NEWSLETTER of the WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

WESTENDER

MAY - JUNE 2010 VOLUME 7 NUMBER 5

CHAIRMAN
Neville Dickinson

VICE-CHAIRMAN
Bill White

SECRETARY
Lin Dowdell

MINUTES SECRETARY
Vera Dickinson

TREASURER
Peter Wallace

MUSEUM CURATOR
Nigel Wood

PUBLICITY
Ray Upson

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
Delphine Kinley

RESEARCHER
Pauline Berry

VISIT OUR WEBSITE!

Website:
www.westendlhs.hampshire.org.uk

E-mail address:
westendlhs@aol.com

EDITOR
Nigel.G.Wood
EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION ADDRESS
40 Hatch Mead
West End
Southampton, Hants
SO30 3NE
Telephone: 023 8047 1886

SPORT IN WEST END (1)



WEST END CRICKET TEAM c.1890

Our picture this edition shows the Westend Cricket Team around 1890 (we are not certain of the exact date). The location is also something of a mystery, could it possibly be Hatch Grange House? Note the window shutters etc.. The player in middle row fourth from the left is Mr A.Wiltshire, who incidently also appears in the other archive picture on page 9. If anyone can identify any of the other players in the picture please contact the editor or any committee member.

West End Local History Society & Westender is sponsored by

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

NOTES FROM A CONSTABLES POCKETBOOK - 6

By Roy Andrews

It was said that you could set your watch by the weekly sailing of one of the Union Castle Line ships which always slipped their moorings dead on the dot of 4pm every Thursday from Southampton Docks. Ships of this Line sailed between Southampton and South Africa from 1853 until 1977, but it did not become public knowledge until early 1965 that regularly in the ships manifesto on arrival in Southampton was gold bullion from the gold mines of South Africa destined for the Bank of England. Then it was reported that when the *Cape Town Castle* arrived in Southampton several gold bars, worth then £100,000 and much more at today's rates, from a larger than usual consignment were found to be missing from the ships strong room. It took several weeks for the gold to be found, encased in concrete, still on board the ship and later two crewmen were each sentenced to ten years imprisonment for the theft.

To get the gold from the docks to London a special train had been built which consisted of a locomotive and two standard British Rail passenger carriages, these however had been fitted with all sorts of security equipment including sophisticated communications systems which enabled the crew on board to maintain contact with the Bank of England and any Police Force through which the train was passing.

On duty one day in the early 1970's I and a colleague, Vic, were called back to the Civic Centre Police Station from our respective beats and told, being both authorised firearms users and to use the modern vernacular, to 'tool up'. We were informed that the gold train was in the Eastern Docks loaded with bullion and about to depart when all of its communication systems had failed. High level discussions had taken place and it had been decided that the train would be allowed to travel to London if two armed police officers were on board. And so with 9mm Browning pistols in holsters discreetly, as was the norm in those days, hidden under our uniforms Vic and I were transported to the docks and boarded the train.

The hour or so journey to London had been completely uneventful as we pulled into one of the side platforms, years later upgraded for use by Euro Star trains, at Waterloo Station. The platform was lined by at least a dozen police officers both Transport Police and Metropolitan Police, also on the platform was a large black limousine which we were told was waiting to take Vic and me to the Bank of England for lunch. Leaving the gold to be looked after by others Vic and I sank into the luxurious seats of the cavernous rear of the Limo' as the chauffeur whisked us of through London and into the bowls of the Bank of England's underground car park. From there we were escorted along numerous corridors to a room where indeed lunch had been set out for us.

Having partaken of a rather pleasant repast we were later escorted back to the waiting Limo' and returned to Waterloo Station where, as we arrived on the forecourt, Vic and I realised we may have a bit of a problem. Hundreds of people were standing at each side of the main entrance held back by 20-25 police officers whom we could see from their different uniforms were members of both the Transport and Metropolitan Forces. Vic and I rightly guessed, as we found out later, that there must have been a hoax bomb call to the station which had now been cleared of the public. We climbed out of the Limo' acutely aware of hundreds of pairs of the public's eyes watching us and we could guess wandering why police officers were turning up to bomb calls in a Limo'. We were also aware of many a curious glance from the police officers as they could recognise that our uniform was not one of theirs.

