

WESTENDER

Newsletter of the West End Local History Society
Autumn 2024



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The Halifax Family in West End By Pauline Jordan née Halifax

Pauline Jordan kindly donated some photographs from her family collection to West End Museum. Here, she shares her memories.

Mum lived with her parents growing up at 5 Chapel Road (now a preschool). Her maiden name was Blake. Her father, William Blake, was the local Prudential man and was well known in the village. When he served in the army, my grandmother, Kathleen Blake, took over his work until his return. She passed away in 1963. My grandfather served on the Parish Council for many years and was involved in managing the local football club.



West End Parish Council with visitors from Nigeria May 1951

Up to around 1972, we lived in Glenn Road and then moved into my grandparents' house in Chapel Road as my grandfather was then in a residential home. In 1984, mum and dad moved to Midlands Estate.

Mum and dad were very actively involved in the West End Community Association. One of her roles was being in charge of looking after the Carnival Queen and her attendants. I remember as a child taking part in several carnival processions on a tractor and trailer driven by Mr. Ted Topp. Mum was a member of West End W.I. She worked at Gusters for several years and following that ran a gift shop called Toby Hoem in the row of shops opposite Asda (now a hairdressers).

Continued on Page 3

“The Halifax Family in West End” by Pauline Jordan née Halifax *continued*



Young Life Guards outside West End Mission Hall (undated)

They were also both regular worshippers at St. James Church and dad was a member of the church choir. They were also founder members of the West End Singers and were active in the choir for many years. Dad was a Parish Councillor and District Councillor and served as Eastleigh Mayor 1979/80. His photo is on the wall in the Parish Centre.

An Ordinary Woman's War – Part Two

By Emily Dimmock

Aircraft factories were dispersed and my brother was sent from Hamble to Cheltenham, where a coach station was taken over for the production of the badly needed aircraft. My brother-in-law was called up into the R.A.F. and went to Blackpool for training. We went on into 1941. I had a baby in the July of that year, born at a nursing home in the New Forest as my doctor in Southampton was on an air raid panel and might not be able to get to me when needed.

He sent me to a friend of his at Lyndhurst and it was arranged that I would go to the Home at Woodlands with which he was connected. I could hear air raids going on at Southampton 7 miles away and feared for my family. Knew I had to go back. The blast wall of the shelter had to be increased to a thickness of 3 feet before a baby was allowed back into Southampton; this was done and I faced the war in Southampton again.

Continued on Page 4

“An Ordinary Woman’s War – Part Two” by Emily Dimmock *continued*

My mother had been bombed out of her home and had a terrifying experience of neighbours being trapped by a “bread-basket” of fire bombs. They couldn’t escape and they died. With what furniture she could save, she came to live in the house next to mine, the owners of which had fled the area. She had been a woman of great character and fortitude all her life, but her nerves were now in a very upset condition, although her grandson was a great comfort and interest to her. My sister’s baby was born in the following September, her husband having compassionate leave to see the baby. The next time he saw his daughter she was four years old and wanted to know who the strange man was. She didn’t connect him with his photograph at all! Her father had been in the Western Desert with the R.A.F. who supported Montgomery’s Desert Rats in Sicily and tight up through Italy and across France – a long way to get home. The winter of 1941 was very cold with a good deal of snow – cold nights to be taking a baby to a shelter in the garden, but we all survived until June 1942, when we nearly didn’t. It was a lovely, warm mid-summer’s night, June 21st. We went to sleep in the shelter after spending an evening sitting in the garden, and, in fact, having supper out there. At 1 a.m. we were awakened by the siren – Old Moaning Minnie, as we called it – and the sound of many heavy aircraft, bombers. They came over us in wave after wave, dropping a carpet of bombs each time. I laid the baby on the floor, covering him with my body and his head with my A.R.P. tin hat, and my husband crouched on top of us. The first five bombs fell on the road in front of the house, the second and third hit the house, the fourth fell in the garden, damaging the blast wall in front of the shelter, sending soil and potatoes, which were growing in the garden, on top of us, and the fifth fell in the woods behind the house. The noise was tremendous, like a thunderstorm magnified a hundred times or more. I can never smell newly-dug potatoes without remembering that night. The all-clear sounded and we crawled out to find there was very little left of our house, our winter coal supplies were spread around most of it, a wash boiler full of nappies had been split in half and the nappies were strewn around the neighbourhood, window frames and doors had been hurled into fireplaces, walls shatters, china blown to smithereens, the roof anywhere but where it should be, but underneath the staircase the baby’s pram was intact (coach-built, not the plastic of today), but full of broken glass and torn curtains. The A.R.P. warden took it outside, upended it to get rid of the debris, got bedding from the shelter and wheeled the baby away to a rest centre. I wanted to follow, didn’t stop to dress and as ready to go in my nightie with a coat on top, but my husband wouldn’t leave without being fully dressed, and there was I in the road hopping from one foot to the other, with one eye on the baby, the other eye on my husband who was half in and half out of the shelter, with a fractured gas main beside me alight and illuminating the scene of desolation around me. Five hundred houses were hit that night just in our part of Southampton and there was some loss of life but the shelters had proved themselves. We had a case of clothes in the shelter, just one change of everything, but toothbrushes and face flannels were in the bathroom and there was no longer a bathroom there, so the next morning off to the local shops to buy these, only to find there were none to be had. Then I really felt anger – the lack of these small items seemed more important than the fact that we had no home.

