THE WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WESTENDER

SPECIAL SOUVENIR EDITION IN FULL COLOUR FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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WEST END
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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A THOUSAND YEARS OF WEST END

Dave Riseborough



VIEW OF GATERS MILL, WEST END 1997

With so much media hype being produced about the millennium, we could be forgiven for wearying of the subject. Nevertheless, to sound a positive note, it can be taken as an opportunity to cast a far-sighted look back at the past of our locality. So, in deference to the event I have chosen an ancient theme for this short article.

West End is I am sure seen by many as a rather mundane dormitory of Southampton – somewhere you drive through, or slam the door on in the evening. However, with only a little investigation one is able to uncover evidence of a long and fascinating past that belies such a dismissive attitude.

The earliest existing sign of some sort of settlement in the area is to be found at the rear of Moorgreen Hospital in the form of a prehistoric burial mound. This is the survivor of five such tumuli that once stood in a close group at Moorgreen. It is a round barrow of the Early Bronze Age, and from the evidence of a burial urn removed from it, a date of about 1400 BC seems likely.

Indications of a later Celtic culture are to found in the woods off Telegraph Road. Here, despite the best efforts of Victorian gravel extractors to mutilate it, lie the remains of a fine iron age hill-fort of say 450 BC.

When William the Conqueror devised the Domesday Book in 1086, the West End area appeared under the guise of the Manor of Allington. Previously it had been held by a Saxon named Godman, but was now held by William Alis. Amongst the assets of the manor were two mills. This mill site in fact pre-dates Domesday by at least 150 years, being mentioned in a Saxon charter of 932. Most authorities are agreed that these references allude to the site that we now know as Gaters Mill. Here, for most of the millennium, the power of the River Itchen's current has been harnessed for corn-grinding, fulling, and most famously papermaking.

The early manorial records for Allington ring with the names of locally powerful land-holders such as Robert le Helyon, William le Rolleston and John atte More. Large institutional landlords included two that still hold large tracts of land in the area: Winchester College and Queen's College, Oxford.

Also mentioned are the names of farms and other localities with Anglo-Saxon roots: Chalcroft, Hickley, Hatch and Quob – which have mercifully survived. Other names have succumbed to the passage of time – their locations a mystery: Herberdeslond, Loslemore and the strangely rendered Pharewyseford (could this be a Farrier's Ford).

Indeed, the millennium year seems an apt time to look back 1,000 years and more, to imagine the lives of those people who trod the same soil as we do today. They, and later residents, have left their structures, documents and names as a legacy of evidence, which it is our job as a thriving local history society to exploit to the full.



Right: VIEW OF MOORGREEN HOSPITAL IN THE 1950's

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

The Museum story so far

Derek Amey

The story of West End in a few hundred words perhaps? Well, no actually – it's more a case of thinking that now might be a good time to review the ***Society's*** history – to take a look at why and how a group of people came to attempt to preserve some record of our heritage in this part of the world. In particular, in this piece for the Special Millennium Edition of the ***Westender***, we wanted to put down a marker for future generations, to create our own contribution to our archives! So, apologies if you already know all or some of what follows but this, as remarked above is one for the record!

It all started with the Fire Station. More exactly, with the closure of the Fire Station, which now houses the Local History Museum on its Ground Floor. The Station was opened in 1940 (matching the other Herbert Collins designed buildings in Orchards Way) and had been planned in the late 30's as part of the preparations for what was by then seen as an inevitable war with Germany. It continued to operate, latterly with a dedicated crew of retained firemen, until 1996*. A new, full-time station was then built at Thornhill and the Fire Station at



The West End Local History Museum & Heritage Centre in the High Street

West End was closed. The Parish Council were anxious to keep the building for community use, and took over ownership from the County Council.

