

WESTENDER

Newsletter of the West End Local History Society
Spring 2022



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Our picture shows George T. May outside his business in West End with his two sons sitting on the wall. George ran a successful bakery and general store in West End roughly where Rosemount Court flats are today. Shown here in 1909, the business and building was later owned and run by Reuben Fray.

Closing Date for Contributions to Summer Issue: 16th May 2022

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**UPDATE – Stories Behind a Museum Object: West End’s Post-War Builder
by Sue Ballard, Westender Issue 12 No. 8 (Nov-Dec 2020)**

It has been brought to my attention that while Ambrose Gwyn GUY was indeed the contractor both financially and legally responsible for the buildings mentioned in the article, as told to us by his sister, he had in fact sub-contracted the work on several of those sites to WELHS member Bill White and his colleagues, who physically carried out the building work on site. Thank you for the additional information, Bill.

**“The Pubs of West End”
by Nigel Wood**

One could be forgiven for thinking that in recent years West End (or to give it its old spelling Westend) is going tee-total. Since the 1950s the community has lost four of its relatively small number of public houses.

The “Lamp & Mantle” formerly known as “The New Inn” was demolished in March 2004 to make way for a block of apartments now known as Rosemount Court. The pub, constructed in mock Tudor style was built by Strong & Co. of Romsey in the late 1920s and had an identical twin at Eastleigh, once known as “The Leigh” in Leigh Road, although no longer a pub. The building at West End previously occupying this site dated back to at least 1834 and formed what was once the centre of the village of West End, complete with a village green in front. However, since that time the centre of the village has gradually moved up the High Street towards its present position centred around another pub the “West End Brewery”.



The New Inn c.1919

Another prominent public house to have disappeared as recently as 2003 is “The Sportsman” at the top end of the village on the corner of Telegraph Road and High Street. Originally it was a smallish building situated right on the corner and was known as “The Sportsman’s Arms”; it later had the indignity of having a new replacement built on ground behind in the 1930s just prior to World War Two. During the war the original pub was kept going whilst the new one was temporarily used as a Home Guard HQ on the right hand side with training trenches dug in front. A wartime “British Restaurant” (providing good wholesome food at low cost) occupied the left hand side of the building.

After the war the old pub was knocked down and the area it occupied became the large front car park for the “new” pub. Over the years the name of the pub changed to “The Collared Dove”, but this only lasted a short time before the name returned to the slightly different name of “The Sportsman”. In 2002 the pub was closed and the site sold to developers who demolished the building in 2003 and built the McCarthy & Stone retirement complex now known as “Fielders Court”, so named because of its close proximity to The Rose Bowl, home of Hampshire Cricket.

Moorgreen once boasted two pubs, the “Southampton Arms” (still in existence) and “The Moorgreen Inn”, run latterly by Mr and Mrs Goodeve. Long since demolished, the site today is occupied by housing.



The Moorgreen Inn c.1930s

Another well known and much loved local pub dating back to the 1870s, the “Blacksmith’s Arms” in the High Street, still stands today, but it is now a private home, its days as a public house long gone. The front of the pub is no longer of “checkerboard” brickwork construction with curved window tops. Many years ago in the mid 20th century a vehicle driving down the road lost control and crashed into the front of the building, which had to be completely re-built in a more conventional style.



The Blacksmith's Arms c.1900

Other public houses that still exist in West End comprise “The Master Builder”, formerly “The Crown & Thistle” on the Swaythling Road, the present building although quite old replaced a much earlier one that jutted well out into the road. The “West End Brewery” in the High Street again is a newer building replacing one that stood on the site of the present car park in front. This pub at one time exhibited a sign stating “The Winchester Brewery”. The “Southampton Arms” in Moorgreen Road, is the only old pub not to have been re-built in Westend and today still looks very much as it did in the 1930s and before, The “Two Brothers” in Townhill Way a more recent modern pub is still going strong.

