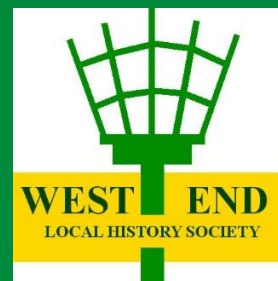


# WESTENDER

Newsletter of the West End Local History Society  
Winter 2025



CHAIRMAN Nigel Wood

TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY Nigel Edwards

SECRETARY Lin Dowdell

MINUTES SECRETARY Vera Dickinson

WEBMASTER Peter Wallace

RESEARCHERS Pauline Berry & Paula Downer

EDITOR Sue Ballard

MUSEUM TEAM: Sue Ballard, Lisette Edwards, Nigel Edwards

Membership fees £15 per annum. Payment may be made by bank transfer:

**Account Name:** West End Local History Society

**Sort Code:** 30-13-95

**Account Number:** 00834027

**Please ensure you provide your full name.**



Blacksmith Opposite Entrance to Hatch Grange in Snow

Photo courtesy Alan Eames

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

West End Local History Society is sponsored by



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## Membership Fees and the Future of the Society

The Committee has had to reluctantly make the decision to increase membership fees to £15 per year, as the Society's outgoings are outstripping our income. An increase of £3 per year is only the equivalent of a cup of coffee at many outlets. Membership fees have been held down for over ten years, but costs are increasing every year, including hall hire, speakers' fees, insurance and bank fees. Minimum bank charges for a group account are currently £4.25 per month. In addition, the bank charges 10% to handle cash or cheques, so we lose money on every such transaction; for this reason, refreshments will now be included and we would encourage you to pay fees by bank transfer where possible. Visitor's fees will be increased to £3 per meeting in line with those of other local societies.

The A.G.M. will be held in April and we would welcome nominations for Committee posts. If we do not fill key posts, the Society – and the museum – may have to close.

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## West End's Victorian Letter Carrier, Henry John Hammond Webster By Paula Downer

In the Old Burial Ground in West End, Hampshire lies Henry John Hammond Webster who died 11<sup>th</sup> April 1909 at the age of 73. The Census of England for 1901 shows Henry as a Retired Postman. He would have been a postman during Queen Victoria's long reign or a Letter Carrier, as Postmen were generally known then.



Henry John Hammond Webster was born in Birstall near Leeds in Yorkshire, England. He moved South to Shirley in Southampton, where he met and married Emily Southwell from Romsey in October 1866. In 1867, their first daughter Mary Eliza was born followed by two daughters, Sarah Ellen in 1870 and Eliza Jane in 1871. The family then moved to South Road in West End (the 1901 Census shows this road renamed Chalk Hill). A son, Benjamin Owen, was born in 1872, followed by three more sons: Lewis in 1875, Samuel in 1877 and William Archibald in 1879.

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West End has had a Letter Receiving Office since 1834, originally located in Swaythling Road, opposite The Master Builder public house, or the Crown & Thistle as it was known during Henry's time. The second Post Office c.1875-1903 was in the High Street, backing onto the boundary of Hatch Grange Estate. James Stacey, grocer, draper, general dealer and farmer was its Postmaster c.1880-87. In 1889, Thomas Parker took over as Receiver of Post followed by Henry Boyt as Sub-Postmaster and grocer until 1897. Letters were delivered to the West End Receiving Office from Southampton twice a day except Sunday, when it was once a day. The Post was dispatched from the office every morning, then again in the evening, except Sunday, when it was morning only. The post was even delivered on Christmas Day! Someone posting a letter locally in the morning could often receive a reply by the evening of the same day!