Continued on Page 5

“An Ordinary Woman’s War – Part Two” by Emily Dimmock *continued*

We spent a few nights sleeping on the floor at my sister’s house and a few days making up the claim for all we had lost which had to be lodged with the War Damage Commission, with my mother in a bad state of nerves; this was the second home she had lost. She went to Cheltenham to stay with my brother, we went out to the New Forest for a couple of weeks, then we heard of a house we could rent for the time being as the owners had evacuated it after some damage by bombing. The owner’s furniture was piled up into one room, we brought back what we had been able to save and we faced another winter of war, and everywhere I went I was greeted with “But I thought you were dead!”. The windows of this house had gone and were boarded up, there was no glass in the front door or the back or the porch at the back of the house, or the greenhouse. However, it was a roof over our heads and the local war damage people put a pane of glass into most windows so that we had some light, and my husband was able to get to his office fairly easily. This was 1942 and we had not been there long when my son developed a rash which necessitated a visit to the Royal South Hants Hospital in Southampton to see a specialist.



Emily Dimmock née Freak
Image courtesy Sue Fitch

No-one knew what sort of rash it could be. We had an appointment in the morning and there were a lot of patients to be seen and very few doctors; most had been called up. It came to early afternoon and we were still waiting when there was activity outside, ambulances arriving, and then there came a long procession of walking, blood-stained, wounded, khaki-clad figures followed by stretcher cases. The remains of the Dieppe raid by the Canadians. But they were chased by the Germans, the air raid warning sounded and for the next few hours we were in the cellars of the hospital listening to the bombs falling, surrounded by patients in their beds who had been brought down by nurses, and my infant was yelling his head off. We arrived home at about 7 o’clock in the evening, hungry and tired. We had walked three miles, there being no transport when roads were cratered by bombs, to find that my husband had been there, but was gone. He was frantically trying to find out where we were and what had happened too us as he knew the hospital had been hit. He had also been caught out in the air raid and had had to spend hours in a shelter near his office. The baby’s rash disappeared and no-one knew what had caused it. Could it have been a reaction from the tension of the grown-ups surrounding him?

We had kept diaries until then, but they went the way of so many things when we lost our home and I don’t think I’ve kept one since, but I do remember when our house was bombed that it caused much head scratching among the military authorities because everything in the vicinity was stained bright yellow. I took no notice while we were cleaning up until it finally dawned on me that I had a large jar of mustard pickle in the larder, which I was hoarding for the winter and this had evidently been blown to smithereens with great force to spread it around so far. I kept quiet, though, not to spoil their little mystery. If memory serves me, it was Christmas 1942 when we were able to make a Christmas pudding.

Continued on Page 6

“An Ordinary Woman’s War – Part Two” by Emily Dimmock *continued*

My sister’s husband was in the Middle East convalescing from an attack of dysentery and he had been able to send some dried fruit, which we had not seen for years. So, with much hoarding and pooling of rations, eking out the fruit with blackcurrants we had picked and bottled in the summer, apple pulp and various other substitutes, we made a Christmas pudding of sorts. We were allowed double rations at Christmas instead of 2oz. butter, 2 oz. lard and 4 oz. margarine for each person each week, and a double ration meat meant we could have a joint. Everyone felt better for a little more food. One egg a month wasn’t very much and when the Americans came into the war and started to send us some food; we had dried eggs and dried milk, and I remember the rumours that went round that we were to have something called Spam. Now, we had never heard of this and didn’t know that it was chopped pork in a tin. It was all right, but we liked Fray Bentos corned beef. The dried eggs were marvellous and enabled us to make a birthday cake for the children, but the sandwich filling we concocted of mashed parsnips flavoured with banana essence did not appeal at all to the children and my niece has never eaten a banana in her life, whether due to these sandwiches or the awful black dried bananas issued to children, I do not know. Feeding a family was a problem; we queued up for snoek, for steaks of whale meat sold at the fishmongers, which we were told to cook like beef steaks. They tasted very fishy and I only tried them once. When bread and flour went onto ration that was really dreadful; you could have either bread or flour; the B.U.s (bread units) were not enough to have both. Milk was severely rationed; children had a pint a day at 2d., which was half the normal price. I used to take the top of the milk from our ration, put it in a glass and shake it vigorously to make a bit of butter because all of the butter ration was given to our son. I swore I would never eat marg on my bread again after the war and I never have.

Thank you to Sue Fitch for providing this account, written in September 1989, by her aunt, Emily Louisa Dimmock née Freak (1908-2003), sister of Rose Hare. Emily’s last years were spent at Elizabeth Court, West End. Part Three, the final part, will be published in the Winter 2024 issue.

The Two Sisters Of ‘Woodlands’ in West End Road
By Paula Downer

In the Old Burial Ground in West End, near Southampton, lies two daughters of a Henry Gardiner who was in the service of the Honourable East India Company. Both of their parents are buried elsewhere, father Henry was buried in Bath, their mother Frances Augusta was buried in Bishops Lydeard, Somerset. The two daughters Elizabeth and Louisa Jane Gardiner came to live in West End, taking up residence in one of the larger houses named ‘Woodlands’, in West End Road.

Henry Gardiner, their father, sadly passed away several ago in 1843 at the age of 52, he had followed in his father Robert Gardiner’s footsteps serving with the Madras Civil Service. Henry began as a Writer in 1811, progressing onto the role of Collector with Magisterial duties.

Continued on Page 7

“The Two Sisters Of ‘Woodlands’ in West End Road” by Paula Downer *continued*

Henry Gardiner married Frances Augusta Dampier on the 23rd June 1828 in Chicacole, India, she was the youngest daughter of the Rev'd John Dampier of Codford, St. Peter in Wiltshire. Henry and Frances had seven children, three sons and four daughters, whom survived, some were born in India and some in England, Elizabeth was born in 1830 in Vizagapatam, India. Louisa Jane was born in 1833 at sea, somewhere on the Atlantic Ocean, presumably she was born before the mother Frances could reach home!