On the border of West End and Mansbridge is the “White Swan”, a very old public house dating back to the early 1800s. Once called “The Middleton Arms” (after Nathaniel Middleton who owned the nearby Townhill Park estate), in the 1830s it became known as the “Swan Inn”. However, in the 1870s it changed again to being known as the “White Swan Hotel” with William Fowler as “innkeeper”, later the name changed again to “The White Swan”. Although much extended today and now set back from the busy main road, in more genteel Edwardian times it boasted out-door refreshment booths overlooking the garden and river with punts for hire. You can almost taste the cucumber sandwiches and pot of tea, how times have changed!

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The White Swan in 1911

This article was previously published in The Partnership 2014.

The Birth of West End Fire Brigade (Part One)

By Pauline Berry

For centuries, fighting accidental fires was haphazard using buckets of water from wells and streams to quench the flames engulfing timber-framed houses with thatched roofs. As a result, sometimes rows of cottages or even villages, burned down. After the Great Fire of London (1666) public protests demanded a more efficient way of fighting fires. The first fire brigades were formed in towns and villages with insurance companies springing up to allow individuals to pay for them, placing their differing plaques on the walls of those who had paid their dividends.

In 1895, the newly formed West End Parish Council (W.E.P.C.) requested the Winchester Rural District Council (W.R.D.C.) to extend their very limited water supply. This was refused by the Water Company who requested that a Sub-Committee should be formed to collect residents' names willing to take a water supply and pay for this privilege.

The following year, 1896, the Sub-Committee (including Messrs Haines, Owton, Blakeston and May) reported a lack of interest by West End villagers and the total cost would be £230 (£19,000 today), an exorbitant sum. By October, the subject was raised again and the councillors asked to meet the directors of the South Hants Water Company with a view to privately acquiring one or two fire

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hydrants for the village. They reported back that the Water Company “would supply as many as needed and maintain them at 10 shillings (£40 today) each per annum.” As a result, one hydrant was fixed at the bottom of New Road and the Parish Council requested two more, one to be placed by St. James’s Church and another opposite the New Inn (now Rosemount Court). After they were fixed in place, the enthusiastic parish councillors inquired about the cost of stand-pipes, hoses, etc. When they discovered that these three hydrants did not match the design of the ones in Southampton they asked for them to be changed in order that the fittings would correspond. This did bring the desired result.

Still concerned about the frequent outbreaks of fire destroying properties in West End village, Henry Haines, the Chairman of the Parish Council, informed his colleagues of the necessity of a proper fire appliance for the village. Records show that in 1898, the only expenditure for fire fighting was 30 shillings (£1.50), the rent for the three fire hydrants aforementioned. The newly formed Fire Committee enquired with neighbouring parishes about the possibility of their sharing the provision of a manual (pushcart) fire appliance. Unsurprisingly, only Hedge End agreed to this proposal, so the idea was shelved owing to cost.

In 1899, the Parish Chairman asked the Water Company to extend the mains pipe through West End village centre, but the reply stated it would only supply a stand-pipe. The Parish Council persevered with this request in 1900 and the District Auditor objected to the Parish Council paying rent for the existing hydrants and that the cost should be charged to the Parish via Winchester R.D.C. That year, the Sub-committee reported that the Fire Brigade’s minimum requirements were: one stand-pipe and nozzle, 100ft of hose, a hydrant key and a 25ft scaling ladder. They would investigate the prices and Winchester R.D.C. instructed them to go ahead with the purchase.

The South Hants water Co. finally notified W.E.P.C. that the water mains would at last be extended through the village. This happened in July 1901 and extra fire hydrants were also placed opposite the Post Office (facing Barnsland) and on Swaythling Road. No doubt jubilant at this achievement, the W.E.P.C. increased their order of hose from 100ft to 200ft in length. Later in the year, the Fire Committee was requested to try to enrol voluntary members to form West End village’s first Fire Brigade. Eventually, these local men volunteered to join the Fire Brigade: H. Barnett, J. Welch, P. Bunney, L. Webster, S. Boyt, F. Lewis and J. Bignell. Their new rules and regulations were adopted in 1902 and a decision was made to purchase the appropriate helmets, which duly arrived in July. These enthusiastic men conducted their first “wet drill” on the corner of New Road, by Langford’s corner shop where Mr. Langford, the shopkeeper, offered to store their equipment in 1903. W.E.P.C. offered to pay Mr. Langford 10 shillings (£40 now) per annum for storage of their basic items. It appears that the longed-for fire brigade had finally been formed!

