NEWSLETTER of the WEST END LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

WESTENDER

JULY - AUGUST 2010 VOLUME 7 NUMBER 6

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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

THE VILLAGE SHOP (1)





ABOVE
Miss Jane May's shop in Chapel Road taken about 1910.
BELOW LEFT
The same shop later run as a General Store by Cyril Hassell.

Our main picture this edition shows the shop run by Miss Jane May in Chapel Road, she was the sister of George May who ran the Rosemount store where Tesco Express is now. Later the shop was run by Cyril Hassell as shown in the photograph on the left. Today the building is long gone, the turning into Chapel Close and the bungalow on the corner marking its position.

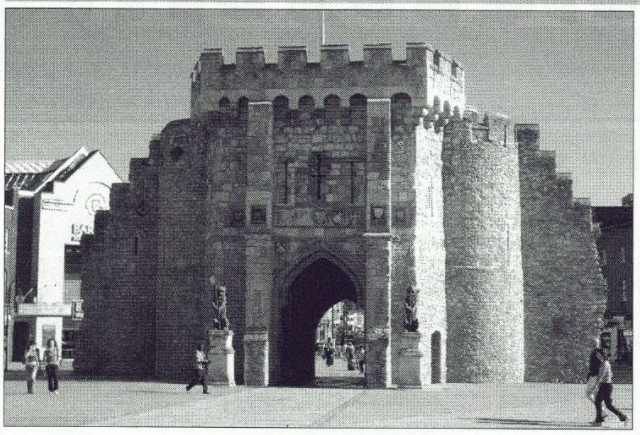
West End Local History Society & Westender is sponsored by

WEST END PARISH COUNCIL

EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

'Southampton 1609-1838 - from economic decline to prosperous Spa town'

A Review by Stan Waight



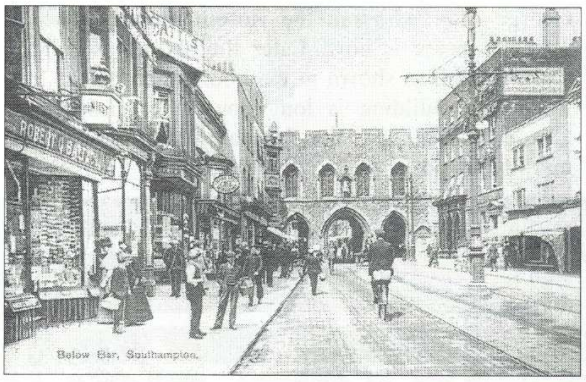


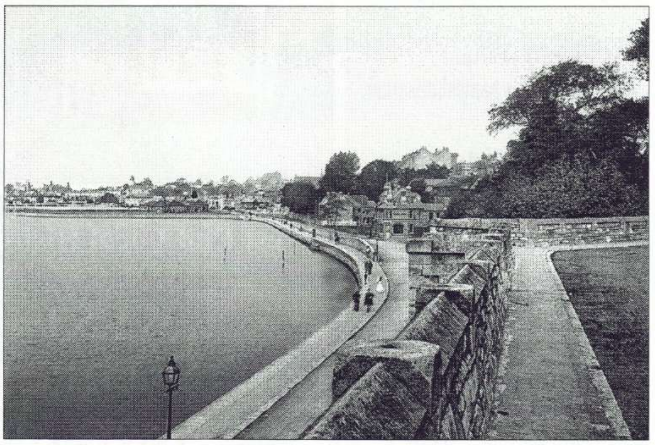
ABOVE & LEFT: Southampton's Bargate, now pedestrianised and at the right one of the surviving old Georgian coaching inn's The Dolphin Hotel.

Our meetings are becoming very popular and more than 60 members and visitors came to hear City guide Jake Simpkin talk about the city's rising and falling economic fortune. In opening the meeting, Chairman Neville made what has become a regular monthly appeal for members to come forward to man the museum - with such a membership it shouldn't be necessary for anyone to do a two-hour stint more frequently than once every two months.

We've heard Jake speak before. He's fluent, amusing and has a lot of good slides, many of old engravings of city scenes.

The importance of Southampton, with its double tides, was recognised by the Romans and Saxons in the building first of Clausentum and later of Hamwic. Prosperity returned again in the 15th century when the Italian mercantile fleet began to use the port on a regular basis. Then the Italians changed their allegiance to London, and, by the 17th century, the town was again in the economic doldrums - Jake cited the lack of Jacobean, Baroque and Palladian archaeology as proof of this - and, in their travels, Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe both described it as in decay. Nevertheless, the departure of the entrepreneur Lord De La





SOUTHAMPTON IN THE 1890's: Above shows Below Bar and the South Shore, site of the Spa Assembly Rooms is shown on the right