When Henry died in 1843, his home address was shown as 21, Marlborough Buildings in Bath, not far from the renowned Royal Crescent. Henry had been home since 1836 as an ‘Annuitant on the Fund’. Subsequently, Henry was buried in Bath, his memorial tablet (pictured right) can be seen in St. Swithin’s Church, Walcot. St. Swithin’s Church, built in the late 1700s, became the Parish Church of Bath in the Georgian era and is today its only remaining 18th century church.



The Gardiner family home in Bath, Marlborough Buildings are on the left

Frances Augusta Gardiner had the means to live independently, the London Gazette shows that she held funds with the Union Bank of London, of which there was a branch in Bath. The 1851 Census of England shows the youngest children being schooled at home, Elizabeth now 20 was living at home, Louisa aged 17 still a scholar. In 1857, the youngest brother of Elizabeth and Louisa, Henry, began service with the 8th Bombay Native Infantry at the age of 18, he would have worn a Red Coat with White facings.

By 1861, Frances and her daughters Elizabeth, Louisa and Augusta Katherine had moved to Bishops Lydeard near Taunton in Somerset, according to the Census of England, Frances is listed as a Fund Holder whereas her daughters Elizabeth, Louisa Jane and Augusta are listed as Share Holders, presumably the sons had left home. Henry was promoted to Indian Army Captain in 1869 with the role of Quarter Master in the Bombay Staff Corps. At the age of 47, he was ‘Retired on Half Pay’ in March 1886 but very sadly died May 1891 at Bishops Lydeard at the age of 52. His mother Frances Augusta Gardiner died the same year in December; they were both interred in St. Mary’s Church burial ground, Bishops Lydeard; a granite memorial cross stands at their grave. Elizabeth and Louisa were still unmarried and, having lost their mother Frances and brother Henry, and left on their own, it could be assumed that they saw no reason to stay in Bishops Lydeard. They moved to West End, and were both living here by 1895. The Census of England of 1901 shows that a cook, parlourmaid and housemaid were in service at ‘Woodlands’.

Continued on Page 8

“The Two Sisters Of ‘Woodlands’ in West End Road” by Paula Downer *continued*



Extract of West End Road showing ‘Woodlands’
(from the National Library of Scotland’s Historic Map Collection)

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When the Misses Gardiners arrived in Westend (West End used to be written as one word), St. James’ Church had recently been rebuilt, replacing the old church, built c. 1834, which was now considered too small for the increasing number of residents in the parish. The Rev’d Charles Patey was responsible for overseeing the building of the new Church. The Westend Parish Magazine of July 1895, show that several of the parishioners, including the Miss Gardiners, had donated to the Church Building Fund, as it was still in debt; the Rev’d Charles Patey was ‘very thankful to be able to announce that the debt on the Church may be considered as extinguished’. The new Church received many gifts from its parishioners. In 1899, Miss Louisa Gardiner donated a set of violet alms bags (purses) for use in church during Advent and Lent services. In 1900 the Misses Gardiners donated 10 shillings towards new cassocks for the choir which were duly purchased from Messrs. Vanheems and Wheeler, the Clerical Outfitters of London.

Early in 1899, the formation of a Parish Nursing Scheme was discussed. It was felt that there was a need to bring into West End a trained and certificated nurse to attend to the residents of the parish and maternity cases. The meeting was held in the Reading Room with Mrs Harriett Haselfoot of Moorhill House acting as President; Miss Louisa Gardiner was on the Committee along with Mrs Acton, Mrs E. Jones, Mrs Willan, with the Rev’d Charles Patey as Treasurer and his wife as Secretary. All the parishioners of West End were invited to become members of the Nursing Association. By March a District Nurse Simmons had taken up residence in West End; by July the Association had over 100 members. The scheme was a popular and very necessary one, with the nurse attending to several parishioners. In 1903, Mrs Willan of Thornhill House was President.