This all happened at the same time as thought was being given to the formation of a Local History Society – which took place at an Inaugural Meeting on 7th May 1996. The Society had the task of setting up a Museum from scratch, opening its doors on 12th April 1997, initially with a hastily assembled collection of artefacts and prints. Something of a truism to say that a great deal of work has been done since then to build up both archives and displays to a point where we have much to show visitors, whether from West End itself or from further afield. (The record so far? ... visitors from New Zealand and Australia!)

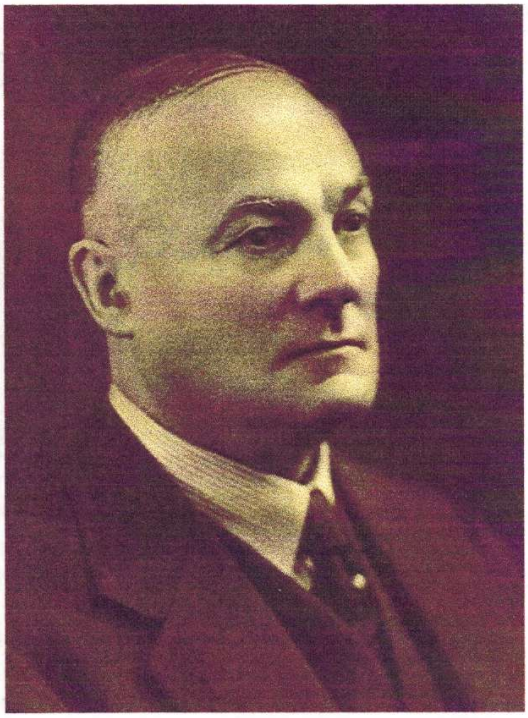
We have acted as a focus for a stream of contributions of photographs and archive material (to say nothing of memories!) from residents; these are usually copied and filed in our library of display folders. We have maps and directories of the Parish as it used to be. We have items relating to Moorgreen Hospital... to Hatch Grange ...to Gaters Mill. We are especially proud of our connection with ***Titanic*** and the part played in the rescue of survivors.....

Continued on page four

Mr FRED WOOLLEY

Pauline Berry

Who remembers the late Mr Fred Woolley, a former resident of West End? A Southampton Councillor, he was twice Mayor of Southampton (1931-



1933) and made a Freeman of the City. He even had a convalescent home, the **Fred Woolley House**, named after him and yet he is often sadly forgotten.

Not only was he involved in brickmaking when he lived in 'Scaffolding House', formerly "Woodleigh" (still alongside the traffic lights on the A27 at the bottom of Chalk Hill – and now used by SGB) but he was also involved in farming. He owned first **Quob Farm** and bought **Hatch Farm** too in 1930. A well known businessman, Mr Woolley had one of the largest accountancy businesses in the area.

A Southampton magistrate, he was also involved in many charitable works. It is a little known fact that he was Secretary to the **Titanic Relief Fund** in the Southampton area and part of his duties were to distribute grants and pensions to the local families of those lost on ***RMS Titanic*** in 1912 *(see one of his letters displayed in the Southampton Maritime Museum)*. He died about 1949.

Surely having a West End road named after this prominent resident is long overdue?

THE PITTER FAMILY ..... AN AMERICAN LINK

By Peter Baker

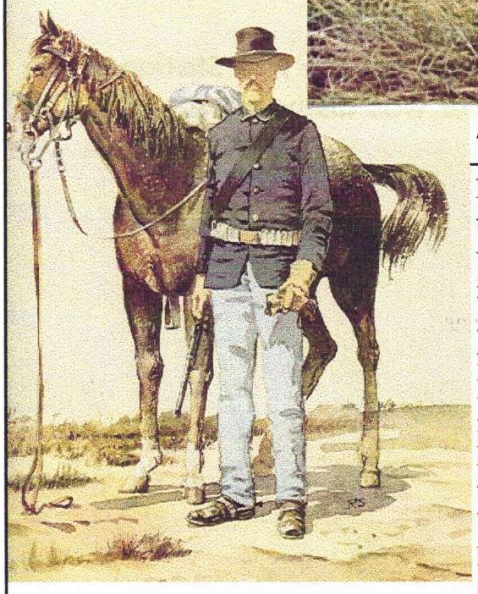
A link between the American Indian Wars and West End seems rather unlikely especially when the link involves **General George Armstrong Custer**, the 7th US Cavalry, the Sioux and Cheyenne Nations and the Battle of the Little Bighorn; but one exists albeit a little tenuous.