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J.N. Langford's corner shop where West End's first fire brigade stored their equipment.

The Fitch Family: A notable West End Family By Alec Samuels

Roselands was a fine late Regency early Victorian villa in Moorhill Road, West End, with typical white walls, large bow windows either side of an impressive entrance porch, and the roof Welsh slate. The grounds, well supplied with trees, contributed to an impressive little estate. The lodge housed the man who looked after the horses and the carriage. There is relevant information to be found in the West End Local History Museum.

A few years before the outbreak of WWII in 1939 a German Jewish refugee came to England. He changed his name to Ernest Blake; he learned English; he obtained UK nationality; he studied English mediaeval church history; he married an English nurse Mavis, and had two sons and one daughter. After the end of the war he obtained a post in the History Department of the University of Southampton; and he bought Roselands and lived there as his family home.

Dr Blake studied the history of the St Denys Priory, Priory Road, dissolved in the Reformation in 1536, the remains of which still exist to this day. Also he was an expert on the C12th Leper Hospital believed to have been situated in or near what is now Guildhall Square.

In 1985 Dr Blake sold Roselands and moved to Moorgreen Road. The family remained long and loyal parishioners of St James' Church as does his daughter Mary to this day.

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As it happened, Roselands was sold to a developer. He tried also to buy the Lodge, but the old lady owner refused to sell. He demolished Roselands, unfortunately not listed, cut down a lot of trees, and built five executive style houses. Curiously in the planning permission no TPOs were placed on the trees on the northern boundary. There are restrictive covenants upon the houses. Perhaps surprisingly the developer did not design in gates at the entrance to the estate for security. The first family to occupy one of the new houses in Roselands in 1989 was the Fitch family. Bob and Sue moved from Western Road with their children to the much larger home at Roselands.

Sue's parents were Charles and Rose Hare. Charles started work in the docks aged 14 and rose to become Operations Manager in Southampton Docks.

He was a much respected senior man in the shipping world. Originally the family lived in Northam before moving to Taunton Drive. They then moved to the top of Chalk Hill and finally to a bungalow, formerly known as Philomena, in Grosvenor Gardens in West End. Rose had a sister named Emily Louisa Dimmock 1909-2003, married in St Matthew's Church in St Mary's Road, the Church now an ethnic minority building. Charles had three daughters, Janet, Sue and Elizabeth. Sue and her sister Janet have always been very active in the West End community, particularly St James' Church, at lunch clubs for the elderly and church flower arranging plus organising many events. Both the Hildene and Moorgreen Schools have benefited from assistance, recently with a children's knitting club.

Bob's great grandfather, on his mother's side, a German gentleman, came over to England in the 1890s and was in the hospitality business originally in London and then became licensee of a well known hotel in Cromer, Norfolk (The Red Lion). He unfortunately lost the business and his life in 1909. He left a wife and 8 children. The mother and seven of the children emigrated to Australia. Bob's grandmother remained as she was married to a sea Captain and had a daughter Peggy, Bob's mother.

Bob's father was Captain Norman Fitch, born 1907. He obtained his Master's certificate in 1934, and worked for the Bibby Line. The main trade being passengers and cargo to India, Ceylon and Burma. During WW2 the passenger ships were requisitioned by the government and converted to either Troopships or Hospital ships, his last troopship being the Oxfordshire which many from Southampton remember. He had an adventurous WWII. He was torpedoed in 1941 off the coast of Ireland and was awarded the MBE for saving his ship. He was Chief Officer of a troopship which carried the first expeditionary force into Japan after the surrender and took a trip with other officers to witness the destruction of Hiroshima. He wrote a long moving description of his experience, which the family retain. The ship returned to Liverpool but on arrival home his wife could not recognise him as he had been suffering from radiation sickness. He retired 1969 and in 1970 moved to Malta with his wife Peggy, returning in his last years to Winchester. He and the other officers who visited Hiroshima all passed away from pancreatic cancer. He carried a Captain's visitors book at sea and amongst the distinguished can be found the signature of Field Marshal Lord Montgomery of Alamein.