Continued on Page 9

“The Two Sisters Of ‘Woodlands’ in West End Road” by Paula Downer *continued*

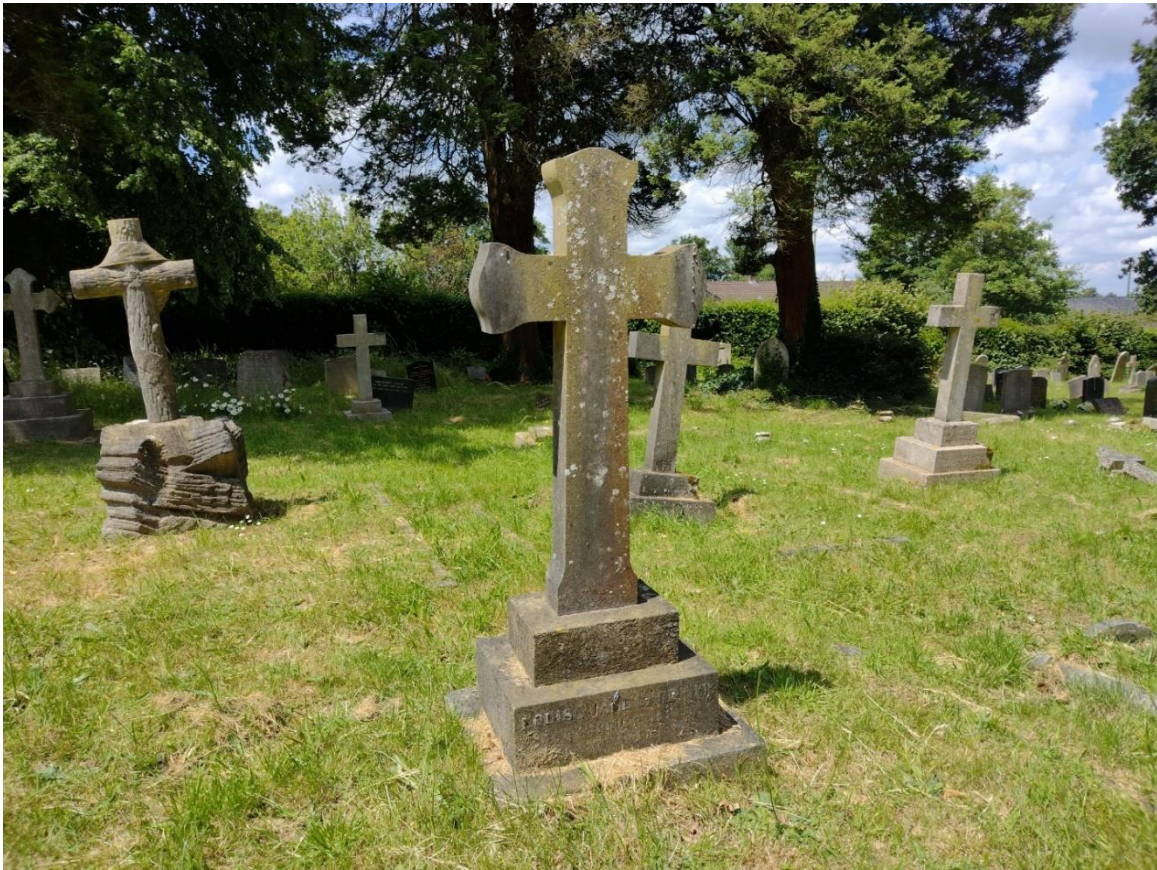
In the Winter of 1902, the young children of the parish were treated to entertainment with a Magic Lantern Show presented jointly by Miss Louisa Gardiner and Mrs C.R. Patey, followed by buns and oranges. Toys were given to the children as they left. In the Westend Parish Magazine for June 1903, the Rev'd Charles Patey wrote that his church had very gratefully received a beautifully embroidered Altar Kneeler made by Miss Elizabeth Gardiner and that her sister Louisa gifted a 'very handsome Brass Stand' for the Altar Book. The Misses Gardiners contributed to many other local causes such as the National School fabric fund, Clothing Clubs, Choir and Organ fund, Sunday School, Reading Room, Waifs and Strays and St. James' Church/Churchyard Maintenance fund. They made a further donation of £50 for the building of new schools in West End. In 1903, the Rev'd Charles Patey stressed that there was 'still a very large deficit on the amount required to be raised, but the Committee have decided to commence building, and they have given the contract to Messrs. Haines Bros.' A new school was necessary as the old school was becoming too small and, anyway, needed repairs. Westend School was formally opened by October 1904, but there was still a deficit of £460, to which the two sisters made a contribution.

Elizabeth Gardiner sadly died in Nov 1912 at the age of 82; her sister Louisa continued to reside at 'Woodlands'.

In wartime (Great War 1914-18), many of the parishioners donated gifts of vegetables and fruit supplies to our Royal Navy, to quote the Rev'd Rowland Dawson, in 1916, 'we cannot adequately estimate now what the Navy has done, but we are all alive to the fact that if the Navy failed, it is all over with us'. In October 1918, a Social and Fancy Dress Dance was held in the Parish Hall until 10.30pm which then carried on afterwards in the Moorgreen Room until 12.30am; in aid of 'Cigarettes for Wounded Soldiers'. There were to be games, dancing, cards etc.; it was stressed that 'Fancy Dress' was not compulsory! Prizes were awarded for the best Fancy Dress. In the same year, a Concert was organised by Miss Synge of Tower House, with one of Louisa's nephews Mr Metcalfe taking part (her sister Augusta Katherine was married to Fenwick Metcalfe). The concert was an 'unqualified success' the Rev'd Rowland Dawson was delighted to be handed the 'splendid sum of £10 5s 9d'. In the Westend Parish Magazine he said that he would have liked to have written 'a great deal about it but space forbids me to do so'.

Louisa Jane Gardiner sadly passed away in January 1919 aged 85. They were wealthy ladies; their probate records show a figure in the region of £15,000. The Census of England returns identify them as 'Living on own Means' with Elizabeth as Head of Household.

The Nursing Association found it difficult to continue during the war years. In May 1923, the Association was re-started to support a Village Nurse. Lady Swaythling became President. It was affiliated with the Queen Victoria Jubilee Nurses of the Hampshire County Nursing Association. The Committee members included Mrs Collins, Mrs Warneford Fletcher, Miss Fraser, Miss Hollingworth, Miss MacLeod, Mrs Orr-Ewing, Mrs Pragnell, Mrs Woolley with Mrs Strong as Chairman, and Mr and Mrs Synge as Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary respectively.



The Grave of Elizabeth and Louisa Gardiner in the Old Burial Ground in West End

A Trio of Air Crashes in West End by Pauline Berry

During the early years of the Second World War when the Battle of Britain was raging above our country, there were three notable aircraft crashes within the boundary of West End. Two of these were British planes, unfortunately caused by the cables holding down protective barrage balloons. One German aircraft was brought down by local fire, probably by the local Ack-Ack site. Strangely enough, all three crashes occurred within a mile of each other in the less populated area north of West End village.