On 4th September 1873 at St Louis Barracks, Missouri two young Englishmen enlisted into the US Cavalry for a five-year term. One of these, William Martin, a labourer, was born in London, while his companion was **Felix Pitter** from Alresford, Hampshire and the son of the village Blacksmith of Brown Candover. Why Felix came to be in the United States and the reason for his enlistment has yet to be discovered although it was a period of deepening recession and growing unemployment in America so the motive could have been purely economic. James, his father, had died in 1862, aged 55, and Caroline, his mother, in 1870 when Felix was just 23 years old which could have encouraged him to seek his fortune in the New World. In fact, he was not alone in the world as he had an older sister, Elizabeth, but there is no trace of her in surviving records after the 1861 Census so perhaps she too went to America.



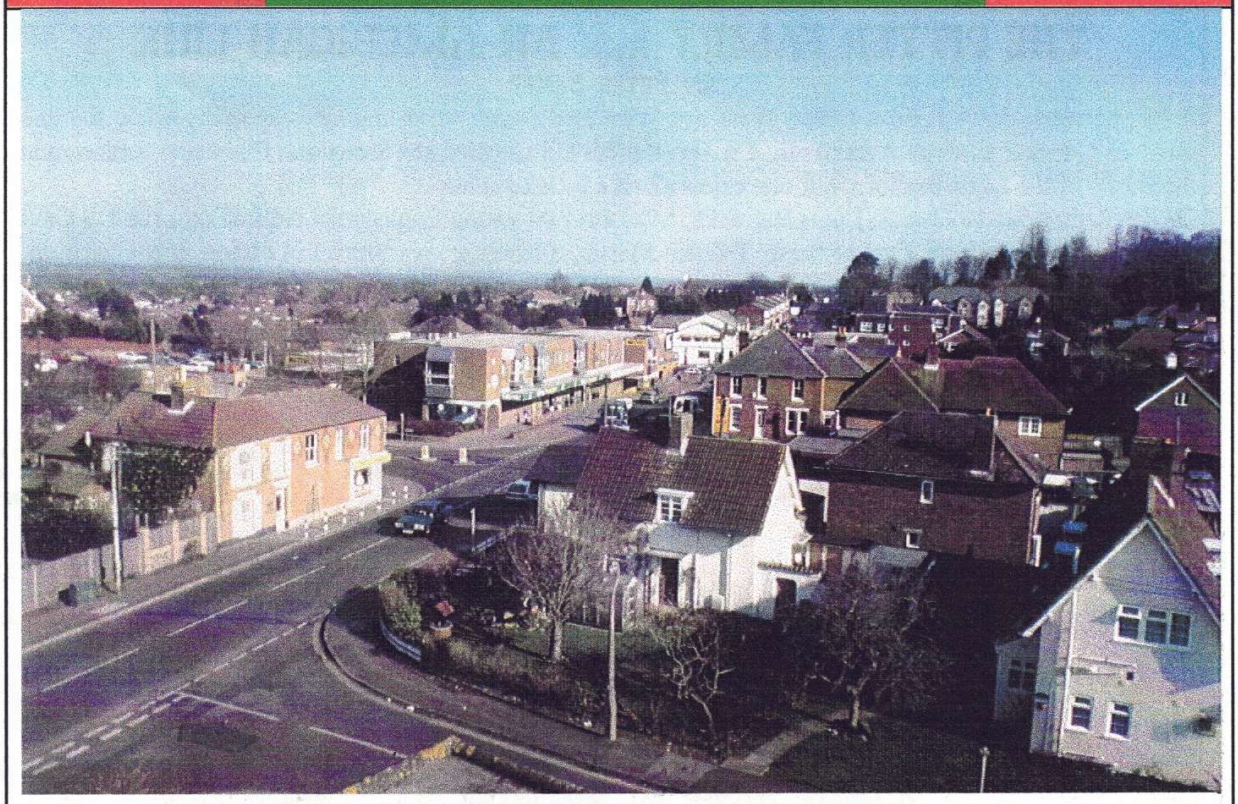
Above: Site of the Custer battlefield showing soldiers markers in Montana, USA