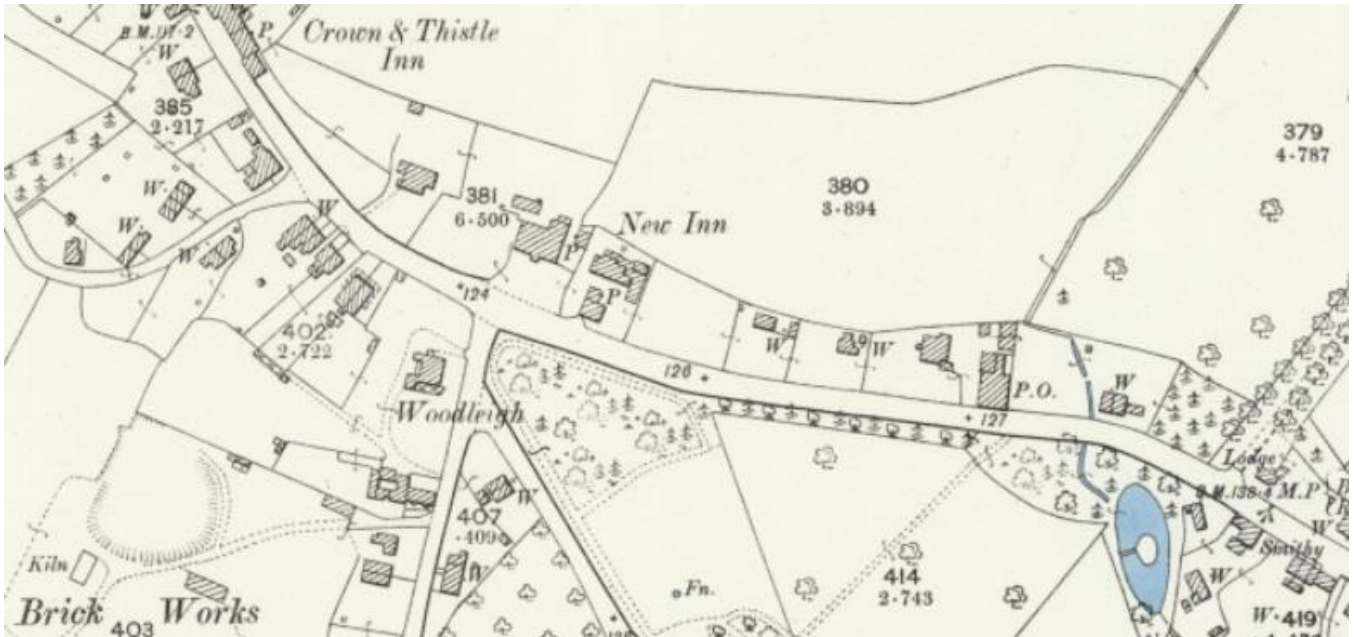
The Post Office in High Street, West End c. 1903  
Image Courtesy of West End Museum Collection

Henry Webster would have probably been issued with a blue coat, trousers and a single-peaked military style shako cap emblazoned with the letters 'G.P.O.' (the General Post Office was established by Oliver Cromwell in 1657.) The coat normally had a scarlet collar and facings. At this time, uniforms were not to any standard, so a Committee for Uniform Clothing was established in 1908; standardized uniforms dependent upon the Postman's role and responsibility were introduced in 1910.

Sir Rowland Hill had reformed the postal system, introducing the adhesive postage stamp, which began in 1840 with the 'Penny Black'. This made postage more affordable for the masses. Mail weighing up to 1/2 ounce could travel anywhere in the UK for only a penny. The Two Penny Blue was introduced for mail over 1/2 ounce. The Penny Red was soon introduced as it was discovered that the Penny Black could be re-used fraudulently. The same portrait of the early Queen Victoria was used throughout her reign. The Penny Post rate continued throughout the Victorian period; sending Valentine Day cards through the post became extremely popular and it also saw a huge increase in the number of Christmas and New Year cards being sent.

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The halfpenny stamp was introduced in 1870 following a reduction in the postal rate for newspapers and introduction of the postcard. The postcards that Henry delivered would have been of a plain type with a pre-printed halfpenny stamp, until 1894, when British Post Office regulations allowed picture postcards; even though picture postcards had been in use on Continental Europe for several years!



Extract of OS 1888-1915 map series showing location of the above Post Office in High Street, West End

From the National Library of Scotland's Historic Map Collection,  
reproduced with the permission of National Library of Scotland

Originally, one had to take letters to the Receiving Office until the Post Box was introduced. Post Boxes appeared in the UK from 1852, either as a free-standing pillar box or inserted into a wall. In 1859, national standards were adopted. Originally, Post Boxes were painted green but people complained that they could not be located in the dark! So in 1874, a massive repainting exercise began, painting all the Post Boxes the familiar Post Office Red that we know and love today.



This 'Victoria Regina' Pillar Box which can be found in Westrow Road, Southampton was manufactured by Iron founder Andrew Handyside of Derby and London. His cast iron Pillar Boxes were renowned for their strength and quality, thereby securing a contract in 1879 to supply a large quantity. It's a testament to Handyside that a large number still exist today.

