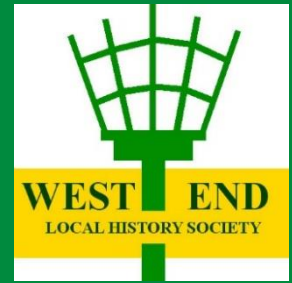


WESTENDER

Newsletter of the West End Local History Society
Summer 2026



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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.



From the archive: West End Villager's Coach Trip 1950s

Photo: Margaret Palmer

A happy looking bunch! Do you recognise anyone? Talk to a member of the Museum Team.

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

West End Local History Society is sponsored by



**WEST END
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COUNCIL**



FOR EVENTS & PUBLICATIONS
VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.westendlhs.co.uk
CONTACT
email: westendlhs@aol.com

PLEASE NOTE: July's talk by Geoff Watts has had to be cancelled. Instead, Jo Wren of Southampton Museums Service will give a talk about Southampton's lost walls.

West End Fire Station By Lisette Edwards

It is 30 Years since the closure of C39 West End Fire Station at 12 midday on 17th January 1996. This article is dedicated to all the firefighters of West End who gave their service for the good of the community.

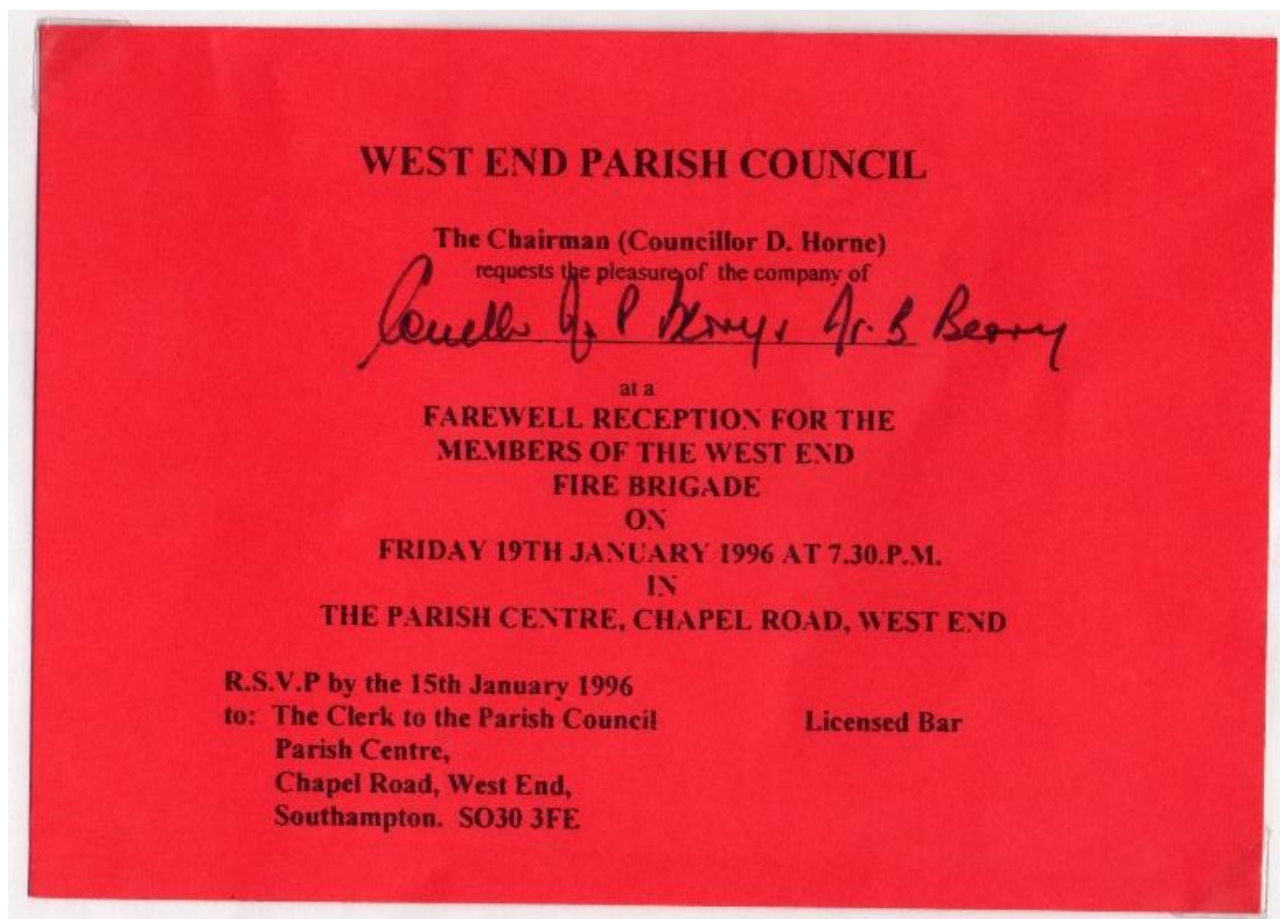
Originally, there wasn't a Fire service, only a Fire Mark which was fitted to properties to show that they had paid an insurance and therefore any fire would be dealt with by their Insurance Company's own fire vehicle. If there was no Fire Mark, the property burned. In 1896, after some bad fires, West End Parish Council decided to ask the Water Company if they could set up extra hydrants to help with local fire fighting. It took time, but they eventually appeared over the years. The Parish then looked for some form of appliance to use with the hydrants to tackle fires and purchased. not a fire engine. but hoses etc. By now it was 1900.