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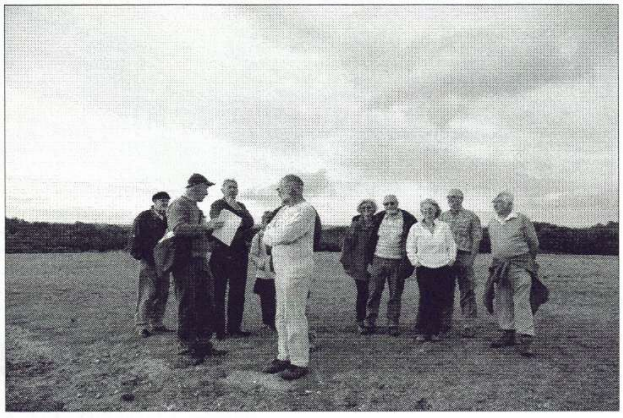
Warr for America in 1609, the sailing of the Mayflower in 1620, and the arrival of the Huguenots in 1685 are important historical events of that century.

The tide began to turn again when Richard Taunton came on the scene. He became mayor, and, as a privateer, enriched himself with French silver and endowed a school and a hospital. Then the Earl of Peterborough came to Bevois Mount in 1723, drawing in other personalities of the age. The most important of these was the Prince of Wales, who praised the air and water. The discovery of a chalybeate spring complemented the bathing and enhanced the town's standing as a spa resort; service industries sprang up and Assembly Rooms and a bathing station were built. It was during this period that grand houses sprang up all around and the 'real' gentry attempted to establish themselves at the Polygon, which never really took off.

Jake ended his talk with the coming of the railway in 1838, which led to the expansion of the docks' facilities and turned the town into a first line port. Once again he had made it an interesting and enjoyable evening.

2010 CARNIVAL WALKS LED BY ERIC READ





CARNIVAL WALK NUMBER 1 "WESTERLY WANDERING" ON Tuesday 8th June 2010



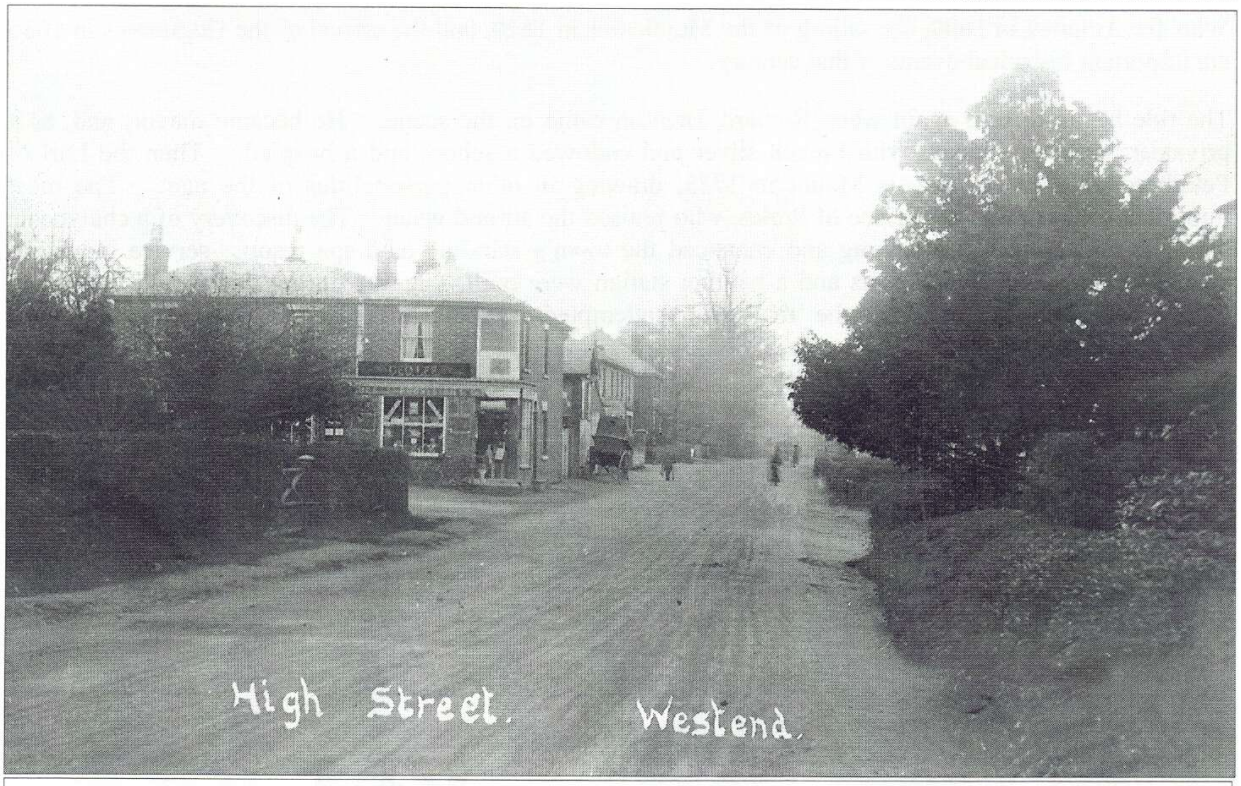


CARNIVAL WALK NUMBER 2 "FIRS, WOODS AND WICKETS" ON Tuesday 15th June 2010

MORE VOLUNTEERS TO MAN THE MUSEUM WANTED

Please see Peter Wallace at the meeting to volunteer

THE OLD CORNER SHOP





GEO. LEE - THE STORES, HIGH STREET, WEST END c.1922 and below his advert in St. James' Church magazine dated January 1923