What were we to do as being armed we were not expected, in those days, to mingle with the public unless required to do so and as we did not have a clue what was going on we could not help out our brother officers. Luckily the problem was solved when a shout went up from the rear of part of the crowd and a Transport Police Sergeant, recognising us from when we had arrived with the train, pushed his way through

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

to us and escorted us into the station, bomb or no bomb, to his office where we waited until the next train for Southampton could depart.

We travelled in a reserved compartment for the uneventful journey back to Southampton Central Station followed by a walk up the hill in the late afternoon sun to book off duty at the police station, happy in the knowledge that very few if any other police officers had ever been entertained to lunch by the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.

HILLDENE RENOVATION COMMENCES

(Hilldene Community Centre - formerly St. James' School)











On Saturday 17th April 2010 at 10.00am Hilldene Community Association held an Open Day at the Centre. It gave local people a chance to look around the centre and to see the progress to renovate the old building and renew the old bell tower, which is so much a feature of the building. Hilldene Chairman Anne Mortimer, gave us an interesting insight into their plans for the future of the building and how they hope to achieve the restoration fund target. Work has already started on replacing the bell tower and our picture of 14/5/2010 shows the new one in place. The meeting ended with refreshments laid on.

THE 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A Review by Stan Waight

It is quite usual for Annual General Meetings to be poorly attended, but this was not the case with our own on 7th April 2010. In fact there were more than 50 members present, a much greater number than had been expected.

The outgoing Officers reported that 2009-2010 had been a good year from almost every point of view. We had made a small profit on the year, turn-out for meetings had been first-class, the speakers had done well, the museum had been visited in good measure and sterling work had been done by all. The only fly in the ointment was the fact that there were never enough volunteers for the museum roster - with a membership of over 70, there would be no problem if everyone did an occasional stint and it can be fun.

In the absence of volunteers to serve on the Committee, last year's Committee was re-elected *en bloc*, even to the point that Lin Dowdell will once again double as Secretary and Minute Secretary (will no-one come forward to take on the latter post?). The groundwork has been laid over the years and no job need be particularly onerous.

There should have been a talk on life on a houseboat on the Hamble River after the formal proceedings, but the speaker let us down at the last minute. As always, Nigel was there to step into the breach and he rummaged through the archives to more than fill the gap. It appears that documents in the collection are now in the course of digitisation (not everyone knows that - and the word isn't easy to spell, either), so we can now see images of old handbills, magazines and other artefacts on the screen.

Nigel once again demonstrated his extensive knowledge of what has gone on in West End over the years, and there were images aplenty. Well-known local families figured among a lot of anonymous ones. The backdrops included the National School, Harefield House, Thornhill Park House and the old New Inn - all now gone but clearly not forgotten. There were also a few more recent scenes, such as the demolition of the Lamp and Mantle, which recorded changes for posterity.

It was a very enjoyable evening as AGMs go, and, with an interesting programme ahead, we can look forward to 2010-2011 with confidence.

GB2TT - SHUTTER TELEGRAPH RADIO EVENT



From the 13th to 16th April 2010, John Wakefield a prominent local Radio Ham set up his temporary radio station at the Rose Bowl to commemorate the Napoleonic Shutter Telegraph station in West End.

The weather was kind and judging from the number of contacts he made (459) and the variety of countries in contact (47), it was most definitely a success. Places in contact as far apart as the Central African Republic, Belarus, Moldova, Hungary, Israel, Croatia, Scotland and Denmark, to name a few gave this a truly international flavour. Well done John. Ed.

St. JAMES' CHURCH SPRING FAIR

Saturday 8th May 2010









St. James' Church Spring Fair this year took place on Saturday 8th May 2010 at 12.00 midday, and in spite of the initial threat of rain and later the almost continuous downpour, all went well. Most of the stalls were found space in the church whilst the refreshments area in the Annexe did a roaring trade. In spite of the inclement weather and thanks to the shelter provided by numerous gazebo's the barbeque hot dogs, bacon and burgers in rolls did a good trade with the visitors, likewise in spite of the almost continuous rain the out-door "crockery smash" seemed to do a roaring trade. WELHS put on a display which due to space considerations was located in the Lady Chapel this year. With a Grand Raffle, free Puppet Show, music supplied by Gregg School and St. James' Brass Band and many stalls selling everything from books to sweets it was a very enjoyable time as the large number of visitors confirmed, having braved the weather to attend. Congratulations to the organisers of the event and all the team of helpers.

