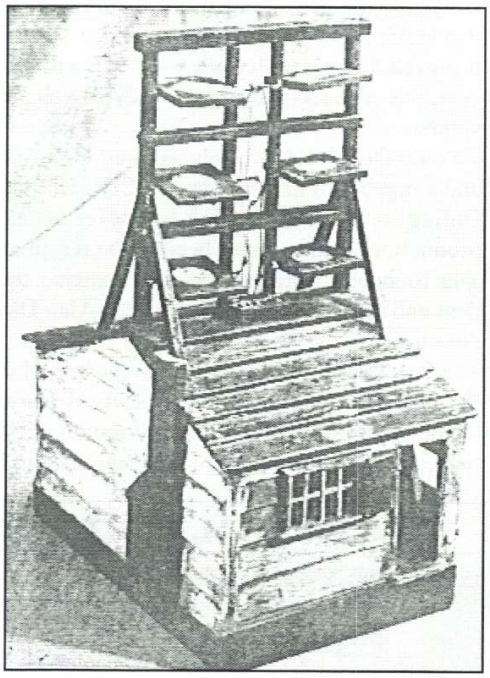
THE WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WESTENDER

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 7 AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2000

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TELEGRAPH



Most local people have heard about Telegraph Woods, here in West End, especially with the near vicinity of the new County Cricket Ground. But how many of you know exactly how it got its name?
During recent research carried out for the successful "Flash Backs" exhibition we discovered some interesting facts and details!
Firstly, that the present Telegraph Woods is NOT the original site of the woods, they were originally an area bounded by the present day Western, Eastern and Telegraph Roads and bisected by Southern Road. This area was cleared in the 1920's and roads put in prior to house building commencing. In the Museum we have a unique set of photographs showing this work being carried out! The name itself comes from the Signal Telegraph station that once stood some way behind Richard St.Barbe Bakers house, The Firs, on the high ground. The threat of French invasion forced the Admiralty, who operated a "shutter" telegraph from London to Portsmouth, to extend the line to Plymouth. The sites for the stations (similar to the model shown on the right) where surveyed in 1805 and in operation by early 1806 (almost ready for use on 4th May 1806) – the local station was known as ***Townhill,*** as it was on land forming part of the very large Townhill Estate. You have to bear in mind that the area was not wooded as it is now, just gravelly scrubland, or heathland, but forming a high escarpment with a clear view inland. The next station in line west was at ***Toot Hill,*** and in the other direction (east) at ***Wickham***. No station was more than about 6 or 7 miles apart as the crow flies, and they were in the main manned by a couple of Royal Navy ratings with a Midshipman in command. They continued in use until 1814 when the Peace of Paris was signed on 30th May 1814, ending war with France. George Roebuck, the Surveyor of Telegraphs, was instructed at that time to close and sell most of the stations off. Most were on land that was leased, with leases ranging from 5 shillings to five guineas per annum, the timber was sold to local people for re-use as it was good stout timber baulks, beams and planking. There is a rumour that some cottages in Moorhill Road have timber that came from the West End Telegraph Station, if anyone can confirm this and which cottages are involved, please let us know. The stations were invariably of a standard pattern, having two rooms, one for the mechanism and work room, the other for living area and kitchen. Equipment was basic, with the exception of the telescopes used by the sentinels. These were of the best quality provided by Dollands at a cost of 12 guineas each! (a great deal of money in those days) The signalling shutters, six in all, were arranged between 20 foot high frames, supported by massive baulks of timber.
We have a photocopy of a map of 1810 showing the wording ***Townhill Telegraph*** in the Museum archive collection and when we have a little more information, hope to publish a booklet with all the details.

Nigel Wood

(RESEARCH CARRIED OUT BY NIGEL WOOD AND NEVILLE DICKINSON WITH HELP FROM BILL WHITE)

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West End Local History Society is sponsored by

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOCUS ON THE WEST END LITTLE THEATRE CLUB



The West End Little Theatre Club was founded in 1945 by the late Canon Dr Ivor Jeffrey-Machin, the then vicar of St James Church in West End (Rev. Jeffrey-Machin was vicar at St James from 1943 – 1953).

It began life in the old Church Hall with a small stage and a seating capacity of 120.

In the early years, in addition to the performances in the Church Hall, the Club toured its productions. They went to the old Borough Hospital, which is now the Southampton General Hospital, the Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley and to the Royal Air Force camp at Whiteparish.

