In 1841, there were 317 unskilled persons and 85 servants (accounting for 47% and 13% of the general population respectively), with roughly 12 female servants to every 5 male servants – that is, more than twice as many females as males. Out of the male general population 28% were agricultural labourers. Other agricultural workers included 3 shepherds, 3 bailiffs, 7 yeomen (farmers owning their own land) & 18 farmers (including tenant farmers & smallholders) giving a total of 266 males working in agriculture – 32% of the male population outside the workhouse. Village traders & craftsmen consisted of 2 butchers, 2 publicans (the Swan Inn and another, unnamed), 1 beer retailer, 2 grocers & 4 bakers. Bakers were important as in this period bread was the staple diet of the labouring poor. There were 9 shoe makers or cordwainers, 3 tailors and 11 blacksmiths (including 6 at Allington).

There was a total of 265 people employed in agriculture in 1851, representing 37% of the male general population or just over 16% of the total general population. There were 22 individual farms or small holdings. Sir John Clapham, in his 1932 publication “An Economic History of Modern Britain: free trade and steel 1850-1886”, showed that 62.5 per cent of all farms in England and Wales in 1851 were classed as small farms, being over 5 acres and less than 100 acres. Here in West End, 59% of farms were less than 100 acres, with 50% being less than 50 acres. The smallest was 3 to 4 acres farmed by a 57-year-old farmer’s

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widow named Mary Harding. There were six larger farms of between 150 and 300 acres while the largest, occupied by Edward Twynham – a newcomer to West End – was 450 acres and employed 11 men. Aside from farming, those in other occupations included 1 butcher, 1 brewer, 3 innkeepers (at the Swan Inn, the Wheatsheaf Inn and Rosemount Hotel), 1 beer retailer and 3 bakers, 1 baker-grocer & 1 grocer-general dealer. One may be tempted to assume that the latter represent the 1841 bakers or grocers diversifying, but they are different individuals. As in 1841, there were 9 shoe makers or cordwainers and 3 tailors (only one of whom was the same man as in 1841) – but now only 3 blacksmiths, including only 1 at Allington, suggesting that the work at the Allington forge had been scaled down considerably. This reflects a general decline in the blacksmith's trade in the mid-nineteenth century due to the increase in mass-produced iron goods (plough shares, axes, rakes and shovels, etc.), resulting in many blacksmiths being reduced to the production of horse-shoes and farrier work.



Again, in 1851 “unskilled” was the largest occupation category, representing 41% of employed persons while servants accounted for 19%. Similarly, there were roughly twice as many female servants than male servants. As well as domestic servants (butlers, valets and pages), male servants included live-in farm labourers (who were of higher status and pay than itinerant farm labourers), ostlers, grooms and bailiffs. Unskilled workers were mainly agricultural labourers, with a few general labourers, two higlers (itinerant pedlars), one carrier, one errand boy, one woodcutter, one bricklayer's labourer and one dock labourer. The main differences we can see in occupational categories is that the percentage of skilled persons had almost doubled, while the professional category had shrunk to almost nothing – an accountant, a solicitor and articled clerk, the veterinary surgeon and three ministers of religion.

Most of those families identified in both censuses remained in the same occupations, particularly those in professions or skilled trades such as the veterinary surgeon John Hyde, as did the majority of the farm labourers. However, there are a few notable exceptions. Six individuals were reduced from their former roles in 1841. Charles Reeves had been a sawyer, John Holmes a shepherd, James Small a brickmaker, John Wiltshire a shoemaker and Edmund Emery a bailiff, but all were now farm labourers. Perhaps most notable was Ann Snook who had been independent in 1841 but by 1851, at the age of 72, was working as a paper stripper. In contrast, eleven families had prospered, mostly general labourers or farm labourers who had become gardeners – perhaps a benefit of the gentry houses. We now see several market gardeners:

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John Taplin, who had been unemployed in 1841, John Snook who had been a labourer and William Sharp a gardener in 1841, as had William Webb, who was now a market gardener with 50 acres, while John Biggs had been a yeoman in 1841 and perhaps found market gardening more profitable than small-scale farming. Charles Pearce moved from being a farm labourer to a farmer of 26 acres and Simon Candy from being a farm labourer to a farmer of 53 acres. Leonard Ely had been a farm labourer in 1841 and by 1851 was a proprietor of houses.

Census records are especially valuable for insights into women and children's roles in the economy. In West End, no women and children were listed as agricultural workers in the 1841 census. However, the wives and children of agricultural labourers would all have worked in the fields: removing stones before ploughing, scaring crows, helping with harvest, threshing, loading dung carts and digging root vegetables. They may also be employed as dairywomen (herding and milking cows) as well as dairy maids (making dairy produce, principally butter and cheese). Although women earned less than half that of a man for labouring tasks, their contribution to the household income would have been vital in a period when labouring families lived at subsistence level. One possible reason why their work may not always be recorded on census was that much of it would have been seasonal and they may not have been working at the time the census was taken, which from 1851 onward was generally the end of March to the first week of April – but in 1841 was 6th June. However, June was the time for haymaking – men would cut the hay, while women and children followed them, turning the hay to ensure even drying before it was stacked, so we should expect to see women's and children's labour recorded in 1841. Similarly, April was the time for ploughing the fallow fields and the sowing of grains, peas and beans on the active fields – women and children would be removing stones and children would be needed for bird scaring. It is more likely that their work was not recorded on census due to a general suspicion of officialdom and a fear of taxation as people were unsure of the purpose of the census in 1841, the first to focus on individuals. Even though Hampshire was not an industrialised county, agriculture was not the only economy in which women and children worked in West End. In 1841, of the 65 women in the general population who are shown as working, 83% were in service: 75% as general female servants and 8% as housekeepers. The remaining 17% of working women were made up of 2 working at the paper mill, 2 dressmakers, 2 washerwomen and 2 toll collectors (at the Botley Turnpike and the Hedge End Toll Bar) as well as 1 teacher, 1 grocer and 1 shoe binder (a shoemaker's assistant who stitches the shoe uppers ready for fixing to the sole and heel).