PINEWOOD'S CHEQUERED PAST

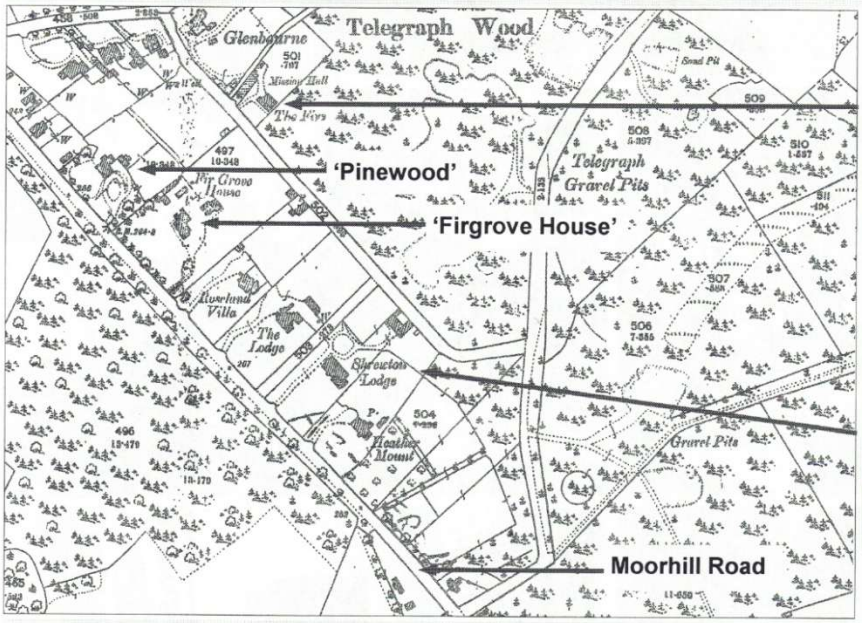
By Pauline Berry

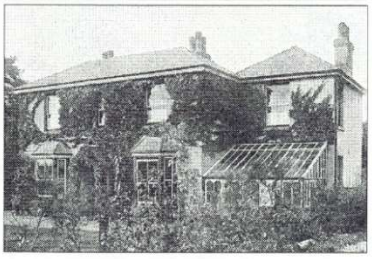
In Victorian times there were six substantial middle-class homes, standing proudly in a row, facing Moorhill Road and Bacon Hill Copse. Each one stood within an acre or two of wooded gardens, cared for by gardeners, with access to their stables from the quiet road (now the A27) running the length of the ridge. Their names, beginning at the St. James' Church end were: 'Pinewood', 'Firgrove House', 'Roselands', 'The Lodge', 'Shrewton Lodge' and 'Heather Mount'

During the 20th century, all were gradually demolished, leaving only 'Heather Mount', now divided into two homes, still in existence today. In the early part of the 19th century, however, all these residences stood in an area called 'Firgrove' (not to be confused with Firgrove House). They were all built around 1840, on

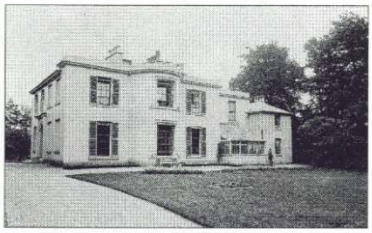
Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5





THE FIRS
Home of the St. Barbe Bakers



SHREWTON LODGE
Typical "Gentry" house, Moorhill Road

land originally owned by the wealthy Michael Hoy of Thornhill Park, and then by his nephew James Barlow Hoy who died in an accident in The Pyrenees in 1843.

Research into the past of my own road, Grosvenor Gardens, led me to concentrate on the first two houses mentioned above, 'Pinewood' and 'Firgrove House', comprising its site. 'Pinewood' was originally built for the landowners elderly mother, Mary Barlow, as recorded on the South Stoneham Tithe Map of 1845. It included the land adjoining it to the north-east, which later became Baker's Tree Nurseries in the late 1800's and Caversham Close in 1959. The 1851 Census tells us that an elderly widow named Elizabeth Tilly occupied the house, with her two daughters and servants. Like many of the genteel folk in this row of middle-class homes, she received her income from private means and did not necessarily own their property, but rented instead.