The first crash was suffered by a Whitley KN-O, a medium British bomber designed in the 1930s. It was known as being “slow, with a small bomb-load”. It was returning from an operation in France on August 15th 1940, but it unluckily struck the cable of a barrage balloon “adjacent to the airfield at Eastleigh”. It crashed, minus part of its wing, in a field off Allington Lane, opposite Railway Cottages near the railway bridge. The Air Ministry H.Q. Balloon Command stated that the “Whitley impacted a balloon cable at 03.30 hours”. Its wing was found two miles away. All five of the crew were killed:

Flying Officer W.A. Stenhouse, age 26, Pilot
Pilot Officer R.B. MacGregor age 19, 2nd Pilot
Sergeant J. Burrow age 20, Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Sergeant H. Davies age 20, Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
Sergeant C.L.G. Hood age 31, Observer

Continued on Page 11

“A Trio of Air Crashes in West End” by Pauline Berry *continued*

The Southern Daily Echo reported that “the Whitley had crashed into a cornfield at night ... the occupants of a pair of cottages opposite were woken by the great crash opposite and thought it was a bomb. The front of their home was lit up by the flames and a window was shattered.” Mr & Mrs Levington gathered up their little family and went to view the burning wreckage to see if there were any survivors. The fire brigade arrived within five minutes and the police and A.R.P. soon arrived at the scene. An hour after the crash, the machine gun billets exploded and struck the porch of the Levington’s cottage. By morning, daylight revealed smouldering wreckage among the wheat sheaves. Strangely, the long balloon cable was not severed, although it had sheared off 6 feet of the Whitley’s wing. The Air Ministry H.Q. Balloon Command ascertained that the barrage balloon was tethered on a 4,000-foot long cable and that 15 feet of the plane’s wing was found.

By a strange coincidence there was a second fatal air crash less than a mile away, caused by a similar contact with a barrage balloon cable. It happened only eleven days later. Was it the same cable? The Blenheim was a light bomber with a record of heavy casualties in combat, although with better luck for night flying. Not this time. This Blenheim was returning from a night sortie in France. Sheer coincidence brought P.C. Joe Malloy to the scene. He came off duty at Portswood Police Station and at about 6.20 a.m. he heard a drone and looked up to see the plane flying low over Bassett, heading toward Swaythling and West End. Joe hopped on his bicycle and cycled furiously towards West End, his childhood home. By the time he arrived at Allington Lane, he could see the crash site in the field immediately next to “Oaklands”.

The Blenheim had crash-dived at such an angle that it made a fairly deep crater, about 20 feet wide. Too late for the three crew, who died instantly. They were:

Sergeant J.W. Balmer, Pilot

Sergeant W.J. Corker, Navigator & Bomb Aimer

A.G. Cranston, Observer /Wireless Operator

Sixty years later, in 2005, Sergeant William Corker’s medals and a letter to his parents was put up for sale in London. In the letter he had written “All I ask for myself is that I shall have died honourably and that the grand old flag, the Union Jack, will be flying as proudly as ever.” How sad it was, that the cable of one of our barrage balloons brought the aircraft down. All the crew were taken to a temporary mortuary within a large wooden building behind the old Parish Hall in Chapel Road. In his book, “I Remember”, Bob Moody recalled visiting them there.

The Engineering Officer of the Balloon Centre inspected the site on the same day and reported to his group H.Q. that the Blenheim appears to have been intact before it exploded. This was corroborated by P.C. Joe Malloy. The damage to nearby “Oaklands” (now a rest home) and grounds consisted of broken windows, a badly damaged conservatory and burnt hedges. Joe reported that the culprit, the cable, fell across Allington Lane into two adjacent fields, one of which was the scene of the aforementioned Whitley crash a little over a week earlier.

The Heinkel III, a Luftwaffe bomber, passed over West End on January 19th 1941 at 8.45 p.m., having started out, some believe, from near Amiens. According to our local “Ack-Ack” battery, it was flying in a north-westerly direction at 7,000 feet. Their guns scored a direct hit and the Heinkel crashed into a field on Allington Manor Farm and promptly exploded. The German Wireless Transmitter Operator, Erwin Krause, bailed out but his parachute failed to open and he was killed.

“A Trio of Air Crashes in West End” by Pauline Berry *continued*

Thus, all five of the crew were killed:

Karl Lindhorst age 30, Pilot

Hermann Radke age 26

Erin Krausse age 23, W/T Operator

Paul Kerzel age 22

Werner Enslin age 37

The forward part (cockpit and wings) was smashed, but the rear section less damaged. A diary discovered later explained that they had carried out successful attacks at Avonmouth and Swansea during the previous two days. This damaged notebook was of special interest to British defences as it contained details of the secret Benito Radio Beam System, using wavelengths and bearing in flight by the Heinkel. This aircraft was one of 62 German bombers which set out to bomb Southampton on that fateful date. They did industrial damage at Eastleigh Locomotive Works, but the Luftwaffe lost four bombers during and after this raid. The crew lie buried in a Staffordshire Cemetery.

How fortunate that these air crashes did not kill any local people, but tragic for the air crews. Some items from the Heinkel, recovered years later by Roger Sherlock, are on display in West End Museum. Further details and documentation can be found in the Museum's archive file. Please contact us if you wish further information.

Shared Memories - 5

Growing Up in the Thirties & Forties

by Fred Harder

Some sunny days, Mum and a few Aunties and Uncles would make a few sandwiches (jam mostly) and bottles of lemonade and they would trapse off, pushing the very large wheeled prams to the Houndwell Park in Southampton for a picnic and play on the swings and slides, or we would go to the Weston Shore across the floating bridge for a picnic and a paddle.

