THE WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WESTENDER

VOLUME I NUMBER 5 OCTOBER 1999

WEST END
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MESSAGE FROM OUR NEW CHAIRMAN

History has always held a fascination for me and I like nothing better than a fictionalised book on a real character plus a bottle of red wine in preference to vacuuming the house or doing the drying up. I feel very honoured that Steve Broomfield and the Committee have asked and agreed I should be your stand-in Chairman until the Annual General Meeting of the Society later in the year. Steve needs to devote a little more time to his future. So can I, on your behalf, offer him our sincere appreciation and warmest thanks for the effort, commitment and knowledge he has given to the Society since it was formed and our very best wishes for the future path he hopes to follow.

At the September meeting we had the pleasure of looking and listening to a photographic presentation on Bitterne Village from the 1880's to the 1950's. A few memories sprang to mind during the presentation especially of old Lance's Hill which I raced down one morning in the 1934 MG Magnet I shared with my brother, with no brakes, a pre-selector gearbox and the thought of that great big policeman Tiny at the road junction. Thank goodness it turned out to be a Saturday.

We have a hill fort hidden in Telegraph Woods as well as the outlines of a signal station. We had an old Workhouse, a lot of pubs, a few well-heeled characters and surely a history that goes back further than the Victorian period. How about a millennium project to show on slide or video the past, the present and possibly the future of our not now so little village and thus retain vital history for the twenty second century let along the second millennium.

Neville Dickinson

WEST ENDS MATA HARI EXPOSED



MELITA NORWOOD nee SIRNIS (Circled) IN SCHOOL PHOTO TAKEN AT WEST END SCHOOL AND BELOW AT 87 YEARS OLD – WEST ENDS OWN SUPERSPY *Photo's : The Daily Echo*

THAT WAS THE WEEK THAT WAS!

Two days following the donation of an old photograph from **West End School** (circa 1922) to our Museum, there came a series of frantic phone calls between the donor and myself. I could scarcely believe the enormity of the importance of the information which emerged; the elderly spy **Melita Norwood**, who had only just been exposed by the National Press, was one and the same person as **Melita Sirnis** who stood so innocently in this photo! Even her hair-do had not altered in seventy odd years!

A joint decision was made to tell the local press, **"The Southern Daily Echo"** who immediately jumped onto the story hardly believing their luck, having beaten Fleet Street to the story.

Since our gentleman informant did not want to be involved I was speedily interviewed and became a ***Page Three Girl!***

I passed on all the relevant information and it soon became clear to me that **Melita** had not come from an ordinary family but had had a strongly political and unconventional upbringing. **John Edgar Mann**, the journalist, is picking up the next chapter of the story when our infamous one time resident moved to Thornhill, and it should appear in the next edition of **"Hampshire Magazine"**. But our society and museum got the scoop first, so congratulations to all especially our "mystery informant" **Mr X**!

Pauline Berry



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BOOKSTALL

Some of the publications available from the Museum shop:

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**

CHAIRMAN RESIGNS POST

Our Chairman, Steven Broomfield announced at the last meeting (September 1st) that he is standing down as Chairman of the West End Local History Society. This move is due to family commitments and his many other activities which leave him with very little spare time. We will sadly miss Steve's style and wit at both the monthly and committee meetings – no one could possibly read minutes as fast as he without drawing breath! He has been our founding chairman and helped steer us through all manner of "teething troubles" and has been a very good reliable Chairman – a hard act to follow, and I would like to record our thanks to him. Luckily, a recently enrolled member of our Society, Neville Dickinson has been prevailed upon to fill the post until the AGM and I am sure you will give him all the help and support he needs – with his background, expertise and enthusiasm we can look forward to building on our past success with the Society. *Ed*

BOOK REVIEW

Coming shortly .... The first of a series of "in house" productions!

"My Memories of the Harefield Estate"
By Chris Boulton

A slim volume, but one packed with a personal view of just what it was like on the original Estate, after the big house had gone (burnt down!) but before the modern Housing Estate had been built. Chris dictated these memories to our Secretary, Pauline Berry, and they are reprinted here just as they were taken down on tape. A fascinating glimpse of the days when the whole area was farmed, when Chris had permission to take game and rabbits, and when he first came across the beautiful giant trees (such as the *Wellingtonia* and *Coastal Redwood*) that are still to be found amongst the modern road layout if you know where to look!

Those were the days when the Edwin Jones Sports Club enjoyed the open spaces of Harefield, and when the produce from the farm went to the shelves of E.J's Southampton store. You'll be able to find out just what lies "under" all the bricks and mortar!

We plan to sell at just £1.50 per copy, with any profits to your Museum.

And later.....

Looking (much) further ahead, we also have another possible title lines up. Can't give much away at this stage, but bear in mind the rhetorical question "Who guards the guards?" - or in this case, "Who nurses the nurses?" It all has to do with a conversation with a visitor to the Museum on Saturday who pointed us towards another "local hero", in this case, very much unsung. That's it, that's all we'll tell you for now! Watch this space as they say!

Derek Amey

STOP PRESS

The first Society publications are now available for sale in the Museum – these are an ongoing series of Occasional Papers on things of local interest written by members and friends of the Society. We also have Christmas/Millennium cards and photo enlargements of local scenes.

Paper # 1
My Memories Of The Harefield Estate
(Oral History Project)
By Chris Boulton £1.50

Paper # 2
A New Church For The Parish
Written by Peter Baker £1.00

Specially produced WELHS Christmas/Millennium greetings cards complete with envelopes. *Pack of 5* £3.00

Various photo enlargements suitable for framing of village scenes taken from postcards.
£2.50 per print

AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM SHOP

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BLUE CROSS

PRESENT

THE WEST END CHRISTMAS, CRAFT & COLLECTORS FAIR

SATURDAY 30th OCTOBER 1999
at
WEST END PARISH CENTRE
CHAPEL ROAD, WEST END
10.30am – 3.00pm

STANDS INCLUDE : BRIC-A-BRAC, ANTIQUES, MODERN COLLECTABLES, MILITARIA, POSTCARDS,EPHEMERA, HANDMADE KNITTING, CERAMICS, BOOKS, CHRISTMAS GIFTS AND MUCH, MUCH MORE!

Refreshments available – Admission 50p
Ample car parking – Raffle