Trooper "I" Company US 7th CAVALRY 1876



What is known is that Felix became a Private in Captain Miles Keogh's Company "I" of the US 7th Cavalry on that fateful day of 25th June 1876 when Colonel George Custer led five Companies, 271 men, against several thousand Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at the Little Bighorn, and not a single Cavalryman survived to tell the tale. Regrettably there are no photographs of Felix, but his Army Records describe him as 5ft 6in in height with brown hair, hazel eyes and a fair complexion. Being small, he was ideally suited for the 7th Cavalry since they rode ponies rather than horses albeit Custer and some of his Officers were around 6ft in height.

Where then is the West End link? Obviously, you would have spotted the surname connection with the well-known West End family. The family, has its roots firmly fixed in Bentworth, Hampshire, from at least 1642 and it was there that James Pitter's elder brother David was born in 1799, later to become the great grandfather of William Thomas Pitter who founded the West End company. Felix's relationship then is direct and uncomplicated as a cousin.



WEST END VILLAGE CENTRE 1998

Two views of West End village (High Street) taken from the Fire Station tower by member Bill White before the tower was dismantled.



SHIFTY VICAR PRODUCTIONS

Derek Amey

Not really the kind of thing you expect to find in an archive, well not a local history archive that is! Just shows that everything received is worth a glance at least, although in this case the publication deserves more than that. You may recall that the Society is a member of the Hampshire Archives Trust (HAT), based at the County Records Office at Winchester. They publish a Newsletter, and it is in the latest edition (which can be read at the Museum) that the curious title referred to above occurs.

David Lee, the Record Office's Wessex Film and Sound Archivist, notes that a recent acquisition is a video produced by SVP and wonders if the 'clergy are now moonlighting in this area ... to help ends meet?'!.

Lots more of interest in the Newsletter; a report of the HAT AGM which included a tour of the 'Castle' at Winchester and a look at the 'Compton Census of 1676' (part of a national effort to prove to Charles II that the majority of Englishmen belonged to the established church); a hospital records survey in progress; a collection at present in the US Library of Congress which is to be brought back to Winchester; many additions of recordings and films to the Film and Sound Archive; and a Solicitor's doodlings in a notebook kept as a record of visits to clients!

I have also attended a training session at Eastleigh Community Services on the computerised Funder-Finding service which can be consulted through their office. If you are seeking funds these days, there is an awful lot of information to be had. You really do need the advice of experts such as ECS as to where to look (and how best to apply). By the way, HAT and ECS each cost us just £5 a year!

And finally .... We have now printed out our own reference copies of "Half A Loaf", the projected history of Moorgreen Hospital* .... a step nearer to getting it published??? Further discussions with the author – Eric Raffo, and others, will follow.

** The printed copy of Eric Raffo's book on the definitive History of Moorgreen Hospital will be available for research purposes in the Museum in the New Year. Ed.*



THE OLD NATIONAL SCHOOL LATER TO BECOME THE PARISH HALL SEEN HERE IN THE 1970's BEFORE ITS DEMOLITION AND REPLACEMENT BY THE PRESENT PARISH CENTRE IN CHAPEL ROAD.

THE MUSEUM SHOP

Listed below are some of the articles and publications available for sale at the Museum shop – please support this venture and enable us to produce more local history publications.