Granny Harder died in 1935 at the age of 61, so I cannot remember her as I was only 2 years old, but from the photos I have seen she was quite robust. And would sit at the front door talking to the neighbours, granddad was ex-army and worked in the docks as did most of the men in Northam. From Bond Street, I think we moved to The Grove in Sholing, for how long I do not know as people seemed to move quite a bit. We then moved to Johnson Street, which was a couple of streets away from Kingsland Square, a big open-air market down St Mary's street where we would go late in the day and pick up the unsold vegetables and pecked fruit (fruit that had been pecked by the birds,) as all the vegetables and fruit used to come in crates straight from the farms or orchards and at the end of the day there would be the pecked fruit left at the bottom of the crates, which no one would want to pay for and so they could not sell.

Continued on Page 13

“Growing Up in the Thirties & Forties” by Fred Harder *continued*

We would play in the street on our bike, most never had any tyres on, and cycle to the end of the road and watch the big red trams clanging past and the horse and carts go by. I was not very old, but I can remember one time, they had one of the little girls dressed up as a bride in some old net curtains and old flowers, and I was dressed up to be the groom and all the kids and parents made a procession to the Methodist church just around the corner and we had a pretend marriage on the front steps and afterwards we had lemonade and buns as a wedding reception.

From Johnson Street, we moved to Hollyoak Road, Shirley Warren. Quite some move, we lived in a corner Council house alongside a sort of park area with great big oak trees on it. I used to like to go to sleep under the trees, under a panel of corrugated iron propped alongside it, especially when it was raining and you could hear the rain on the iron; I still think about it when I hear the rain. I remember one time, Mum, Yvonne Desmond and I went to the local clinic; it must have been Autumn as there were masses of leaves on the ground and me being a kid ran through the leaves dragging my feet as one does, straight into a sheet of corrugated iron, splitting my leg open with blood all over the place. They took me to the hospital and I had some stitches put in - still got the scar about 70 years later.



Continued on Page 14

“Growing Up in the Thirties & Forties” by Fred Harder *continued*

At one time there were workmen on the site doing something to the paths, workman used to have a large hut on big metal wheels which they used to tow behind a steam roller, they used to have a big fire stove which burnt coke and glowed red in it with a chimney protruding through the roof. The stable door to the hut was quite high off the ground so it had a big wide wooden set of steps, I used to like to stand just inside the door and feel the heat of the stove. The men always had a brew of tea going in a big blue enamelled container, and sometimes had bacon and eggs going. At night they would have a night watchman on duty, then on the night of Friday 28th 1938 there was a very bad storm. The winds were blowing very hard and one of the very high 50 ft lime tree was blown over, which just missed our house, although the branches pushed alongside of it. Some of the other big trees were rendered unsafe, so we were given refuge in the workmen’s canteen/hut for the rest of the night (all nice and warm with the smells of the hut). Next morning we had our photos taken in front of the house with the tree alongside; Mum was interviewed and the photo was Published in the Southern Dailey Echo.

Our next move was to 155 Honeysuckle Road, Swaythling. We moved in next door to Our Aunt Ede Daulton (Harder) with Uncle Fred who, like Dad, was in the Army (The Hampshire Regiment) along with our cousins Ede and Gordon. How we came to live here I do not know, only it must have been at the start of the war, because I seem to remember the shops and houses putting up brown tape across the windows to stop them shattering with the bomb blast, and black material or thick blankets across all windows and doors so that there would be no light for the enemy planes to see. When you went out in the evenings, there was no lights at the windows and the street lights were switched off, the cars that went past only had very dim lights with black covers with slits so that the light only shone just in front of the car and not up to the sky; they also painted their bumpers white so that it was easier to see them. On very dark nights you would walk along with your arms in front of you, but you still knocked into people and lampposts, etc. Often you would hear someone swear as they bumped into someone or something. If there was a chink of light showing between your curtains, the ARP (Air Raid Wardens) person would bang on your window and shout out “Put that light out”.

If you wanted to go out you had to switch off the lights in the passageway or, in most cases, they had a double curtain over the door you would walk through one and make sure that there was no light before opening the second and door. Just across the road from us was the ARP station with the siren on top. The howl of it can be heard from miles away, so you can guess what it sounded like from just across the road. Just around the corner was the public air raid shelter (with a concrete static water tank built alongside for the fire brigades use) the shelter was built with bricks and the top was built with reinforced concrete there were a number of separate rooms, so that if a small bomb blew up one room it would not kill everyone in the shelter. If there was a very bad air-raid we would go into the shelter taking our blankets and maybe something to eat and drink, because sometimes the raids would go on all night. It was always dank and wet, with a few bunks up the side, most nights there would be a singsong.

REVIEWS

Calshot: The RNAS Years – Colin van Geffen A Review by Roy Andrews

At the start of his talk at the June meeting, Colin Van Geffen announced that owing to the nearness of the 80th anniversary of D-Day, he intended to make over part of his talk to an aspect of that subject. He also explained he was suffering from a cough which was affecting his voice and so he began a rather rapid talk, it seemed, on the origins of Calshot and yes, although the sound system was loud, it was at times difficult to understand him whilst he read from a script in a somewhat monotone voice.

Calshot, the spit of land at the mouth of Southampton Water where Henry VIII had built a castle, opened as a Royal Navy Air Service camp in 1913. In fact, there were two camps, known as 'The Bottom Camp' which was on the Spit and 'Top Camp' situated in fields north of the Spit.

The main job of the site appears to have been the testing and evaluating of new seaplanes and we were given a very long list of planes that were tested, built by the likes of Avro and Sopwith, plus many by firms I have never heard of who presumably did not build planes for long. Various hangers were built from 1917 and a narrow-gauge railway that lasted until the end of WWII.

Personnel training was carried out on site as well as experiments with bombing from the air using flour bags and potatoes. The first successful drop of a torpedo from a seaplane was carried out by a Sopwith plane in 1917. Marconi also used a building, still there today, to carry out wireless transmission tests from land to ships.