Bob was born in Liverpool and moved to North Wales, then as a teenager to Fareham. His first married home with Susan was in Fair Oak before moving to Western Road in West End to a house owned by another well known local Mike Pitter. The family finally settled at Roselands, Moorhill Road, West End in 1989. To convey to interested, curious and intelligent laymen the essence of a highly skilled and experienced career in a technical maritime speciality represents a challenge. So here is the layman's attempt: Bob went to sea in 1962 and obtained all his certificates through to Master Mariner at Warsash. He served initially on refrigerated, general cargo, and container vessels. His first command was a small containership in 1977. The company decided to change the fleet registry to Liberia which was not for him.

Soon he found work in the North Sea as Master on submersible support vessels, in support of offshore oil and pipelines. This led to command of large multi-purpose diving support vessels working alongside platforms and general workover in the North Sea and Campos Basin offshore Brazil. The technology to maintain the position of ships and drilling rigs by use of propellers only with the supporting systems became a specialisation. Bob was Master of the “Stena Seaspread”, a vessel with accommodation for 108 crew and offshore personnel that was taken up from trade as a forward repair and support vessel during the Falklands War. The ship sailed with the task force to the Falklands with 220 on board made up of Crew and Multi disciplined Naval Personnel. Arriving on station each vessel damaged was patched up by the naval force working on board. After a second spell in the Falklands on a sister vessel work resumed back in the North Sea. Forced into redundancy owing to an inter Company transfer to manage the commissioning of the positioning system on a large Oil Rig he found his command had been filled so Bob went into consultancy work conducting Offshore Vessel Surveys and Marine risk assessments. His technical experience led to a study of Marine Traffic patterns around the whole of the UK coastline and Continent to support risk assessments of shipping in convergence areas such as the Dover Strait and vulnerable headlands. Taking the skills to a new company in the New Forest as a Director the emphasis became providing stakeholders such as the MCA, Port of London and many others with risk assessments of Port Marine Operations, using traffic patterns to establish navigational risks. Following the loss of the Marchioness on the Thames his Company took a major part in the Safety Enquiry which led to the RNLi being present today as the rescue force. The loss of the “Braer” a tanker on the Shetlands led to another official enquiry. The MCA were tasked with conducting a Risk Assessment on all vulnerable headlands around the UK. Bob managed the data gathering and analysis part of the project. This involved purchasing a 65 foot Patrol Vessel from Scottish Fisheries and building and installing all the necessary recording equipment to be used for gathering data for the Risk Assessment. This lasted for three years. The vessel was called “FPV Morven” and was featured recently as the survey vessel that found the site of the aircraft crash in the sea North of Alderney with a prominent footballer. Morven had been converted to a survey vessel with 8 berths and two weeks duration at sea. Bob managed and skippered the boat for 18 years. He later took ownership until 2019 when he retired. At 76 he has not stopped his love of the sea – he has just bought a motor cruiser!

All three Fitch sons have been and are associated with the sea. Mrs Hare continued to live in the bungalow in Grosvenor Gardens after the death of Charles, finally moving to a residential home in Ferndown to be near her youngest daughter Elizabeth. On her death her executors sold the bungalow. It was bought by an insurance company to apply as part of the compensation for a young man who had been disabled in an accident, and they adapted the building for his particular needs, that he could live there, with the help of social care workers. He is still there to this day. Bob’s eldest son Matthew, by now a builder, completed the conversion work. Matthew lives with his family in Hemdean Way. Tom Fitch is a marine engineer and lives in Glenlea Drive. The middle son James moved to Bracklesham where he is married with two children. A very West End Family.

© Alec Samuels, whilst most gratefully acknowledging much advice and assistance from Bob Fitch himself.

