THE WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

WESTENDER

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2004 VOLUME 4 NUMBER 3

WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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WEST END LIGHTS UP FOR CHRISTMAS



SOME OF THE ILLUMINATIONS IN THE HIGH STREET AT DUSK

Photographs by J.D.H.Chapman

This Christmas (2003) West End village centre saw the installation of Christmas lights as well as the usual Christmas trees along the High Street courtesy of the Parish Council, an excellent idea and next year we understand there will be a festive Christmas Market held as well – full marks to the Parish Council and local businesses for splashing out and making the effort.



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West End Local History Society is sponsored by

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

OUR CHRISTMAS JOLLY

Stan Waight

The December meeting was very-well attended, and took the form of a social evening, the principal ingredients of which were a quiz, a raffle, a slide show and, of course, the food and wine.

Our Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Nigel, acted as Quizmaster and was ably supported by Lin. They set us four rounds of questions, lulling us into a false sense of security by making the first so easy that every table did well - from Round 2 onwards the scoring rate wasn't nearly so good!

Then there was the supper - such a spread that I felt sure everyone had brought enough for two. Although there was waitress service for the wine, it was buffet-style for the food, and there was such great variety that we hardly knew where to start. The buzz of conversation increased noticeably during this period.

The raffle that followed was quite splendid, and there seemed no end to the prizes (since our table didn't get a look in, I can't say what was on offer, but it seemed to me that every other winner was clutching a bottle!).

Finally came a trip through Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway, courtesy of Vera (at the microphone) and Neville (at the projector). The slides were first-class and gave us a taste of a part of Europe that is not always considered when making holiday choices.

Even the Parish Council had played its part by decorating the hall in right royal fashion, and, all in all, it was a most enjoyable evening. Our grateful thanks must go to the Committee for organising it.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS

WELHS member Marie Newton writes.....

Re: Westender October/November 2003

I enjoyed the photo of the Holiday Inn. Last time I stayed in one it overlooked San Diego Harbour, not quite the same here but I agree it is a good addition to West End. However, I must correct you on "a waste section of land". Most of the land on which the Holiday Inn stands was covered by well cultivated allotments – over a number of years. I know because I had one! We were moved in 1989 at very short notice and given alternative plots at Moorgreen. In hindsight there was no panic as building on the hotel was delayed until now. Incidentally they were known as Hickley Allotments, referring back to Hickley Farm.

Ed. My apologies, this is what you get when the writer is a "new boy" to the area (I moved back to West End only 8 years ago, so sadly did not see the allotments in use.

WELHS member Ray Upson mentioned.....

The Holiday Inn is not the first hotel we have had in West End. Black House opposite Haskins Garden Centre near the crest of Gaters Hill was originally a hotel.

Ed. I stand corrected. Many thanks for the information.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO WRITE TO THE EDITOR WITH INFORMATION OR COMMENTS REGARDING THE CONTENTS OF "WESTENDER" WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU AND AS LONG AS THE COMMENTS ARE PRINTABLE I WILL INCLUDE THEM IN THE NEWSLETTER.

Thank you

ROAD PLANS FALL ON STONY GROUND YET AGAIN?

Pauline Berry



OVERVIEW OF WEST END HIGH STREET PHOTOGRAPHED IN 1999 *Photo by Bill White*

Armed with the knowledge that C.B. Fry, who lived at 'Glenbourne Manor', West End, was nipping around our roads in his first motor car in 1904, I set out to research the state of our roads a century ago. I came across an old article, written by the late Wilf Phillips, which appeared in the *West End News* in 1982. His valuable research into the Parish Records reveal the concern shown by West End Parish Council over the roads through the village, long before the superstores were even thought of.

The council's first concerns over the speed of motors were first expressed in 1903! The request for a speed limit was brought up regularly at Parish Council meetings over successive years, but usually fell on stony ground. In frustration, no doubt, Mr Harry Haines (Chairman) moved a resolution, at a meeting in December 1928, that yet another application be made to the County Council.

The reasons given were:

(a) The amount of traffic passing through the village.

(b) The speeding lorries causing damage to properties.

(c) The sick getting no rest day or night.

(d) The number of accidents occurring.

(e) The dangerous road junctions and crossroads.