Then we had an abrupt change to WWII and were introduced to the Lancaster Bomber, backbone of the RAF, as used by 617 Sqd. 'The Dambusters'. Colin, however, wanted to talk about 101Sqd. in which his father served; they were given a secret mission that was so secret even the seven crew of each bomber did not know what it entailed. The only person who did know was an additional German-speaking crewman who was ensconced in a partitioned off part of the plane with a lot of equipment. The only giveaway that the bombers were different was two large aerals sticking out of the top of the fuselage.

The equipment was known as Airborne Cigar (ABC) equipment and was designed for jamming German night-fighter radio transmissions communications, the operator even issuing false transmissions to the German crews.

On D-Day several of these equipped bombers were tasked with flying in a continuous circle between Dieppe and Somme to disrupt German transmissions.

The day after Colin's talk, our Secretary contacted him to thank him and discovered he had succumbed to a nasty bug so we wish him a good recovery.

Woolston Floating Bridge - A talk by Stephen Hoadley Review by Guest Reviewer Angela Andrews

The evening of our July meeting was, unusually for this year so far, warm and sunny and this was matched in the hall by the warm anticipation of our talk. It was a well-attended meeting with many members and several visitors who wanted to hear about one of Southampton's best remembered landmarks, the Woolston Floating Bridge. The talk was given by Stephen Hoadley, an experienced public speaker who has worked in museums and educational settings for many years and who specialises in communicating the social history of travel and he remembers travelling on the Floating Bridge when he was a young boy of 6 years.

Before the creation of the Floating Bridge, also known as the Woolston ferry, Southampton had fixed bridges at Mansbridge and Northam but the crossing further down the waters was by rowing boat. In 1833, the first Itchen Bridge Company was formed for the purpose of building a fixed bridge across the river Itchen. It was designed to have a swing bridge in the middle to allow for shipping but the Admiralty disapproved the plans as impeding the movement of shipping. They favoured a floating bridge, in effect a boat guided across the water by pulling it on chains around a cog wheel and driven by steam. This was the invention of a brilliant engineer, James Rendel, who had already built one in the West Country. The first Floating Bridge went into service in November 1836.

Stephen's talk was well illustrated with photographs through the years showing different Floating Bridges; they were numbered in turn but never given names. He also pointed out interesting local and social history facts. The first picture showed that the river was very busy, in fact Itchen was at that time a thriving community, now no longer a residential area because of bombing to the Supermarine works in World War II.

The installation of the Floating Bridge meant that new areas of economic growth became possible because they were now accessible and Woolston itself became busier. However, the Bridge itself was not always very profitable in spite of the tolls charged and indeed there was a time when it did not run because there was no money.

Stephen gave us several anecdotes about the Floating Bridge. Fog was a particular hazard and thick fog was much more common in the past than it is now. On 8th March 1928, Floating Bridge 7 was involved in a collision with a tug and it took on water. Many vessels in the area came to help and all passengers were rescued including a Royal Mail boy who also managed to save his bicycle. Bridge 7 had to be scrapped and there was a six-month wait for the new one. There were always two Floating Bridges so the service continued.

There were stories of crimes concerning the Floating Bridge. One night in the 1970s, a man decided he couldn't wait for the hourly service and so climbed into the control tower and tried to drive off. The proper driver, presumably having his break, ran and got on board and took control of driving at the other end of the bridge so both men were driving until police arrived. At first, they were not sure what offence had been committed but settled for "taking without consent".

Continued on Page 17

“Woolston Floating Bridge” - Review by Guest Reviewer Angela Andrews *continued*

Maintenance was an important part of the running of the service and pictures showed us the dry docks used for this. The first Bridges were steam powered so boilers had to be serviced and the wires needed to be regularly replaced as they stretched coping with changing strengths and directions of the tides. It was hard work for those running the service as the engine room was hot, dirty and noisy. The driving controls were opposite the engine room so the driver had to go between the two sides of the vehicle. There was a story of a bus driver looking for a new job and thinking the Floating Bridge was for him – but he left after only one day. Those who did work for the company were very proud of their jobs and there was even a cat, named Ginger, who got rid of mice and rats. It is rumoured Ginger had several litters but this is disputed by those who say only male cats can be ginger.

In the 1930s, Southampton Corporation bought out the Company running the service for £50,000 and they said they would abolish tolls for pedestrians and cyclists, although this did not happen until September 1946. Stephen had a picture showing very happy foot passengers. (I know of one WELHS member who regularly had to take his 3 year old nephew back and forth on the Floating Bridge as part of a day out!)

In the 1960s, steam power was replaced with diesel and three vehicles were built – numbers 11, 12 and 14 – for obvious reasons there was no number 13! These engines were much quieter than steam, though our speaker has memories of screaming engines, and they made maintenance easier.

As the photos became more up to date, Stephen pointed out the progress of the building of the fixed Itchen Toll Bridge and on 11th June 1977, the last Floating Bridge was taken out of service. The final run was celebrated with bunting, fireworks and a drink of wine in specially inscribed glasses for the last passengers in the evening.

And so, what remains today? The artist L.S. Lowry visited Southampton in the 1950s and he did a painting of Ferry number 10 which is now part of the collection in the Southampton Guildhall Art Gallery. There is also a 1977 folk song “The Woolston Ferry” by Gutta Percha and The Balladeers. Floating Bridge Road still remains in Southampton and a waiting shelter from the Southampton side went to Oaklands School. Two slipways can still be seen. One of the Bridges was converted to a club, Floaters, under the fixed bridge but it was destroyed by fire. Another was located in the Elephant Boatyard in Bursledon and became the Ferry Restaurant until it closed in December 2019 and a third is owned by Mr Kemp of Kemp’s Quay.