In 1851, we see both women and children recorded as agricultural workers in the West End area. A total of 25 children under the age of 15 were working, representing 6% of this age group. Five were girls working as house servants. There were 17 boys listed as agricultural labourers – in addition to which there were two cow-boys, one foot-boy (house-servant), one apprentice tailor and one 14-year-old boy listed as a scavenger – a name given to a child employed in a mill to collect loose lint lying about the floor under machinery. Only 38% of children under the age of 15 were recorded as scholars, although it is not possible to compare this with the 1841 census, which did not record scholars. A figure of 38% is actually quite high when one considers that at the time there was no state provision for education and no legal requirement for children to attend the National School. Of 124 working women and girls, 17% were employed in agriculture as "field labourer" or "worker in fields" – and as "servant at home" or "worker at home" on their family farms. There was one farmer's widow running the family smallholding, while there were also two dairywomen. Other women's roles outside the home include the traditional roles of servants, laundresses or dressmakers (63%, 9% & 7% respectively), while 6% worked in the paper mill as "bag sorter", "rag cutter", "paper stripper" or simply "employed in paper mill". There was also a boot binder, a charwoman, a market woman, a female baker, a female butcher and two school mistresses, apart from the matron and school mistress at the workhouse. In this census we see female roles in the workplace

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becoming more defined, with specific job titles for the various mill workers and with cooks, house maids, kitchen maids, ladies' maids and nurse maids being distinguished from general servants.

Together, the 1841 and 1851 censuses show us how West End remained predominantly a farming community, mostly on a small scale, with other rural occupations such as shepherds, woodsmen, gamekeepers, wheelwrights and millers. These censuses also show the rise and fall of individual families, demonstrate the decline in the blacksmith trade and the growth of market gardening in the area and are valuable for detailing the role of women and children in the rural economy. Perhaps most surprising was the role of the workhouse, traditionally remembered as being a last resort for the destitute elderly, but in this period clearly operating primarily as an orphanage.

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### **“The Real Biggles” by Nigel Wood**

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 Mercantile 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 17th 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 15th 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 submarine's decks, and being unable to dive, she was compelled to travel on the surface. 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!

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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)



Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth (1885-1961)

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.

*This article was previously published in The Partnership 2010.*

## RECIPE CORNER: Martha Lloyd's Spiced Mushrooms

*Autumn is almost upon us, when mushrooms are at their best. This recipe is based on one by Jane Austen's friend, Martha Lloyd, who for many years lived with Jane, her mother and sister at Chawton. Martha was a keen cook and wrote her recipes in a household notebook, which has recently been published.*

*Martha's original recipe:*

"To Dry Mushrooms. Take a peck of mushrooms without taking out the combs, peel the biggest and wash the others, then put them into a kettle with 12 onions, two handfuls of salt, a good quantity of pepper, cloves, mace, nutmeg and some bay leaves, then hang them on the fire and let them boil till almost all the liquor is consumed, often stirring them about, and when they are cold pick them out and lay them singly on earthen platters, and set them into the oven as soon as you have drawn your bread, and so do as often as you like till they are thoroughly dry. Then beat them to a powder, and put it up close in a gallipot; a spoonful of this powder gives a rich taste to any made dish, and helps to thicken the same."

*This adaptation for modern cooks, published in "Dinner with Darcy" by Peg Vogler (Cico Books 2020), adds wine to make a tasty side vegetable:*

12 small whole shallots, peeled.

30g butter

450g field mushrooms, quartered

Freshly ground white pepper

¼ tsp ground cloves

½ tsp ground mace

½ tsp grated nutmeg

Sea salt

2-3 bay leaves

Small glass of white or red wine (optional)

"Gently cook the shallots in the butter until they are nearly soft – about 15 minutes. Add the mushrooms to the pan with a little more butter if needed, and cook for about 10 minutes until they are brown on all sides and oozing juice. Sprinkle over the spices and salt, add the bay leaves, cover with the wine, if using, and simmer for 10-15 minutes until there is just a little liquid remaining.

If you want to dry them, omit the wine and leave the mushrooms somewhere very warm, such as the bottom of an Aga or the top of a wood burner, for a few hours. The dried mushrooms can be added to stews, or left whole and reconstituted in water."

*I tried this both ways by dividing my mixture in half and cooking half with red wine as a rather tasty side vegetable and drying the other half to store for use as a spice mixture. I used portobello mushrooms and finely chopped them – the smaller they are, the quicker they dry out and grind down. Martha dried them by placing them in a bread oven after the bread has been removed. Not having the luxury of an Aga or woodburning stove, I preheated the oven to 220C/200 fan (the temperature at which a loaf is baked) then switched off the oven and placed the mushrooms inside to dry out overnight. They were not quite dry enough to pound to dust, so I reheated the oven, switched it off and placed the mushrooms in for another 4 hours. It is quicker and easier to use a coffee/spice grinder than a pestle and mortar. A half quantity makes enough to fill a spice jar. Good in omelettes or scrambled eggs as well as stews and pasta sauce.*