(f) The number of children walking to and from school.

It all sounds very familiar today, but despite these strong arguments West Enders had to wait until the 1930's for a speed limit to eventually be imposed.

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The subject of street lighting for West End was first mentioned in 1898, and then discussed at regular intervals, until a special meeting in 1931 when the Parish Council discussed the costs it had been given: *26 gas lamps = £274-6s.-0d. and 26 electric lamps = £168-7s.-0d.*

The running costs of street lighting would have increased the rates so the proposal was again defeated! We do know, however, that chairman Mr Harry Haines' efforts were finally rewarded when he inaugurated the first electric street lights on the High Street on November 30th, 1934. It was, of course, a special occasion and he was presented with the key which he had used during this momentous ceremony.

The stony and often muddy surface of the High Street fared better and only had to wait until 1913 for its first tar-spraying and topping with granite. The introduction of paved footpaths was delayed for many years owing to the proposed imposition of half the cost onto the Parish Council.

In 1918, the council objected to the unsuitability of seeing women and girls, employed by the County Council, engaged in road sweeping and tar spraying. Whether it was regarded as unfeminine, dangerous or simply seen as taking away men's jobs at the end of the First World War, I'm not sure. Equality of the sexes was still far away, perhaps fortunately, in this case!

These Parish Records can be viewed by request, in their original hand written state, at the Winchester Record Office.



MEMORIES OF EARLY SCHOOL DAYS

at St. James Church of England Primary School, West End (1951 – 1957)

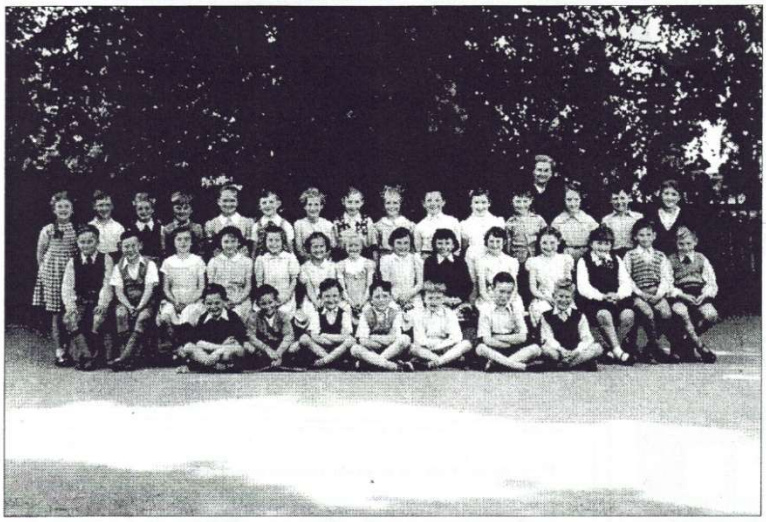
Peter Wallace

We'll start at the beginning. I was born in Bournemouth early in 1946 and moved to Spencer Road (one of the Poet roads) in Thornhill, Southampton a year later. It was a further four years before I was ready to start school life; at the time I believe Thornhill came under the parish of West End therefore I was destined to go to St. James Primary School, West End, quite an imposing building when you are only five years old, very high windows with cranks and leavers to open them. We all sat in rows of cast iron and wooden desks facing the teacher.

All dressed up in my new school uniform. I can still remember the trouble I was in the day I lost my new school cap, Lost Property was searched to no avail. As I could not look after my cap I was never bought another.

Each day would start with a short walk to pickup the Hants & Dorset school bus on the corner of Thornhill Park Road and Thornhill Avenue outside Knights Corner Shop.

I stayed for school dinners most of the time but on the odd occasion I would take a packed lunch, I can remember one





St.JAMES SCHOOL AND SCHOOL CLASS GROUP Circa 1950

hot summers day Mum had packed me banana sandwiches; you may well imagine what they were like by lunch time, not very appetising at all, so I pushed them through the chestnut fence which formed the boundary between the school and the cemetery next door.

In 1952 when I was only six years old my grandmother died and was buried very close to the fence and before they changed to a feather-edge boarded fence I could see her grave.