It moved to the Parish Centre in 1981 and produces two plays a year, one in April and occasionally March and the other in November.

To date the Club has produced well over 120 full-length plays and a number of one act plays at Carnivals etc..

During its history, the Club has never been forced to cancel a production and has never been in the red financially.

The founder's wife Brenda still remains the Honorary President and still taking an active part is Alan Daws, who is a founder member.

The success of West End Little Theatre Club is mainly due to the past chairman and women such as Harold Simmons, Bert Clapper, Jim Edwards, Lillian Simmons, Leslie Jennings, Connie Howarth, Robin Upson and Beryl Jordan. The present members of the Club try their best to live up to the high standards set in the past.

A SPECIAL VISIT TO OUR MUSEUM

Derek Amey



VISITORS FROM THE CURTISS MUSEUM VIEW OUR ARCHIVES

More visitors to your Museum! This time round we were pleased to welcome, on the evening of 13th July, some 25 friends from the Curtiss Museum at Alton. As well as being able to take a good look at our Museum itself (they were especially interested in our Archives for the picture they gave of village life in past years), we were also able to take them up to the Old Burial Ground and show them the graves of Sir Arthur Rostron, Kate Oram and Edwin Jones. Of course, they were all familiar with the *Titanic's* story, but nonetheless I think it gave them fresh pause for thought to look at the simple inscription on Sir Arthur's gravestone concerning the rescue and reflect on the dramatic scene those few words mirrored. They would have been equally familiar with Florence Nightingale's story, but, again had not expected to come face to face in such a place with the grave of the nurse who looked after the reclusive Florence in her old age, but who herself died tragically young. When they all finished up back in the Museum and enjoyed some refreshment, they were able to explore these and other stories in greater detail. They were kind enough to leave a generous donation and to say that, whereas before West End had just been a name on the map to them, now they knew better, especially as far as its history was concerned!

IMPORTANT GIFT TO THE MUSEUM – Pauline Berry

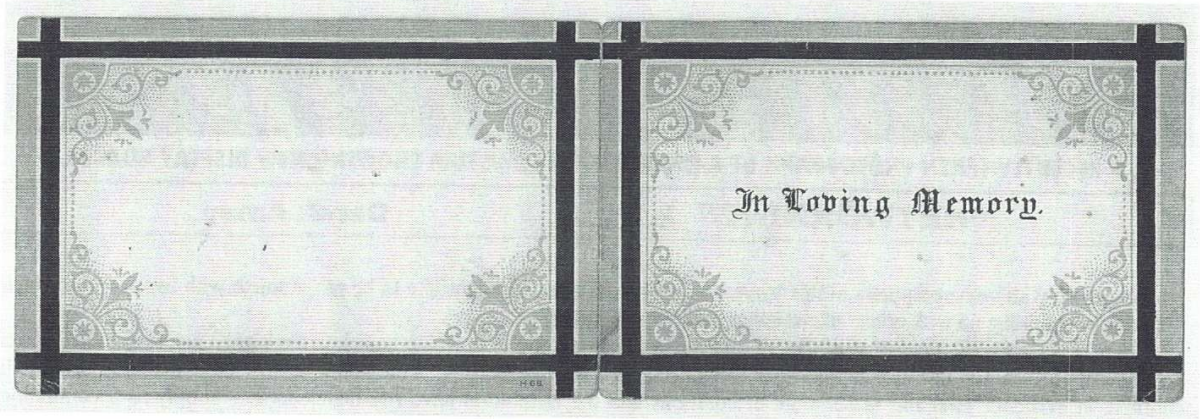
It is with great pleasure that we can inform you of a new and valued acquisition to our Museum/Local Heritage Centre. It is a traditionally black edged ***"In Memoriam"*** card sent out by the grieving parents, Mr and Mrs Joseph Jukes of Moorgreen, in memory of their son ***Henry James Jukes***, a crewman lost on the ***Titanic*** in 1912.