In December 1879, owing to the large increase in Christmas and New Year cards 'which is the fashion to send at those periods of the year' putting a 'severe strain upon the Post Office', the Post Office put out a notice asking the Public to 'render assistance by posting letters etc. early on the 24th and 31st December; and this it is hoped they will do'.

Wall Letter Boxes were typically embedded into brick walls where a Pillar Box type was not required.

This one in Newport, Isle of Wight, was manufactured by Smith & Hawkes of Birmingham.

Kelly's Directories for Southampton, from 1897 list Wall Letter Boxes near Black House in Mansbridge Road, near St. James' Church and from c.1907 on Chalk Hill; post was collected three times daily and once on Sunday. I do wonder if Henry Webster instigated the one on Chalk Hill!



My thanks go to The Postal Museum in London [www.postalmuseum.org](http://www.postalmuseum.org) for their guidance in respect to a Victorian Postman's uniform as it is not possible to establish the colour of a coat in a black and white photograph!

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**ON THIS DAY, 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 1864:** The Christmas Day dip in the Serpentine at Hyde Park was inaugurated.

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### A Postman's Tale By Pauline Berry

Back in the sixties, when there were two postal deliveries daily and police officers patrolled the streets on foot, I was a hard-up student. Like many of my friends, I sought Christmas employment at the Post Office to earn much-needed cash. Like them, I applied for a job as a temporary postman based at the Head Post Office in Southampton High Street. I filled in the application form, which strangely asked for my height and shoe size!

I was duly accepted for two weeks' work, not knowing exactly what I would be doing. So early in December, I arrived promptly that dark morning and learned to my surprise that I would become a real "postie" out delivering the festive post, initially shown the route by the regular postman. The round was to be in the Harefield estate on the edge of Bitterne and I was taken out in the back of a post van to the beginning of my route. This came as a bit of a shock to me, not liking the cold too much, when my fellow students were mostly in the warmth of the main Post Office, sorting the mail into pigeon-holes. One good friend was always hot, working in the kitchen preparing meals for all the employees. A busy place, with much toing and froing owing to the two regular deliveries in the various neighbourhoods.

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My uniform was simply an official badge and a sack, which was always full and bulging at the start of my delivery. The sack was usually full of Christmas cards, letters and small packages. The chief instruction given to me was to never leave the sack alone and never put my fingers through the flaps of the letter boxes in house doors! The latter was due to excited dogs, of course.

My route, starting near Commercial Street, included hundreds of houses and bungalows, extending through the newly-built Harefield estate and finishing near the A27. Having delivered the contents of the sack, which took a couple of hours, plodding through many streets, I was horrified to discover that I had to return, on my own resources, to the Head Post Office in Southampton High Street and go out a second time that day to do the second delivery. Buses all the way, which fortunately was free owing to my P.O. badge. This proved to be necessary for the entire fortnight. So much travelling, back and forth, then after about 10-12 hours, home to Sholing. I forgot to mention a third visit each day to sign off! All this walking was alien to me, especially leaving home and returning in the darkness of December.

On the second day I was left on my own, trying to get used to the heavy postbags. My muscles were not used to such work and I broke the rules by leaving the bag at the house gate at the very beginning of my delivery, then walking freely up to the front door of the house. How I envied my friends in the warmth of the Head Post Office, wishing that I had filled out my application form differently – i.e. short in height with small feet! Fortunately, apart from the odd shower, the weather was clement for the time of year.

One particular day before Christmas, the postal deliveries were heavier than usual and I was instructed to collect a second sack from a nearby sub post office when my first was empty. I was still making deliveries in the dark evening at 8 p.m. I arrived like a snail at the gate of a house in Selbourne Avenue, tearful with exhaustion. I had been on my feet for 13 hours and I met the lady of the house at her gate and she kindly asked me if I was alright. “No,” I moaned, “I’m already three hours late and I was supposed to be going out with friends an hour ago!” These were the days before mobile phones and this lady, Miss Gillett, became my saviour for she took me indoors, into her warm home, and allowed me to use her telephone. I have never forgotten Miss Gillett, who also gave me a cup of tea. I was surprised to learn, about 12 years later, that she was a health visitor and took the antenatal classes nearby that I attended and visited the homes of new mothers and babies, so I reminded her of her former kindness.

Nevertheless, returning to my Christmas postal deliveries, I survived the fortnight without any rain or snow. I even delivered on the morning of Christmas Day and I received the princely sum of 1s 3d (6 ¼ p) as a tip from a thoughtful householder! The regular postman, whom I rarely saw, invited me into his home nearby for a celebratory glass of sherry that morning.