In 1936, following a fire in Allington Lane, it was decided that 'the council would purchase a second hand appliance'. A lorry was purchased and converted, along with a towed pump and a garage built to house it, next to the Old Parish Hall on the corner of High Street and Chapel Road. In 1937, the Government passed a Fire Service Act requiring every local authority to provide fire cover and the West End Fire Station was planned to comply with this Act of Parliament.

In September 1939, land at Orchard Way was purchased and a new fire station built in 1939. The new fire station was designed by the architect Herbert Collins (who designed and built Orchards Way) at a cost of £1500. It had a brand new, state of the art, Dennis New World 350/500 GPM MP fire engine provided by Dennis and issued in May 1939 at a cost of just £400. In May 1940, the new West End fire Station was officially opened by Mrs Pearson of Oaklands and served the village and local area manned ultimately by local retained firefighters.



At 12 midday on the 17th January 1996, fire operations transferred from West End Fire Station to a new Fire Station at Hightown. Afterward, Hampshire County Council closed both Woolston and West End Stations. Before the station closed, Mike Smith was awarded his 20 Years Long Service Medal in a presentation in the room above West End Fire Station. There was also a presentation by the Fire Chief for the last crew and wives at the fire station and a farewell reception for the members of the West End Fire brigade on Friday 19th January 1996 at the parish centre chapel road by the chairman councillor Don Horne.



The West End Parish Council bought the Fire Station in February 1996 so that it could be preserved and continue to serve and benefit the parishioners as a community and a heritage centre for all to enjoy. The West End Local History Museum and Heritage Centre opened in April 11 1997. In 1998, the tower and air raid shelter was removed to make way for a new community room to be built.

Interesting statistics about West End Fire Station:

- There were 331 shouts between 1st January 1995 and 31st December 1995, the most since the 1976 hot summer.
- There were 20 shouts between 1st January 1995 and the closure of the station on 17th January 1995.
- The total years of service of the 13 Firefighters made redundant on 17th January 1996 was 180 years.
- West End was the busiest Fire Station out of 52 stations, and 3rd busiest 1 pump Hampshire station in 1995.

The First Municipal Bus Operator – Part Two

By Ashley MacFarlane - Watt

Although electric accumulator buses were an attractive alternative, the advantages of such vehicles were negated by the extreme weight of the batteries. In the end analysis, the best options still seemed to lie between petrol buses and petrol electric buses.

Three routes were considered as being the most commercially viable.