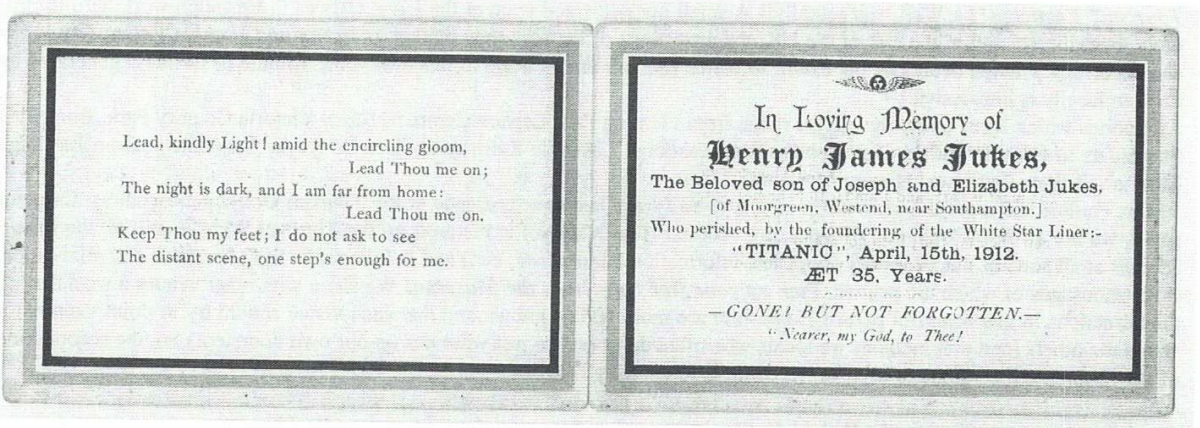
The card has been generously donated to the Museum by his great-niece Mrs Gillian Holloway of Locks Heath. She, with relatives, witnessed the unveiling of a double plaque in April 1999, dedicated not only to the memory of her great-uncle but also to that of Captain Sir Arthur Rostron of the rescue ship ***RMS Carpathia.***

This unique and valued item is now carefully displayed in a secure cabinet so that interested visitors to the museum may pause and reflect on what was also a deeply felt personal tragedy to the family in Camlens Cottage, Moorgreen Road, West End – *"Nearer my God to Thee!"*.



Greaser James Jukes lost with the Titanic in 1912





OUTSIDE COVER AND INSIDE OF THE "IN MEMORIUM" CARD FOR JAMES JUKES NOW IN THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

"FLASH BACKS" PICTURES IN NEW MUSEUM DISPLAY



A RECENTLY TAKEN PHOTOGRAPH OF A CORNER OF THE MUSEUM SHOWING NEW DISPLAY BOARDS

"NETWORKING" — Derek Amey

Nothing to do with with computers in this instance, but though that you might like to be put in touch with two ways in which the Society is linking up with other 'like-minded' people in the area.

Flashbacks - One is the formation of the 'Forum' of local history societies which launched the highly successful Flashbacks Exhibition, presented in our turn at the Parish Centre recently. Pauline Berry tells me that it is very likely that the Forum will continue in existence after the Millennium celebrations and the Exhibition have run their course – simply as a continuing means by which local history groups can keep in touch and perhaps run future joint events.

Tourism? Eastleigh?! - Well, yes actually!! A small but dedicated team at the Civic Offices in Eastleigh work hard to promote, both locally and in the rest of the UK, the attractions of the area they market as *Itchen and Hamble Valley*. (And they can cheerfully provide details of the extent to which tourism brings trade to this area – the volume of business generated by tourism locally is impressive.)

Attractions which come under their aegis range from Fleming Park Leisure Centre to Royal Victoria Country Park, from Blue Star Boats to Hamble Village Tea Rooms, from Eastleigh Lakeside Railway to Beatrice Royal Art Gallery, from Eastleigh Museum to West End Local History Museum!

Just as Pauline has represented us at the 'Forum', so I have been our presence at the Tourism Unit's get-togethers. Large or small, we are all in the business of attracting visitors! Our Museum is featured on the Tourism Website and on the *touch-screens* at all sorts of places locally (libraries, information bureaux etc, etc.) and is featured in their brochure and mini-guide, many thousands of which are printed. ***Pick up your free copy from the Museum!*** We share with other venues a wish that *all* the attractions in this beautiful part of Hampshire are more widely known and that each venue should try to point visitors towards the others (and that includes we locals who often don't realise just what lies on our own doorstep!) So, the second kind of *networking* will continue to involve 'Keeping in touch with Tourism'!

NB.

Don't forget our mention on the Web in Hantsweb as well as the prestigious Encyclopedia Titanica. ***Ed.***

THEATRE PROGRAMMES ACQUIRED Part 2

Featuring "THE GAUMONT" theatre by BILL WHITE



The second selection of programmes donated to the Museum cover performances at the Gaumont. Of the many venues of entertainment the "Empire" of the 20's is the last of the City's many theatres changing it's name to the "Gaumont" during it's cinema period and now the "Mayflower".