The presentation ended with memories from the audience and Ashley McFarlane-Watt rounded the evening with a warm vote of thanks and flourishing his own final journey ticket from the last Floating Bridge.

The Body Through the Porthole – A Talk by by Steve Herra

Sadly, this talk had to be cancelled due to the speaker’s ill health. We wish Steve a speedy recovery.

WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

West End Summer Fete

Despite uncertain weather in the morning, the summer fete was deemed a success and enjoyed by all who attended. Once again, the Local History Society ran the coconut shy, which proved popular with all ages.



Photo courtesy Paula Downer

West End Heritage Trail

West End Local History Society
A short walk through the history of West End



West End Local History Society has produced a self-guided Heritage Trail for West End village, which is soon to be printed.

The trail takes between 1 and ½ hours beginning at the Parish Centre. The illustrated booklets detailing points of historic interest will be available from the Museum and the Parish Centre free of charge.

FORTHCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

Royal Victoria Chapel Heritage Open Days

Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th September 10.30a.m.-5p.m. – Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley
Heritage Open Day pop-up exhibition, guided walks, self-guided heritage trails, tower views.

Friends of Southampton Old Cemetery Walks – meet at 2 p.m. at main cemetery entrance, Cemetery Road. All walks approx. 90 minutes. Prebooking advisable as numbers are limited.

Saturday 7th September 2p.m. – Late Summer Flowers & Insects

Saturday 22nd September 2p.m. – Southampton Docks & Lives Lost

Book online at: <https://fosoc.org/upcoming-events/>

Showcasing Hampshire History – Ashburton Hall, Elizabeth II Court, Sussex Street, Winchester

Saturday 14th September 10a.m.-4p.m.

Programme of 9 talks throughout the day

Exhibitors

Free Entry, Cafeteria, Public Car Park with card or cash payment

Continued on Page 19

Researching Early Black History – a talk by Dr Cheryl Butler

A look at the challenges in researching early black history with three case studies.

Sunday 15th September 2p.m-2.45p.m. The Arc (formerly Discovery Centre), Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8SB

Prebooking preferred. Book online at: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/hampshire-history-trust/researching-early-black-history-a-talk-by-cheryl-butler>

Hamble Valley Walks

Sunday 8th September - Herbert Collins's Swaythling.

Sunday 22nd September – Fair Oak

Sunday 13th October - Reach for The Sky (at Hamble)

Sunday 27th October - Hanging around Botley...

<https://www.facebook.com/hamblevalleyheritage.co.uk>

Book online at: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/HAMBLE-VALLEY-WALKS>

JANE AUSTEN 250 EVENTS

A huge range of local events have been planned to celebrate 250 years since the birth of Jane Austen. Booking opens this Autumn, so don't miss out!

15th Nov 2024-23 Feb 2025 – Jane Austen's writing slope on exhibition in God's House Tower, Southampton – the only place to see it in the U.K. before it goes on a world tour.

The exhibition will look at the significance of the writing desk and Jane's journey as a writer, when she left Southampton for Chawton in 1809 her journey was complete and in a few short years she produced six of the most memorable novels in English history.

15th Nov 2024-23 Feb 2025 – art exhibition by Jocelyn McGregor at God's House Tower, Southampton

Jocelyn McGregor's work will explore the wit, wisdom, life and legacy of Jane Austen, focusing on new perspectives and challenging pre-conceived ideas and interpretations of her work. The artist has taken inspiration from a quote from Northanger Abbey "I have no notion of loving people by halves, it is not my nature. My attachments are always excessively strong." The installation will explore how these fictional relationships reflect Austen's reality, and the relationships developed between Gothic women authors through their works of fiction.

9th, 11th & 13th December 7.30p.m. – "The Strangers Guide: a Gothic story", a theatrical perambulation starting from Holy Rood Church, Southampton

In 1793 Jane Austen visited Southampton in search of adventure and with a liking for Gothic novels that were to inspire Northanger Abbey, she was following in the footsteps of the founders of the Gothic movement Horace Walpole & Thomas Grey who had visited Southampton in search of ghostly inspiration. Join The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre for a jaunt around Old Southampton uncovering tales of ghosts, guillotines, and gruesome stories.

Continued on Page 20

16th Dec 11a.m. – “In Training for a Heroine”, a walk starting from Holy Rood Church, Southampton

A specially curated walk around old Southampton to link in with the exhibition of Jane Austen’s writing desk exhibition at God’s House Tower. Find out about what inspired Jane as a writer in the town where Jane spent her 18th birthday in 1793.

WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY FORTHCOMING EVENTS

All events take place at West End Parish Centre, Chapel Road SO30 3FE and begin at 7.30 p.m. Members free. Visitors welcome (£2 per person per meeting). Membership £12 per year.

Programme of Talks 2024

- September 4** “Violette Szabo, G.C.” – *Jeremy Prescott*
- October 2** “Armchair Tour of the River Hamble” – *Geoff Watts*
- November 6** “The View from the Bargate” – *Dr. Cheryl Butler*
- December 4** SOCIAL EVENING – RAFFLE & DRINKS (bring your own plate of food!) plus “Around the World – the Weird, the Wild & the Wonderful” – *Andrew Negus*

Articles for Westender

You don’t have to be a historian to write for Westender. We would love to hear your memories of growing up in the village.

email: suballard@yahoo.co.uk

or leave hard copies at the museum addressed to Sue Ballard, please.

Closing Date for contributions to Winter Issue: 11th November 2024.