- a) Common tram terminus -0 Winchester Road – Shirley tram terminus
- b) Millbrook -Waterloo Road
- c) Docks – Western Shore – West Station or Docks – Western Shore – Hill Lane.

As had happened previously, a small deputation visited a number of other transport undertakings and reported their findings on 5th October 1914 and were enthusiastic about what they had seen but formed no strong conclusions. As a result of these deliberations, tenders for three single deck buses of 40hp were invited from John. I. Thornycroft (petrol) and W.A. Stevens Ltd. petrol – electric). By this time, the horrors of the First World War had begun to permeate society and with the restrictions of wartime all thoughts of motor bus operations were suspended for the duration of the war.

After such disappointments and frustrations, Southampton Corporation Tramways finally recommenced motor bus operations in 1919, when six Thornycroft J type chassis were purchased. They were fitted with 40hp petrol engines and solid tyred wheels. Transmission was by means of a four-speed gear box with a gate change. They were governed down to a maximum speed of twelve miles an hour. Anecdotal stories say that drivers who were late often tied down the governor to increase the speed! The body was a double-deck open top body, rear entrance, designed by the Corporation at its Portswood workshops. They seated 42 passengers and those sitting on top were exposed to the elements. The driver, who sat behind the engine, with its lowered radiator and tapered bonnet, had no windscreen or any other protection from the weather. The livery was grey lower panels, bearing the town's armorial device, with white upper works, all attractively lined out, separated by a narrow red waist band, which carried the legend 'SOUTHAMPTON CORPORATION TRAMWAYS'.

On 31st July 1919, two Thornycroft motor buses inaugurated the first service from the Clock Tower – Winchester Road (St.James Corner) via Bedford Place, Milton Road, Hill Lane, Raymond Road and St. James Road. This was a distance of two miles and 580 yards. The initial service was every twenty minutes, fifteen at peak times, commencing at 07.20 a.m. and terminating at 10 p.m. Stopping places were indicated by signs on adjacent lamp posts. The fare was 2d, children under ten half-price. Parcels were charged for as on the trams, but tickets were not transferable. The new bus route proved to be a success. The Corporation was now convinced that a motor bus operation could be undertaken reliably and decided the time was opportune to further expand the bus network. For most of the 1920s, the operation of bus services proved still to be very tentative and for several years the motor buses made a loss and were a serious drain on the finances of the tramway system. In an attempt to improve the financial operation of bus services, single deck buses were introduced during 1921 and one-man operation in 1923.

Motor bus services came into their own in 1925, when they received their own corporate livery of blue and cream (ivory) and carried in large lettering along the waist panel SOUTHAMPTON CORPORATION MOTOR SERVICE. The turning point in the financial position of bus operations came in 1929 with the introduction of large, high capacity double-deck buses to inaugurate a new service across the recently purchased Northam Bridge to Bitterne on 16th May 1929. They used a new terminus at Houndwell which, in the years to follow, replaced the Clock Tower as the focal point for bus operations.

In retrospect and with the value of hindsight, was the first motor bus service of 1901 such a failure? The first and inevitable reaction is to say yes, it was a failure. The experiences Southampton Corporation had with the early motor bus was little different from those of other undertakings. Many carried out experimental services between 1900 and 1914 and found the embryonic motor bus to be far from satisfactory. In short, the technology of the internal combustion engine lagged behind the aspirations of those who saw its potential advantages. They had to wait until mechanical engineering had reached the point when the internal combustion engine had proved itself to be efficient and reliable. Prior to the First World War, reliable buses had become available but it was the demands made upon mechanical transport during wartime that witnessed that much sought after reliability.

Southampton Corporation Tramways came to an end on December 31st 1949. Some of its trams were purchased by Leeds Corporation and saw further service in Leeds. One tram, No.45, an open top knifeboard car, became the first acquisition of what was to become The National Tramway Museum based at Crich in Derbyshire. No. 45 was displayed at the Montague Motor Museum at Beaulieu before being stored at Blackpool prior to the acquisition of the site at Crich.