By 1861, 'Pinewood' was acquired by the Rev. John Thomas Wright Baker, grandfather of Richard and father of John, the evangelist and horticulturalist. The Rev. J.T.W. Baker was the Chaplain at the South Stoneham Union (Workhouse) situated a mile away. His grandson Richard St. Barbe Baker (Man of the Trees) described him as ... *'a parson, passing rich on £140 per annum'* and *'living in his own house and tree surrounded garden'*. This must have been 'Pinewood' in which he lived with his family until his sudden death in 1874, attributed to shock after reading a critical letter from his Bishop! He and his wife Harriett are buried close to the main path into St. James' Church and churchyard. The 1881 Census shows us that his widow and only son John moved downhill to 'Laurel House', opposite the Old Burial Ground, for a while. Following the death of his mother Harriett, he married Charlotte Purrott of 'Clifton Villa' and had 'The Firs' built in Beacon Road, where it still stands today. During the years before the turn of the century, several different people occupied 'Pinewood', which was probably still in the ownership of the (St. Barbe) Baker family. The most prominent being the Vicar of St. James' Church, the Rev. Charles R. Patey. He was single and with his mother and two sisters, leased the house until the new Vicarage was built, next to the church, in the 1890's. The Rev. Patey was instrumental in the construction of the 'new' (second church on the site in 1890.

In 1900 John St. Barbe Baker decided to sell 'Pinewood' to Sidney Smith, a retired Indian Police Force officer. Retaining his established tree nursery (now Caversham Close), he had a covenant placed on the house and garden for 999 years allowing private homes to be built but preventing any trade or business, other than that of *'doctor, dentist or similar'* from being carried out on the site.

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

In 1912, a Mr & Mrs E.W. Sandstedt, the last owners, purchased the property for £745 and renamed it 'Bethel'. Thus began the sad decline of the owners and their property. Mr Sandstedt, who suffered mental health problems, died in an asylum in 1919. The house slowly fell into dereliction. Mrs Sandstedt became a recluse and a familiar figure locally, shopping nearby wearing long dark clothes and a veil.

Complaints from neighbours were eventually lodged with the Council regarding the unhealthy state of 'Bethel', the house, cellar and overgrown gardens. *'The Lord will provide'*, the elderly owner told people. Mrs Sandstedt eventually died in a nearby nursing home, 'The Lodge' in 1959. The once attractive residence 'Bethel' had by now become a temporary lodging-house for vagrants. It was then sold to Ward Bros., builders, and demolished to make way for the completion of Grosvenor Gardens in 1962.

No photographs of this house exist in our archives so far. Do you have any which we could copy please? The story behind 'Firgrove House' will follow.

TWO MAYORS ATTEND TITANIC LINKED MEMORIAL SERVICE

Report by John Avery - Photographs courtesy of Will Temple









The Mayor of Eastleigh Councillor Mrs Pamela Holden-Brown and the Mayor of Southampton Councillor Mrs Elizabeth Mizon attended the White Star commemorative service on 16th April 2010 in memory of Philip Curry who had served as the Southampton Manager based at Canute House. Mr Curry was in post when the Titanic sank in April 1912. The service held at St Nicholas Church, North Stoneham was followed by a wreath ceremony at the grave, the White Star flag from the Majestic covered the grave which volunteers had tidied up for the ceremony.

Speakers at the service were the Mayor of Eastleigh, Wayne Irish, Genevieve Bailey and John Creamer.

THE MID HANTS RAILWAY - The Watercress Line

A Review by Stan Waight



MID HANTS RAILWAY TRAIN NEAR ROPLEY
(Copyright Richard Thomas and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence)

Rail travel in the Age of Steam was a noisier and dirtier mode of transport than it is today, but it seems to hold a fascination for people of all ages. So much so that over 60 members and visitors attended our May meeting to hear Dave Yaldren give a flowing account of what is popularly known as 'The Watercress Line'. His talk was accompanied by the showing of a 16 mm film produced by Southern Television in 1981 and by numerous amusing anecdotes.