Christmas Social Evening

By Nigel Wood

Our Christmas social evening was well attended, given the circumstances we have found ourselves in over many months. Members brought their own platters of food and glasses and the committee provided drinks and a complimentary one prize raffle.

The highlight of the evening was a very humorous talk by John Pitman entitled “What The Butler Saw”, life in a big house in Victorian Times. He was ably assisted by two of our members “Lord & Lady Kinley” a.k.a Leslie and Delphine Kinley.

A good evening was had by all.

Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley

A Review by Roy Andrews

Our January speaker, Ursula Pearce, opened her talk by stating she would have to gallop through so much to tell the history of the hospital and this she did with a continuous flow of detail. In 1855, Prince Albert commented on the lack of suitable accommodation for our wounded troops and by 1856, 109 acres had been purchased at Netley from the Chamberlain Estates for the building of a purpose-built hospital. The grounds were later extended to 200 acres.

When building work commenced, the first Victoria Cross, amongst others, was placed under the foundation stone and it was planned to take two years to complete the build but in fact it took seven years; it opened in March 1863. When Florence Nightingale was shown the building, she stated it was an architect’s vanity project and had no merit as a practical hospital. Over the years she was proven to be absolutely correct: all of the wards were on the north side of the building so they were cold and sunless, fresh air flow was limited, long distances between various wards were impractical and during WW1, when the hospital became over crowded, the long south facing corridor which served all the wards was used for additional beds, the incumbents of which roasted behind the high south facing windows.

A pier had been built from the front of the hospital out into Southampton Water so that hospital ships could unload casualties directly into the hospital. However, for some reason, the pier was built to only half the length it should have been, making it impossible for bigger ships to dock there and forcing them to go to Southampton docks. The need to transport casualties from the docks eventually resulted in a railway being built from Southampton to Netley.

What became known as The Red Cross Hospital was built in huts behind the main building and was found to be more practical than the original building which after WW1 lacked maintenance. The US Army was given the hospital in January 1944 but found they needed to carry out a lot of work on the building to make it usable. By the 1960s the building was semi derelict and so was demolished. To the rear of the main building Victoria House, a smaller version of the main building, and the Psychiatric Unit remained open until 1978. In the early 1980s Hampshire police took over this building as a training school.

William Cobbett's Botley A Review by Roy Andrews

The February meeting saw a welcome return of speaker Geoff Watts to give one of his hour-long-without-notes detailed talks. William Cobbett was born in 1763 in Farnham, Surrey and during his lifetime was a soldier/traveller/writer/publisher/farmer/MP and jailbird. The house he first lived in still exists as a pub in Farnham where at the age of eight, on a country walk, he decided that one day he would be a farmer and own land.

Having joined the army in 1784, Cobbett was stationed at New Brunswick and in 1792 he married Anne Reed (Nancy) whom he had first seen when she was thirteen years old playing in a farmyard ; he had decided there and then that one day he would marry her. To avoid going to court over a misdemeanor, Cobbett left the army and moved to France where he saw the revolution beginning; this gave him a lifelong loathing of revolution. To escape the unrest, he moved to Philadelphia in the USA where he taught English and became a publisher. It seems that Cobbett was good at upsetting people, one of whom was Thomas Paine an advocate of revolution.

In 1800 he returned to London and in 1804, while staying near Alresford, he visited Botley for the first time and described it as 'the most delightful village in the world': the soil was rich, it was neat, it was surrounded by woods and the farms were small. In 1805 he moved to Lantern House in Botley and began buying farmland in the area to fulfil his lifetime wish. The sister of Cobbett's wife was already married to James Warner of Steeple Court, a large farm in the area.

Botley vicar was one Richard Baker; his grandson was the famous 'Man of the trees' and a West End resident Richard St.Barbe-Baker. The vicar and Cobbett fell out when the vicar, having bought by weight a load of straw from Cobbett, discovered the inside of the bails were saturated with water, thus increasing the weight. The animosity between the two continued for many years.