The depot at Highfield started life as a private coach house and stables built within the grounds of Highfield House Estate. In due course, it became a bus garage a considerable time before the advent of the electric trams. The original brick-built building was 100 ft long and 26ft wide. Its use altered in 1883, when the building was rented out to the Southampton Tramways Company to house its fleet of twelve horse-buses dating from 1887. In 1888, the company purchased the site outright and built extra buildings to accommodate thirty one horses, stores and stables. With the change of ownership to Southampton Corporation Tramways the depot housed for fifteen years the horse-bus fleet until they were disbanded in September 1902. The original Daimler Waggonette was also housed here from August 1901 until September 1902. After withdrawal of the horse-buses, Highfield depot was used to house the tramways permanent way fleet including specialist electric trams, maintenance carts and horse drawn tower wagons.

At its maximum, the Highfield depot comprised an imposing brick-built bus garage, four large corrugated iron and wooden sheds, two open yards, a siding and various stores and an overhead gantry. A short tramway connection from The Avenue gave access to Shed One and one of the open yards where the overhead gantry was situated. The six Thornycroft 'J' of double deck buses of 1919 were garaged in the brick ex horse-bus garage which was adapted to accommodate the vehicles. In the following years, further additions to the motor bus fleet including a variety of single deck vehicles were also housed at the Highfield garage. With the withdrawal of the earliest buses, the number of buses garaged at Highfield by the end of 1927 was twenty five vehicles. With the Corporation looking at ordering high capacity six-wheel double deck buses and with no further land available for development, the Highfield Bus garage was replaced by a new purpose-built bus garage and maintenance facility at Portswood in 1928. Highfield continued to be used as the depot for the permanent way tramway fleet until the Southampton tramway system closed on 31st December 1949.

With the cessation of the Southampton Corporation Tramways, the bus garage, four permanent way sheds, siding and storage yards were leased to various companies until 1967, when the corrugated iron and timber buildings had reached such a state of disrepair and dilapidation that no one was willing to pay for what would have been expensive repairs. In view of this, in 1969 the Education Department took over the responsibility for the buildings to be used by the Southampton Sixth Form Union. They were granted permission to demolish the four tramway buildings but to retain and renovate the brick-built bus garage as a student clubhouse and music venue. At one time, an ex-Tilling Group low height double decker was squeezed in next to the dance floor. The old bus garage found a new lease of life as a very popular student clubhouse and music venue. The bus garage at Highfield was the oldest structure to house the various components of the Corporation's transport fleet. The bus garage had been in continuous use as a transport facility since 1887. Therefore. it became historically important as being the FIRST MUNICIPAL BUS GARAGE.

Sadly, by 1997, such an important and historical structure had been completely cleared and eradicated. The site now forms part of the University of Southampton's Avenue Campus. On reflection, such a historical building could have formed the nucleus for an interesting transport museum, particularly as a considerable number of Southampton buses are now in preservation by private owners, Xelabus, the 7164 Group (owned by the City Council) but officially looked after by the Southampton and District Transport Heritage Trust, formerly the Solent Transport Trust, who also have an large collection of Southampton buses based at Bursledon Brickworks and at the Working Omnibus Museum at Medstead.

The Southampton and District Transport Heritage Trust organised a highly successful Classic Bus Spectacular on September 28th 2025, when over thirty vehicles operated various routes throughout the city, including open-top bus services. Perhaps the culmination of such a wonderful day, attended by large and enthusiastic crowds, was a display of fifteen ex-Southampton buses in front of the Guildhall.

One further thought. On reflection, perhaps the trial service, 1st August – 8th August 1900, using the Granville wagonette supplied by the Motor Manufacturing Company and operated by Southampton Corporation could perhaps rightly claim to be the FIRST MUNICIPAL BUS SERVICE.

On this day in history 12th August 1944

PLUTO – Pipeline Under The Ocean – went into operation, running from Shanklin to Cherbourg, supplying fuel across the English Channel to the Allied Forces in France. Most of the pipeline was salvaged after the War, between September 1846 and October 1949. The building housing the pumping station at Sandown survived.

WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

West End Local History Society Annual General Meeting

The A.G.M. held on 1st April was well attended.

The Treasurer reported that the Society is still solvent, but will need to consider increasing the subscription again to cover ever-increasing costs.

No nominations were received for any committee posts so the existing committee agreed to stand again, with two exceptions. Vera Dickinson stood down as Minutes Secretary and Sue Ballard agreed to take on that role. Nigel Wood stood down as Chair and no replacement was forthcoming, so it was agreed to continue without a Chair for the time being. Vera was thanked for her many years of service.

The A.G.M. was followed by an excellent talk by Cheryl Butler entitled “A Game of Thrones.”

Botley, Curdridge & Durley Local History Society

On the 22nd April, a group from the Botley, Curdridge & Durley Local History Society spent an evening visiting our museum. They browsed the many folders of photographs and enjoyed a slide show, which prompted many memories and lively discussions. It was a very successful evening and we hope they will return for another visit.

FORTHCOMING LOCAL EVENTS

All information is correct at time of publication. Please contact event organisers for up-to-date information.

Wartime Walks – Exbury Gardens

Sat 6th June & Sun 7th June 11 a.m. & 2 p.m.

£5 per person for Friends of Exbury members.

£20.00 per person for non-members, including a full day's admission to the gardens.

“During WWII, Exbury House became a “stone frigate”, operating as a land-based ship, HMS Mastodon. As such it formed part of the complex planning network which ultimately resulted in the successful D-Day invasion of France. In April 1944, shortly before D-Day, a German Junkers 188 bomber was spotted approaching Exbury House before being brought down in the fields below the house by two RAF Typhoons, assisted by the Lower Exbury anti-aircraft battery. This intriguing story is told in the book, *The Exbury Junkers: a World War II Mystery* by John Stanley. Join the author on a fascinating walk around the gardens and wider estate as John recounts the curious tale of the lone bomber and its unknown mission, and shares his knowledge of the role of Exbury House leading up to D-Day.” Tours are being held on 6th and 7th June, and start at 11am and 2pm. Please meet at the Visitor Entrance approximately 10 minutes before your preferred tour is due to depart. The tours will last approximately two hours.

Heritage Fair – Southampton City Art Gallery

Sat 6th June 10 a.m.-4 p.m. FREE ENTRY

“This event also includes a 2.30pm screening of the *Armada Chronicle* film commissioned by the University of Southampton Maritime Communities project.”



Retro Wheels & Rails – The Watercress Line, Alresford

Sat 13th June & Sun 14th June 10.30 a.m. -4.30 p.m.

Advanced booking - Adults £29, Child (5-16 years) £16, Child (under 5 years) FREE, Family (1A & 3C) £66, Family (2A & 3C) £95, Family (2A & 1C) £66, Dogs FREE

“Celebrating the changes of road, rail, music and more through the '40s, to the '70s! Join the journey through the decades as you travel through the Hampshire countryside at The Watercress Line. You'll step back in time as you step off the train at each station, with each station celebrating a different decade:

Alresford: 1960s; Ropley: 1940s + vehicles; Medstead & Four Marks: 1950s; Alton: 1970s. Enjoy period music, vehicles, activities and more, around the railway over the weekend.”

A Royal Hunt: a history re-enactment weekend - Beaulieu

Sat 11 July & Sun 12th July 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

“Join us for an immersive family-friendly weekend where history comes alive with *The Marquess of Winchester’s Regiment*. Step back in time to the Civil War period as the Regiment re-creates the life and times of the turbulent 17th Century. This two-day event features live re-enactments including military displays with firing muskets and cannon fire, officers dining and the feeding of the troops and civilians, plus a live drum jam featuring music from the Civil War. There will be living history stations within the displays that showcase the lives of civilians and specific military personnel during the English Civil War period, focusing on the story behind the much-loved novel, and later TV show, *The Children of the New Forest*.”

Please note: Drill displays at 11am and 3pm on the Arena include firing muskets and three cannon firings.