My first teacher was Mrs Mercer, a large daunting looking lady, I sat to the rear of the class, my early progress was slow, to what subsequently was due to poor eye sight, I was soon moved to the front of the class where I was better able to see the blackboard. I do have a lot to thank Mrs Mercer for because she was the first person to recognise my eyesight problem and I was soon off to see Mr W. R. Atterbury in Bitterne Road for an eyesight test, ever since I have worn glasses.

1953 was the Coronation year of Queen Elizabeth II and I was chosen with three other boys to stand on the base of the Maypole whilst the girls and boys danced around it during the annual May Day celebrations. Also that year I received a Coronation Plate as a memento.

It was in Mrs Mercer's class that I had the first of several school photographs taken of me and my classmates, copies of which have been deposited into the archives of the WELHS Museum along with copies of my school reports. Two years after starting school my sister was to join me on the morning walks to catch the school bus. According to my school reports I did quite well at most subjects with the exception of English and spelling, unfortunately the spelling has not improved much over the years (I make good use of the spell checker on my computer).

Other teachers that I can remember who taught me were Miss Stuchbury, Mr Beasley and Mr Ford. Sport was never my forte because I was often made to take off my glasses and being short sighted I was unable to see the ball clearly but I still

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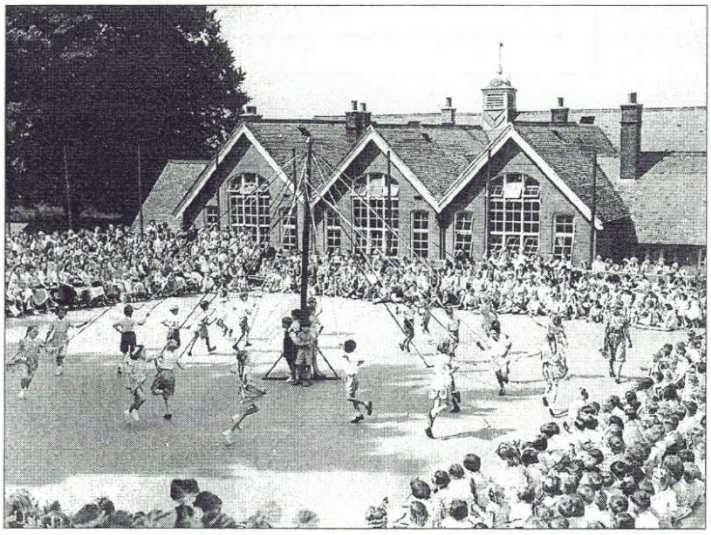
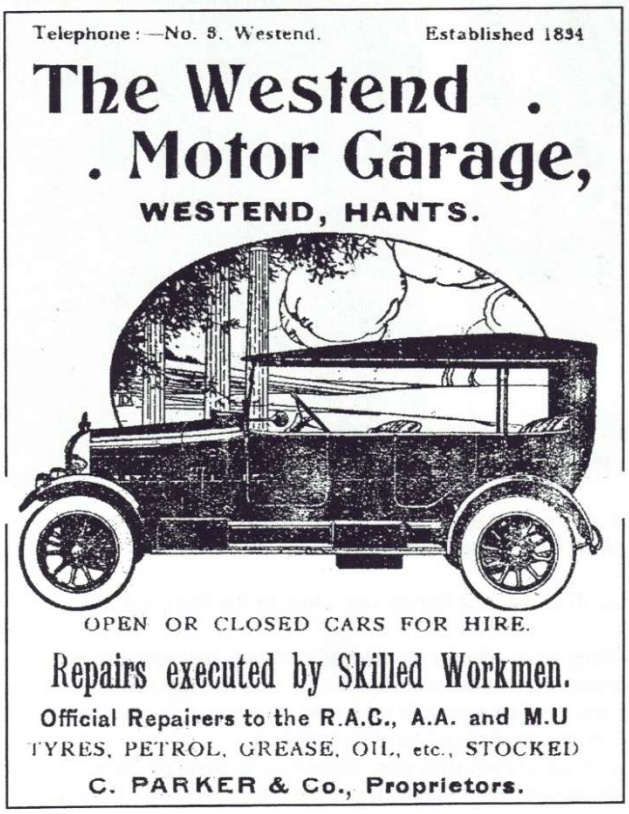