Geoff included in his talk much of the history of Botley, its buildings and industry and for good measure he noted that Cobbett, with others, was responsible for the road from Botley to Winchester being built, before the route was via Bishops Waltham.

In 1810 Cobbett was found guilty of libel, fined £1000 and sent to Newgate Prison for two years where he appears to have lived in some luxury in a flat above the Governor, leaving his wife to run the farm. Released in 1812, he was welcomed home to Botley by a band, cheering locals and a party all arranged by his wife. In 1817 he returned to the USA but returned home in 1819. He was now heavily in debt as his farmland had been bought with mortgages but in 1820 he began what was to make him famous - his Rural Ride. He travelled on horseback as he hated travelling in carriages and he felt he could be more in touch with the communities he travelled through from the back of a horse.

Cobbett died in 1835 and is buried in Farnham, where there is a statue erected of him; only a stone plinth in Botley Square commemorates him here.

RECIPE CORNER: Pork Chops Baked in Cream by Gillian Owton

Here is another recipe from the 1960s publication “The West End Community Association Recipe Book: A Collection of Favourite Recipes”. This recipe was contributed by the book’s editor, Gillian Owton. The Owton family is well-known locally for their chain of traditional butcher shops, first established at Chalcroft Farm in Burnett’s Lane. Census records show earlier generations of Owtons to have been farmers locally with Caleb & Peggy Owton at “Chalkroft” Farm in 1841 with five of their sons and daughters. The 1844 tithe records show that Caleb owned two plots of arable land named Broomfield lying between Moor Green Farm (owned by William Hallett and occupied by William Gosling) and Little Moor Green Farm – owned by the Fellows of the Warden of Queens College, Oxford and occupied by Charles Owton (Caleb & Peggy’s son, baptised at South Stoneham on 4th Dec 1815). An enclosure notice in the Hampshire Chronicle 6th Sept 1824 describes a public footway running over parts of Moor Green leading to a private carriage road into “an inclosure belonging to Caleb Owton, called Broom Field”. The tithe records also show a “Widow Owton” who owned four small plots, which she leased out, including a small arable plot behind the Union Workhouse known as the “Poor House piece”, which she leased to a William Mansbridge. “Widow Owton” appears to have been Frances (also known as Fanny), who died in 1845 aged 92, “the relict of Mr Owton of Chalcraft Farm”. Richard Owton & Frances Fice had married at Owslebury on 15th January 1778; their son Caleb was baptised at South Stoneham on 23rd July 1790. Caleb took over the farm when Richard died in February 1822. On 18th November 1822 an auction notice appeared in the Hampshire Chronicle for all of the farming stock and some of the household goods of Mr Richard Owton, deceased, at “Chalcroft Farm, Bishop’s Stoke, near Botley”.

Gillian Owton’s original recipe:

PORK CHOPS BAKED IN CREAM

4 pork chops	Salt and black pepper
2 tbsps butter	Thyme and oregano
$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. finely chopped mushrooms	4 tbsps double cream
1 tbsp lemon juice	Finely chopped parsley
1 tbsp flour	

Trim excess fat from chops and saute in butter until golden on both sides. Remove. Spoon off 2 tbsps. fat from the pan and saute finely chopped mushrooms in remaining fat until soft; stir in lemon juice; sprinkle with flour and cook until slightly thickened and almost dry. Season with salt and pepper. Rub chops with a little dried thyme and season with salt and pepper. Cut four pieces foil into heartshapes large enough to wrap a pork chop completely. Brush hearts with oil; place chop on one half; cover chops with mushroom mixture and pour 1 tbsp. cream over each chop. Sprinkle with parsley; fold the foil shape over and seal edges well by crimping them together. Place on a baking sheet and bake 325° - 3 for 45 - 60 minutes.

NOTE

This simple but tasty recipe appears as originally printed. Needless to say, the oven should be preheated before starting the recipe and the chops should be kept hot while making the mushroom sauce. 325F is equivalent to Gas 3 or 170C (150 fan). The exact cooking time will depend upon the thickness of the chops. If you don't fancy fiddling with foil, you can place them together in a covered casserole dish.