For tickets & prices, see <https://www.beaulieu.co.uk/events/history-reenactment-weekend/>

Outdoor Theatre: Sherlock Holmes & the House of Baskerville - Stansted Park Walled Garden

Wed 5th Aug 6.30 p.m.-8.30 p.m. (doors open 6 p.m.)

£20 Adults, £12 children, under 5's free

“How can one show possibly contain so much action and adventure? Elementary, my dear! The critically-acclaimed Pantaloons Theatre Company present a brand-new riff on the fiendishly famous case. Will detective duo Holmes and Watson discover the deadly secret of the Baskerville family curse before it strikes again? Or are they barking up the wrong tree? Find out in this delightfully inventive show that will have you yelping with excitement and howling with laughter.”

Book tickets from:

<https://www.stanstedpark.co.uk/events/sherlock-holmes-and-the-hound-of-the-baskervilles-outdoor-theatre>

Wild! Festival of flowers and nature – Winchester Cathedral

15th- 19th Sept also with late night opening 6 p.m., 6.30 p.m., 7 p.m.

“Step into a world where nature takes over—Wild! Set to be one of the most spectacular floral events in the UK calendar. Nestled inside the magnificent Cathedral, in the heart of the city of Winchester, Wild! is a vibrant celebration of flowers and nature inspired by the beauty and diversity of our natural surroundings. Hundreds of local floral artists will transform this spectacular building creating an immersive experience inviting visitors to wander through breathtaking, large scale floral installations, feel enveloped by uninhibited facets of nature and be absorbed by sensory exhibits that engage sight, scent and sound. With many displays showcasing British grown flowers in an array of colours and holding sustainability and seasonality as their guide, each area tells a story with gentle thought-provoking messages of harmony between people and the environment, encouraging deeper appreciation and connection to the earth. More than just a feast for the eyes, this festival promises hands-on workshops, live botanical art, quirky performance elements and a sense of theatre – making it a truly exciting and unforgettable journey through the wonders of creativity inspired by the natural world.”

This is a limited-time event, and demand is expected to be extremely high. We strongly recommend early booking to avoid disappointment.

Book online at <https://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/event/wild/>

or call 01962 857 275 or book in-person at the Box Office inside Winchester Cathedral.

Owls by Moonlight – Hawk Conservancy Trust, Weyhill, Andover

**26th Sept, 3rd Oct, 10th Oct, 17th Oct & 24th Oct - doors open 5.30.p.m., flying display commences 7 p.m.
£23.50**

“This autumn, venture out into the night with the beautiful owls at the Hawk Conservancy Trust. Experience the mystical owls’ graceful, silent flights in and out of the darkness in two enthralling flying displays. Before the flying displays, there will be chance to explore the Trust after-hours to meet some of the other owls in their care, where their knowledgeable Bird Team will give you an insight to some of the conservation and research projects that they undertake to conserve British owls. Feathers Restaurant will be serving a delicious menu to keep you feeling warm. Complete your evening out with some delicious food and drink before meeting the owls!”

Prebooking required: <https://www.hawk-conservancy.org/events/obm/>

FOR MORE EVENTS IN HAMPSHIRE VISIT <https://www.hampshireattractions.co.uk/events>

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

Wed. 3 rd June	The Flying Scotsman, a living legend by Stephen Hoadley
Wed. 1 st July	From Strength to Ruin: The Story of Southampton’s Lost Walls by Jo Wren
Wed. 5 th August	SOCIAL EVENING <u>AT MUSEUM</u> with raffle and refreshments
Wed.	PLUTO: Pipeline under the ocean by Rob Eldridge
Wed. 7 th October	Roman Southampton by Andy Skinner
Wed. 4 th November	“Don’t delay, Enrol today”: The Women’s Land Army in Hampshire by John Lander
Wed. 2 nd December	CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENING

Articles for Westender

You don’t have to be a historian to write for Westender. We would love to hear your memories.

email: suballard@yahoo.co.uk or leave hard copies at the museum addressed to Sue Ballard, please.

Closing Date for contributions to Summer issue: 9th August 2026.