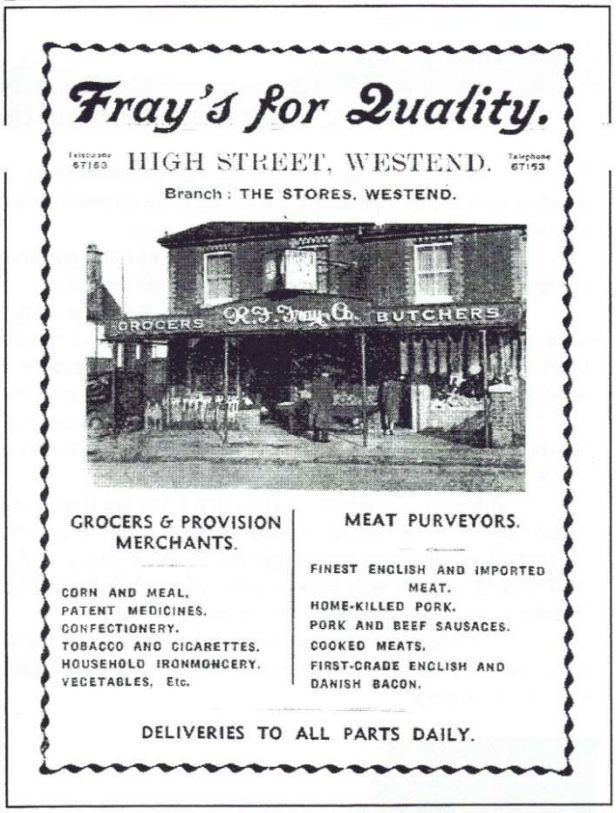


Left: MAYPOLE DANCING AT St.JAMES SCHOOL c.1953 right: PETER AS A PUPIL AGED 5 AT St.JAMES *Continued on page 7*

OLD WEST END IN ADVERTS







A good way to "get the feel" of a period of history is to look up old advertisements of the time. I have illustrated a few here from early copies of the local St. James' magazine. Frays Store stood where Tesco's new store is today on the corner of Barbe Baker Avenue. Parkers Garage is today Viking Garage in the High Street and Haines the Builders stood roughly where the Post Office on the corner of High Street and New Road is today. Ed.

NEW BOOK AVAILABLE FROM LOCAL AUTHOR

A new book from local author and historian John Avery charts the story of the cable ships of Turnchapel, it is a follow-up of John's excellent account of the cable ship *Mackay-Bennett* in his now out of print booklet entitled:

"The Mackay-Bennett...the Funeral Ship at the Titanic Disaster". *By John G.Avery.* We still have a few copies of the last enlarged revised edition of this booklet in the Museum at **£2.50**, so pick one up before they are all gone!

John's new booklet is entitled: **"The Cable Ships of Turnchapel"** (34 pages) is available direct from the author at: Beech Books, 2 Beech Court, Beech Avenue, Southampton, SO18 4TS. Telephone: 023 8063 8650. Price **£2.00 each, £2.40 by post (inland rate)**. An interesting read about a much neglected subject.

WEST END IN THE RECENT PAST







These are three pictures from the WELHS archive. They show clockwise; The Old Fire Station (now our Museum) taken in 1999 with the tower and air raid shelter in place just before their removal; The Blacksmiths Arms in the High Street while it was still a pub in 1960/70 before it became a private home; the shops opposite the site of the old National School at the corner of Chapel Road showing W.G.A. Wiltshire's newsagents and E. Beale & Sons when it was a store in the 1940's.

Continued from page 5

enjoy watching a variety of sport today at least I'm allowed to keep my glasses on. I carried out many posts whilst at school such as filling the ink wells, milk monitor; many's the time we would carry in the crate of milk with the silver tops two inches above the bottles due to the freezing weather and stand them in front of the coke fire in the corner of the class room to defrost, I can still remember the smell of sour milk emitting from the waste bin where the used straws were deposited. I also used to ring the large hand bell to signal the end of playtime.

Ah! Playtime, hopscotch, marbles, leapfrog, tag and so many more, I would help twirl a long skipping rope to see how many girls we could have skipping at any one time, from what I can remember I'm sure we had as many as twelve at a time or perhaps even more.