It was a lonely, tiring job and it did me good to learn how other people earned their wages. For this fortnight’s work on the Harefield estate I was paid £16, for which I was duly grateful. I was able to buy a much-needed raincoat with my earnings and enjoy the Christmas activities before completing training college to become a primary schoolteacher (indoor work!).

## A Quiet Corner of England: A footnote to 'A Whitley went to war' by Stephen Middleton.

A few years ago, I wrote an article in the 'Westender' on one of the aircraft that was downed in the village during the Second world war. The aircraft was a Whitley Bomber and its loss occurred in August 1940. The incident resulted in the tragic loss of all five crew onboard and it had been my intention to visit their graves since writing then. I managed to fulfil that objective during the last week of October when I travelled to All Saints church in Fawley. It is a Norman church and is in good repair with a tended graveyard and the Commonwealth War Grave Commission headstones of the crew of the Whitley are easily found, along with other RAF Servicemen that perished on the 15th and 16th of August which was the busiest day of the Battle of Britain 85 years ago. From the church, it is easy to visualise the sizable funeral procession as it approached along the road. Coincidentally, the church itself suffered bomb damage, which destroyed all of its medieval stained glass, in the same year.

### The Fallen Flyers

Whilst standing before the headstones, I was struck by the age range and the breadth of geographical locations from which the crew were assembled, probably a very stereotypical amalgam of teenage to thirty something, from as far afield as Scotland, the home counties and South Africa, each made comrades in a common cause. Pilot Officer Robert Butler Macgregor, Sergeant Harold Davies, Sergeant John Burrow, Flying Officer William Alan Stenhouse, Sergeant Claude Lionel Geoffrey Hood.



### Remembrance Poppies

My jaunt into the New Forest also took me to St John's Church in Boldre. This is another Norman church which has had a magnificent curtain of knitted Poppies draped to cascade down its tower onto the ground in preparation for Remembrance Day. Visitors can adopt a poppy and the donations will be split equally between two charities, the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. Inside the church, there is a memorial to HMS Hood which was the Pride of the British fleet until its sinking during the Second World War with the unimaginable loss of over 1400 lives.



Photo credits: author

## Recipe: Smoking Bishop

*In “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge offers Bob Cratchit “a Christmas bowl of Smoking Bishop”. This refers to a drink akin to mulled wine, made with port and citrus fruits. The “smoking” in the name is commonly assumed to reference the smoke given off by the roasted fruits. The earliest known recipe (below), which used lemons, appeared in “Apician Morsels: Tales of the Table, Kitchen and Larder” by Dick Humelbergius Secundus, published in 1829 (not so much a recipe book as a wide-ranging compendium of all things food-related.) Secundus refers to it as one of the “Oxford Nightcaps” and “one of the oldest winter beverages on record” and suggests that the name Bishop derives from it being served to “ancient dignitaries of the Church” when they visited the University of Oxford. The recipe is more usually associated with the 1845 edition of Eliza Acton’s “Modern Cookery for Private Families”, in which she replaced the lemons with Seville oranges. However, it does not appear to have been included in later editions of her work.*

“Receipt, or Recipe, to Make Bishop” by Secundus, 1829 (Apician Morsels, page 308)

“Make several incisions into the rind of a lemon; stick cloves in these incisions, and roast the said lemon by the fire. Put small but equal quantities of cinnamon, mace, cloves, and all-spice, and a race of ginger, into a saucepan, with half a pint of water; let it boil until it be reduced one half. Boil one bottle of port wine; burn a portion of the spirit out of it, by applying a lighted paper to the saucepan which contains it. Put the roasted lemons and spice into the wine; stir it up well, and let it stand near the fire ten minutes. Rub a few nobs of sugar on the rind of a lemon; put the sugar into a bowl or jug, with the juice of half a lemon, (not roasted) pour the wine upon it, sweeten it to your taste, and serve it up with the lemon and spice floating in it.”

The simplified version below is published by <https://www.smokingbishop.co.uk/>

1 x Bottle of Red Wine  
A Splash of Ruby Port  
6 x Whole Cloves  
1 x Cinnamon Quill (around 5 to 6 cm in length)  
1/4 Teaspoon of Allspice  
1/2 cup of Sugar  
3 or 4 Sliced Oranges

Into a large pan, empty the whole bottle of red wine and add a large splash of ruby red port.