It opened on 22nd December 1928 with a production of "Winona", an import from America and due to go on to London's theatreland, which it never made. Called "White Eagle", a musical play of frontier life in the wild west, it had been produced in America as "The Squaw Man" and also turned into an early film.

The Gaumont which started life as the "Empire"(not to be confused with the one between French Street and Bugle Street which was operated by Moss Empires), was the largest and most up to date theatre in the South with seating for 2,300 people in the stalls, grand and upper circles. The stage was enormous with the opening being 26 feet high, 80 feet wide and 40 feet deep, ideal for the many spectacular productions that appeared there later on.

The auditorium was decorated in the classical style, the colours being a delicate grey and silver and the seating upholstered in rose du barry velvet with the curtains of velour picked out with gold. This colour scheme changed through the years, the walls once being red are now green. The seating was square to the stage and may be the architects had the cinema-goers in mind with this decision with just two pillars obscuring the sight wings in the stalls. The circle suspended by a steel girder, said to be the longest girder in use in a theatre in Great Britain. The dressing rooms in the stage area were considered comfortable and spacious, each floor having a bathroom with hot & cold water, while the "Star" rooms had their own facilities and telephone. There was also a lift and laundry for their use. Above the stage, the framework from which the scenery is hung is 62 feet high which makes the heaviest curtains, lighting or scenery easy to fly in a professional production. The original lighting console was capable of providing 100,000 candlepower and was better than many installations in London theatres. It operated four colour battens, footlights, focus spots and stage lights and was said to be easy to operate. The Theatre continued with a menu of plays with famous actors and actresses mostly coming from runs at London theatres.

Matheson Lang in the "Chinese Bungalow", Sybil Thorndyke and Lewis Casson in "The Squall", and "Liliac Time" were examples of shows in these years.

For the Ballomanes, the appearance of Anna Pavlova dancing "Le Lac Des Cygnets" filled the theatre to capacity, thrilled by the performance of this famous dancer. In 1931 it was announced that there was to be a special "Talkie" season of films lasting for five weeks. Jolson's remarks "You ain't seen nothing yet!" had changed cinema going now sound was available and the many early musicals promoted this new invention. This season of films proved so popular that they became an established feature alternating with live shows from then on.

The role of the many famous names of the entertainment world who performed there was endless. Jack Buchanan, Gracie Fields, Harry Lauder, Gertrude Lawrence and Lesley Howard in "Candlelight", the American lady Tallulah Bankhead, Ivor Novello, Nellie Wallace, Sybil Thorndyke, Jack Hulbert and Cicely Courtnidge, George Robey and Sonny Hale– all icons of the acting profession.

The films shown were too many to be listed but mention of one, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" reminds many of us of our youth before World War Two.

It was during the Second World War that film shows became dominant at the Empire, the theatre productions travelling between theatres being curtailed for wartime use of the Railways by the military.

The Moss Empires concentrated their operation on the forerunners of the Rank Organisation who were showing films nationally. The Empire escaped serious damage from the bombing and in the run-up to D-Day was used as a venue for continuous film shows for the troops involved in the Liberation of Europe.

Eventually the theatre came under the control of the Gaumont-British film chain and in January 1950 the Empire's name was changed to the Gaumont.



This article will conclude in the next issue of "Westender" available in November. Ed

HOUND SOCIETY HOSTS "FLASH BACKS"

HOUND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

"FLASHBACKS"