Girls as I remember were somewhat different to us boys, Marilyn was the first girl I had ever kissed except for Mum. We would often go behind the cycle shed for a kiss and cuddle, those were the days of complete innocence, weren't they! During the winter we would trample the snow to form long slides down the slope of the playground but as with all dangerous activities the Caretaker would soon come out and put an end to it by lighting braziers over the slides to melt the ice! What spoil sports they were! The outside toilets were often frozen but things improved when the new toilets were built, so modern compared with the old ones.

In my final year at Junior School Mr Ford was my form teacher, I can remember he was an excellent story teller, he would change his voice for each character when reading our favourite story from the Famous Five by Enid Blyton. Some of us older boys would wait in the morning by the top entrance to the school for the Headmaster Mr Hodkin to come along so that we would be picked to escort his large alsatian dog back home. It was the dog that took us back as he knew the way better than us.

I can also remember the daunting prospect of doing the 11 plus examination and failing. I never liked exams. A Grammar school place wasn't to be for me so off to Merry Oak Secondary Modern School for Boys where I had a great time.

Well, that's another story!

THE DAY MY FATHER ALMOST DROWNED IN THE RIVER ITCHEN

Roy Backhouse

As a nine year old schoolboy I can well remember the Sunday my father came home all wet and desperately trying to light a cigaratte, (which was also wet) after he had nearly drowned in the River Itchen close to the bottom of Gaters Hill.

It was an overcast and wet afternoon when my father left the garage in Freemantle, Southampton en route to pick up passengers in Southsea.

Father was proceeding along Mansbridge Road having just passed the White Swan Inn towards the ruins of Gaters Mill when a motor car came down the hill very fast in the middle of the road, my father moved the car he was driving over to the left hand side of the road to avoid a collision. On applying the hand brake it jammed in the "on" position due to the fact that the pawl on the ratchet would not release causing the car to skid, whilst trying to release the pawl with both hands the car moved nearer the grass bank which formed the rivers edge.

Realising his predicament he applied the foot brake but inadvertently hit the accelerator instead which made the car jump forward on to the grass bank through the wooden fence and topple into the river where upon it turned right over onto its roof and began to sink, ending up with only two wheels and part of the chassis showing above the water.

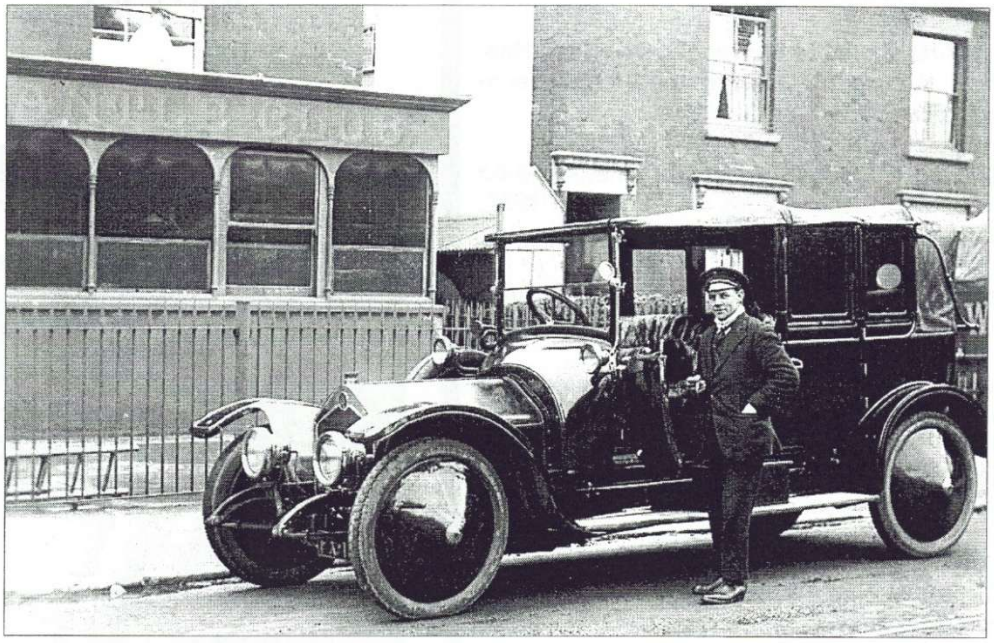
Father managed to scramble out of his seat onto the chassis, surprisingly the engine was still running. One of two boys that had just arrived on the scene gave him a helping hand to reach the river bank.