First opened in 1865, this London and South Western Railway line ran from Winchester Junction (two miles north of Winchester) to Alton, where it joined the main line from Southampton to Waterloo. Stations en route were Itchen Abbas, Ropley, Alresford and Medstead and Four Marks, and it got its name from the produce of the local watercress beds that it carried to the London markets. It reached its highest point at Medstead and Four Marks, where the gradient is so steep that railwaymen referred to it as 'crossing the Alps'.

Although it became part of British Railways and provided an alternative route to the Southampton to Waterloo main line, the route declined between the wars. It survived Beeching's 'Axe' of 1967, but was eventually closed in 1973.

The Alresford to Alton section was purchased from British Rail in 1975 and reconstruction subsequently progressed in stages by means of the voluntary effort that still maintains it. The three-mile section between Alresford and Ropley re-opened in 1977, the extension to Medstead and Four Marks in 1983 and the final section to Alton in 1985. The main locomotive shed and workshops are at Ropley, where derelict locomotives are restored. Most of the rolling stock is obtained from the locomotive 'graveyard' at Barry

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 8

in South Wales and restoration can take up to five years. Railway structures such as footbridges and signal boxes have been imported from other disused lines to replace those that had been demolished and all sorts of maintenance equipment has been accumulated over the years.

Dave says that there is something for everyone. Families are particularly catered for and over 2,000 people will visit on a good day. The project now has a healthy turnover, mainly generated by ticket and souvenir sales which are boosted from time to time by income from the production of advertising films for TV.

The year's programme includes special events such as 'Steam Weekends' (with visiting engines from similar projects), 'War on the Line' (re-enactment of scenes from WW2 - shades of 'Brief Encounter'!), 'Santa' trains at Christmas and even a 'Real Ale' train.

Dave has himself been a volunteer for 30 years, and seems to favour acting as a steward in the restaurant car, where he has met a number of celebrities. I think Roy Andrews hit the nail on the head in his Vote of Thanks when he said that Dave had 'sold' the Watercress Line well, for it was as much an advertisement as a talk. Nevertheless it was very interesting and very well delivered.

FROM OUR ARCHIVE .....



WEST END CRICKET TEAM circa 1890's

Back Row

L-R Messrs Roberts, Swanson, W. Haines, G. Haines, G. Elliott, W. Paice, Upson, Purchase, Parker, Webb, Axtell, Axtell Jnr.

Middle Row

L-R Messrs Wiltshire, Morgan, Windust, Small, Willis, F. Pearl, A. Wiltshire, Thorn.

Front Row

L-R Messrs J. Wiltshire, R. Dove, C. Welch, G. Finlin.

ON THIS DAY.....

On this day (2 June) in.....

1840 Thomas Hardy, English novelist and poet, born at Higher Bockhampton in Dorset, the son of a stonemason.

1857 Sir Edward Elgar, English composer, born at Broadheath near Worcester, the son of a music-seller and organist.

1868 The first Trades Union Congress was held, at Manchester - finished on 6th.

1882 Guiseppe Garibaldi, Italian soldier and patriot who helped to form the Kingdom of Italy, died.

1896 Marconi was granted the first patent (numbered 12039) for a system of communication by means of electro-magnetic waves.

1941 Clothes rationing started in Britain.

1953 The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE....

July 7
CHURCHES CONSERVATION TRUST IN HAMPSHIRE & SUSSEX
Dr. Frances Hurd

August 4
SOCIAL EVENING AT THE MUSEUM
(including refreshments)
ALL WELCOME

September 1
FROM WEORBLING'S TON TO WARBLINGTON
Madeleine Selby

October 6
ICEBERG RIGHT AHEAD!
Geoff Watts

WELCOME ONTO THE COMMITTEE

It is my pleasant task to welcome our latest recruit to the WELHS team - as you are probably aware Rose Voller who was our Minutes Secretary for many years and gave unstinting service to the society, had to relinquish this post recently due to ill health. As a stop-gap Lin Dowdell added this to her other duties, but in response to a plea for a volunteer for the position as Minute Secretary, Vera Dickinson, wife of our Chairman Neville has kindly offered her services. Our grateful thanks to Rose for all her work in the past and thank you to Vera for volunteering. And whilst talking of volunteers, don't forget we always need people to volunteer for the Museum Roster, please see Peter Wallace at the meetings. We also need articles, either full blown ones or anecdotes for 'Westender', any contributions please to the Editor (see front cover). Ed.