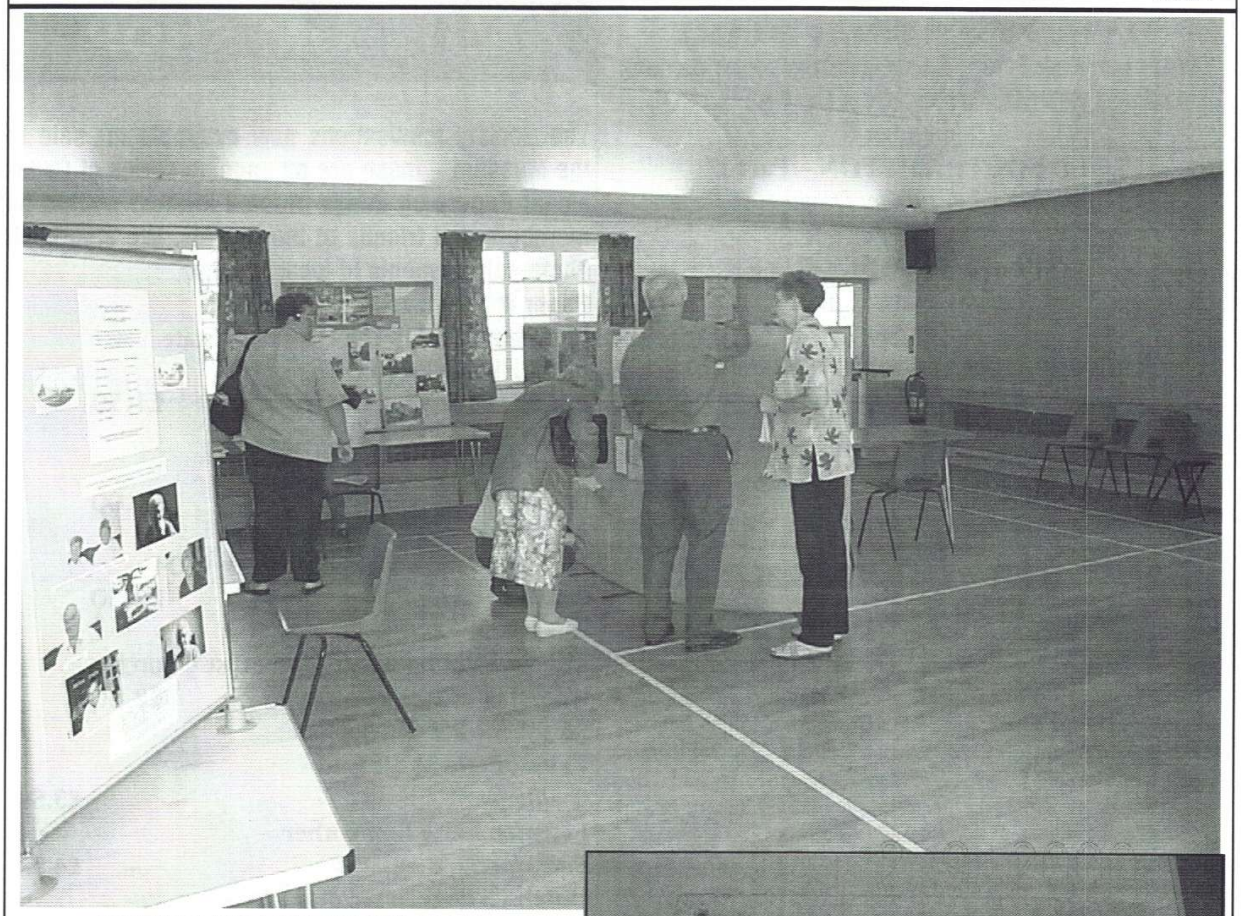
In conjunction with Eastleigh Borough Local History Societies Forum and Eastleigh Museum; the Hound Local History Society present a display of pictures and artefacts of Eastleigh Borough and Hound Parish; for your interest and delight.

At the St Edward's Church Hall, Grange Road, Netley Abbey
On the 2nd & 3rd September 2000
Between 10.00am and 4.00 pm each day

FUNDED UNDER THE MILLENNIUM FESTIVAL AWARDS PROGRAMME

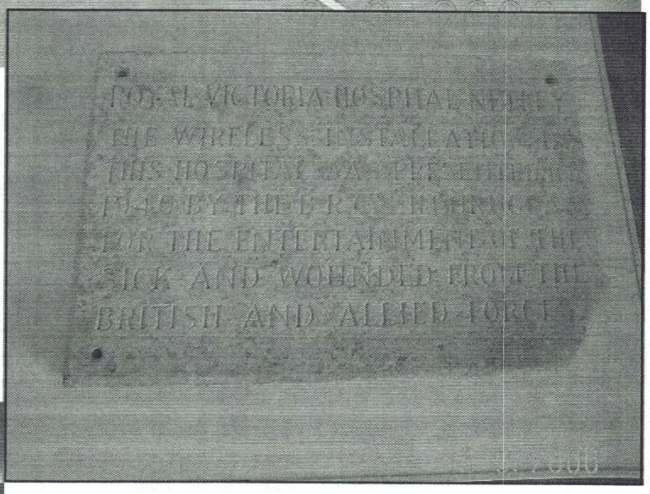
After the promised rainy weather it was a pleasant surprise on Saturday 2nd September to have the weather turn to hot bright sunshine – and the organisers of Hound Local History Society's "Flashbacks" exhibition must have felt relieved. Held in the local Church Hall it covered a variety of local aspects. Lin and I visited the exhibition in the late morning on Saturday and were made most welcome, renewing acqaintance with several old friends including Jack Foley and John Taylor. There was lots to see and of particular interest to us was quite a substantial display relating to the old Royal Victoria Hospital at Netley – one of the main reasons for Netley villages existance. We would have liked to add the stone tablet pictured on page 7 to Lin's Netley collection – it is unique! It is good to see other Society's involved in these joint projects such as Flashbacks and we wish Hound Local History Society continued success and look forward to future exhibitions. **Ed**