An attempt was made to remove the car later that afternoon but it failed. The car was successfully removed by a small crane the following day. This story was relayed to an *Echo* reporter and it appeared in the Monday 20th April 1925 edition along with the photograph below of the car being lifted out of the river.



NEWSPAPER PICTURE SHOWING THE AFTERMATH OF THE CRASH

Below is a picture of my father Frank Backhouse with a different limousine than the one in the accident taken outside of the Freemantle Club in Southampton circa 1920/30.



Can anyone help me by identifying the make and model please. You can send details via the Editor at the address shown on the front cover.

WISH YOU WERE HERE.....

Stan Waight

How can you fill an hour talking about postcards? Well, John Silman showed us how at our January meeting. Ably assisted by his friend Mick at the projector, he took us through their origins and subsequent development - it hadn't occurred to me that they had been around for such a long time.

Plain postcards, with embossed ½d 'stamps', were produced by the Post Office quite soon after the introduction of the penny post in 1840, but the service remained fairly functional for many years. The development of photography brought change, and the mail was revolutionised when the first pictorial cards appeared in the 1870s. Many of the early cards carried photos of newsy events, both national and local, and we saw pictures of spectacular road accidents that were bound to catch the eye (nothing changes!). This new means of communication was not without its drawbacks, for anyone could read your message, and some people even took to writing in code. Conventional cards were soon followed by the 'cheeky' ones we all associate with the seaside; we may think them corny today, but some were adjudged to go too far, and a printer named McGill was convicted for indecency and actually went to prison. Production became wholesale, and more than half-a-million copies of individual cards could be printed - it became fashionable for 'standard' cards to be overprinted with the names of the resort at which they were bought.

John's lively talk about a piece of social history was followed by a session using Mick's modern form of episcope. Many local postcards brought by Secretary Pauline were shown, and audience participation was ensured wherever the part of the Village was in doubt.

It was raining when we left the hall, but what the heck! It had been a jolly good evening.

On this day (February 4th) in.....

1881 Voroshilov, Russian Army marshal and political leader, born in the Ukraine.

1893 The first stretch of Liverpool's Overhead Railway – from Alexandra Dock to the Herculaneum Dock – was opened by Lord Salisbury.

1902 Charles Lindbergh, American aviator, noted for his historic solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927, born at Detroit in Michigan.

1918 Ida Lupino, English film actress, born in London.

1920 Norman Wisdom, English comedy actor, born as Norman Wisden.

1945 The Yalta Conference in the Crimea between Allied leaders Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, began.

1948 Ceylon became a self-governing dominion within the Commonwealth, having been a British Crown Colony since 1802. The 4th February is also Sri Lanka's (formerly Ceylon) National Day.

1953 Sweet rationing ended in Britain.

1962 The 'Sunday Times' became the first British newspaper to issue a colour supplement.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE ....

March 3
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
plus
HAMWIC – THE SOUTHAMPTON ORIGINS
Genevieve Bailey

April 7
CHARLES DICKENS IN PORTSMOUTH
Madeleine Selby

May 5
MY GOD IT'S A WOMAN! (Early Aviators)
Jean Cook

June 2
I'LL SEE YOU IN NEW YORK!
(The story of Edith Haisman, survivor of the Titanic Disaster)
David Haisman

ROBERT PERCIVAL MOODY

1906 – 2004



It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing of our President Bob Moody, who died on Saturday 24th January 2004 at the age of 97 years. A great supporter of our local history society, he wrote several booklets on the history of West End and received recognition from the Borough of Eastleigh on the 1st December 1994 being made a Citizen of Honour. Having been born and lived his life in the village of West End, he played a prominent part in many of the village activities including the Church and Boy Scout movement, becoming Group Scout Leader. For many years he worked at Townhill Park House in charge of the glasshouses. He was married in 1941 to Betty Goodwin and our condolences are extended to her and to all the members of their family on their sad loss. This true gentle man and friend of the Society will be much missed by us all and our village.