Place the pan over a gentle heat and start warming the red wine and the ruby port.

When the red wine and the ruby port is getting warm, add in the whole cloves, the cinnamon quill, allspice and sugar.

Gently stir the pan until the sugar has dissolved and the mixture is heated through (but not boiling). Remove the pan from the heat and let the mixture fuse together for around 10 minutes (stirring occasionally).

Serve the mixture into 4 heat proof glasses or your favourite mug. Add an additional slice of orange to garnish (optional).



## WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

### Scarecrow Trail

Committee members made a scarecrow in the shape of a firefighter to commemorate the fire station for display at St. James's Church Scarecrow Trail.

Photo courtesy Lisette Edwards.



On Sunday 9th November, our youngest member Shane Mason laid a wreath on behalf of WELHS at the Remembrance Day Service.

Photo courtesy Lin Dowdell.

## FORTHCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

*All event details are correct at time of publication. Please contact event organisers to confirm.*

### **A Pantomime Christmas at Hinton Ampner (NT)** 15<sup>th</sup> Nov – 4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2026 (excluding 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Dec.)

“Join us this Christmas and discover scenes from your most loved pantomimes. Twinkling fairy lights will shimmer their magic across our beautiful house. Bask in the glow of Aladdin's lamp, see Jack's magic beans and a glittering Cinderella slipper, discover Snow White's sumptuous forest feast and marvel at a quilted mountain of mattresses made ready for a sleepy princess.”

PRE-BOOKING ESSENTIAL

### **A Cinderella Christmas at Mottisfont (NT)** 22 Nov - 4 Jan 2026 (excluding 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> Dec.)

“This Christmas rediscover the magical story of Cinderella, as Mottisfont unveils the tale of poor Cinders, her wicked step-sisters, her fairy godmother and her charming prince. Collect your timed ticket for the house at Visitor Reception, then head up to the house where story unfolds in rooms filled with sparkling trees, music and enchanting scenes to discover and enjoy.”

TIMED TICKETS AVAILABLE AT VISITOR RECEPTION FROM 10A.M. ON THE DAY OF YOUR VISIT. PRE-BOOKING NOT REQUIRED.

**Kingston Lacy's Magical Christmas Ball (NT) 22 Nov-4<sup>th</sup> Jan 2026**

"Explore the house and gardens, decorated for a spectacular Christmas ball. You'll follow the story as you move through the spaces, from quiet side rooms full of gossip and speculation, to the spectacular woodland dance floor and feast. Outside, the woodland creatures have been drawn into the garden and are ready to be discovered under the giant Christmas tree outside the house."  
PRE-BOOKING NOT REQUIRED.

**Carol Concert, Royal Victoria Country Park Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 7.00-8.30 p.m.**

Doors open 6.30p.m. for a 7p.m. start. £5 to include parking. Tickets on sale in park shop.

**WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**Unless stated otherwise, all events take place at West End Parish Centre, Chapel Road SO30 3FE and begin at 7.30 p.m.**

**Members free. Visitors welcome (£3 per person per meeting, including tea/coffee).**

**Programme of Talks 2026**

January	NO MEETING
Wed. 4 <sup>th</sup> February	<b>Royal Victoria Hospital and the development of Netley Abbey village</b> by Ursula Pearce
Wed. 4 <sup>th</sup> March	<b>The pleasure of a Paddle Steamer</b> by Simon Gomm
Wed. 1 <sup>st</sup> April	<b>A.G.M. followed by A Game of Thrones</b> by Dr Cheryl Butler
Wed. 6 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>The Itchen Navigation Part 1</b> by Ashley MacFarlane Watt
Wed. 3 <sup>rd</sup> June	<b>The Flying Scotsman, a living legend</b> by Stephen Hoadley
Wed. 1st July	<b>TO BE ANNOUNCED</b>
Wed. 5 <sup>th</sup> August	<b><u>SOCIAL EVENING AT MUSEUM</u></b> with raffle and refreshments
Wed. 2 <sup>nd</sup> September	<b>PLUTO: Pipeline under the ocean</b> by Rob Eldridge
Wed. 7 <sup>th</sup> October	<b>Roman Southampton</b> by Andy Skinner
Wed. 4 <sup>th</sup> November	<b>"Don't delay, Enrol today": The Women's Land Army in Hampshire</b> by John Lander
Wed. 2 <sup>nd</sup> December	<b>CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENING</b>

Closing Date for contributions to the Spring issue of Westender: 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026.