TOP END OF HALL & REFRESHMENT AREA

The top end of the hall had a servery providing tea and biscuits which was very welcome (they made a nice cup of tea). The displays included much material on local events both past and present and gave a real look at the Social History of this area. Also on display were maps including a wonderful colour aerial photo of the whole of Hampshire.



STONE DEDICATION TABLET FROM NETLEY HOSPITAL



MORE DISPLAY BOARDS

The exhibition included the section of boards from the original "Flashbacks" exhibition held at Eastleigh Museum and gave everyone another opportunity to view the varied aspects of our boroughs varied and long history.

This exhibition in line with most of the other Forum Society events was held over two days – it would be nice to have had the exhibitions run for longer, but cost and effort are always a restraint. Well done to all the Local History Societies who took part! Ed.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

(WHAT'S HAPPENING AT WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY MEETINGS)

NO MEETING IN AUGUST

September 6

OLD SOUTHAMPTON – Part 1

Slide show & talk by David Hill

October 4

BOTLEY & HAMBLE RIVER

Talk by David Chun

November 1

ITCHEN NAVIGATION (Canal)

Talk by Ashley Watt

December 6

CHRISTMAS BUFFET & RAFFLE etc..

(Members only evening)

ANOTHER "THANK YOU" TO EASTLEIGH

Its thanks once again to Eastleigh Borough Council for their support, this time in the form of a Grant for £250 to help improve our Museum displays and publications. The Millennium Grant was received from Cheryl Butler, Head of Arts and Tourism at Eastleigh and is the latest in a continued history of support and encouragement that we have received.

You will notice that the first visual signs are the increased size of the Newsletter, with more pictures of events etc.. And we soon hope to further improve and develop the museum displays.

Thank you Eastleigh for your continued support. ***Ed.***

A GENEROUS DONATION

It's a big thank you to member Pat Cain for her generous donation towards our purchasing a colour printer for the Museum, we have decided to also purchase a better computer, albeit "second user", which will enable much more work to be carried out "in situ" by volunteers at the museum.

Work such as indexing, letter writing, labelling etc.. will be easier to do and using the PC for image storage and retrieval via CD-rom is another possibility as well as the use of Kodak Picture discs.

We might even start Tutorials for helpers in the near future, so that maximum use is realised. ***Ed***

PAULINES GONE NORTH

Our Secretary, has just returned from her holidays and tells me that we are now represented "up north", how far north I asked – "the Outer Hebrides", she said. Apparently, just as all good Society members should she "just happened" to have some of our Society gatefold publicity handouts on her and they are now residing in that northern extremity of the country for all the visitors to see. Well done Pauline! Ed

MUSEUM SHOP

The Society publications 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 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**

Paper # 3
West End National School 1863-1904
Written by John Collins **£2.50**

Paper # 5
The Swaythling Road Methodist Church
Written by Marjorie Bodman **£2.50**

Plus the following 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**

Swaythling...More than a fleeting glance
Jack F. Allen **£2.00**

PLUS POSTCARDS AND PRINTS SUITABLE FOR FRAMING

AVAILABLE AT THE MUSEUM SHOP

Do YOU know what happened on 6th September....

In....**1666,** The Great Fire of London came to an end – having started at Pudding Lane on the 2nd.

In....**1757,** Lafayette, French soldier, statesman and hero of the American Revolution, born at Chavagnac.

In....**1880,** England played Australia at the Oval in London, in the first cricket test match in England.

In....**1939,** The first air raid of the war on England took place.

In....**1948,** Queen Juliana became Queen of the Netherlands, on the abdication of her mother, Queen Wilhelmina.

In....**1966,** Hendrik Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa was assassinated in Parliament at Cape Town, by Dimitric Tsafondas.