BOOKS

Tales of Old West End	*C.Sillence*	**£3.50**
I Remember, I Remember	*Bob Moody*	**£4.00**
Hatch Grange...a stroll back in time	*Pauline Berry*	**£6.95**
Townhill Park House	*Ralph Coney & Jim Brown*	**£3.00**

WELHS OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Paper No.1
My Memories Of The Harefield Estate
(Oral History Project) *Chris Boulton* **£1.50**

Paper No.2
A New Church For The Parish
Peter Baker **£1.00**

Paper No.3
West End National School 1863-1904
John Collins **£2.50**

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS

Various enlargements suitable for framing of scenes of old West End as well as our own series of views from the old Fire Station tower (no longer there) taken by member Bill White in 1998 £2.50 ea

Plus many other items....
We usually have a selection of items for sale at the Monthly meetings.

Continued from page two..

Arthur Rostron, Captain of the ***Carpathia,*** who came to live in West End prior to his retirement, and who is buried in the Old Burial Ground. Memorial plaques commemorate Sir Arthur and a West End crew member who was lost with ***Titanic.*** Displays and folios (present and planned) point to such West End VIP's as Edwin Jones, of store fame ... C.B.Fry, a great cricketer amongst many other skills... Herbert Collins ... and Richard St. Barbe Baker and his 'Men of the Trees'. We have already toured, and feature in the Museum, the great house at Townhill Park that welcomed many of the rich and famous in that golden age between the wars. A growing list of publications and prints under our own logo means that visitors can take away a quality reminder of a Museum that aims to mirror the title of this piece. And, of course, everyone knows where they will be on the first Wednesday of each month – in the Parish Centre listening to the latest in a growing line of speakers tell an enthusiastic audience about Moorgreen Hospital and the Poor Law, about the Village War Memorial, about the cinemas that flourished in and around Southampton before and after the Second World War, about the buildings of Hampshire and their architecture, about that beautiful park in our midst at Hatch Grange ... the list really is endless!!!

To all who have helped – Thanks! To those who visit us in the first weeks, months and year of the new Millennium – Welcome! to our future – keep it up!

* *Footnote – A newspaper cutting dated Thursday 9th May 1940 refers to "official opening yesterday" of Fire Station. Cover from West End Fire Station finished at 12.00 midday 17th January 1996, and the fire appliance stationed at West End was removed from the Fire Station at 12.01pm the same day.*
(WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO EX WEST END FIREMAN COLIN MOCKETT)

PROGRAMME 2000

January 5
OLD EASTLEIGH (slide show)
Gordon Cox
February 2
SHIRLEY (Domesday to D-Day)
John Guilmant
March 1
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
April 5
SOUTHAMPTON LINERS (Part 2 – 1912 onwards)
Ashley Watt
May 3
HAMPSHIRE BRICKS & BRICKMAKERS
Bill White
June 6 (TUESDAY not WEDNESDAY)
Visit BURSLEDON BRICKWORKS at 7.00pm
July 5
EASTLEIGH MUSEUM - Behind The Scenes (slide show)
Sue Tapliss
NO MEETING IN AUGUST
September 6
OLD SOUTHAMPTON – Part 1 (slide show)
David Hill
October 4
BOTLEY & HAMBLE RIVER
David Chun
November 1
ITCHEN NAVIGATION (Canal)
Ashley Watt
December 6
CHRISTMAS BUFFET & RAFFLE
(Members only)

MEETINGS HELD AT THE PARISH CENTRE
CHAPEL ROAD, WEST END
7.30pm – visitors welcome
For further details contact PAULINE BERRY
Hon. Secretary on 023-80-462490

STOP PRESS

Good News! The recently formed Eastleigh Borough Local History Societies Forum, which includes our own, has just been awarded a Lottery grant of over £2000 to enable the Eastleigh Museum "Flashbacks" Exhibition (plus more) to tour the parishes involved. Our turn will be JUNE 9th & 10th 2000, at the Parish Centre in Chapel Road, West End. More information later!

Pauline Berry