The top photograph was recently added to our archive. It shows a hitherto unknown business that occupied the corner shop at the junction of Upper New Road and High Street. The more usual photographs of this shop show either Langfords or Fray's, but on closer inspection this one shows George Lee. The photograph is circa 1922 and by chance his advert appears in St. James' Church Parish magazine for January 1923.

ST. JAMES' CHURCH PARISH MAGAZINES SCANNED

St. James' Church Parish magazines from 1884 to 1960 are now available in digital format to view by prior arrangement at the museum. The project which took a year and a half to complete was carried out in conjunction with St. James' Church, to whom we would like to express our sincere thanks. NGW

A FLYING ACE AT FIRGROVE HOUSE

By Pauline Berry



HATCH GRANGE HOUSE BEFORE THE FIRE



ARTHUR WELLESLEY BIGSWORTH

The site of Firgrove House comprised the other half of Grosvenor Gardens, referred to in the last edition of Westender. It was an imposing middle-class residence, standing in nearly two acres, facing Moorhill Road (A27). The position of the present public footpath is roughly where the carriage entrance was in Victorian times.

Wealthy land-owner James Barlow Hoy of Thornhill Park, owned the property in 1839, but leased it to a Charles Peaty. As previously mentioned, the owner died in an accident in the Pyrenees in 1843 and his extensive land and properties were sold in an 1844 auction. The South Stoneham Tithe Map of 1845 indicates that Mr Peaty had purchased his residence Firgrove House, as well as the 'Fir Plantation' on the other side of Beacon Road.

The 1851 census reveals that another prosperous landowner Caleb H.Gater occupied the house with his wife, four children and four servants. He also owned both Hatch and Grange Farms amounting to 300 acres at that time. He had Hatch Grange House built there, but never lived in it. Today we know it as Hatch Grange Open Space, occupying the last remaining 30 acres.

A gentleman named Mr Burrell Ayre occupied Firgrove House until his death in 1875 and his Scottish widow lived there for the next ten years when she also died.

There were several different residents of this grand house until a Mr Albert Saunders was recorded as living there with his wife in the 1901 Census. He was an elderly historian and author who also had a cousin, Miss Box, and several members of the Bigsworth family, from the London area, living with him. They all appear to have been related.

The most notable resident was the youngest 'boarder', Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth, aged 16 years. He was then a 'cadet at a nautical training college'. Could that have been T.S. Mercury at Hamble, not far away? Its manager, Beatrice Fry (wife of C.B. Fry) lived only 200 yards away, at Glenbourne. This young man became a most memorable lodger for he became a Wing Commander in World War 1 and became a renowned flying ace. Not only did he drop two bombs on a German air-ship at night, but he was the first airman to sink a German submarine by air. For this he was awarded a DSO and in 1917 a 'bar' was added to this for his daring bombing and reconnaissance work. He was later awarded the AFC (Air Force Cross) and was made a CMG (Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George).

Having met W.E.Johns. the author, after the War, at the Air Ministry where he worked, Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth apparently became the inspiration in his books about the 'Boy's Own' hero BIGGLES!

From 1907 on Miss Box, his elderly aunt, occupied the house for several years. Several tenants lived there after 1915, until Mr G. Eaton.S.Cubitt, CBE and JP, took over during the 1930's. A charitable gentleman, he was reputed to have presented Coronation mugs to the local school-children in 1936.

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A tragic story was recorded in the Southern Daily Echo in 1944, stating that a Councillor and Mrs S.J. Lane, living at Firgrove House, had lost three sons (Richard, Roy and Peter) serving in the Forces during World War 2.

During the 1950's, the house, now over a hundred years old, took a complete change of direction and became a Children's Home named St. Philomena's. This was run by the religious order Sisters Of Our Lady Of Charity, connected to Redcote Convent in Bitterne.

In 1960, the dilapidated house, on its large plot, was sold to Ward Bros, Builders, who demolished it. A new access was created from Beacon Road and the site became the first section of Grosvenor Gardens. Like 'Pinewood' (Bethel) next door, another large house hit the dust!

Any further information on the above, including photographs, would be gratefully received.

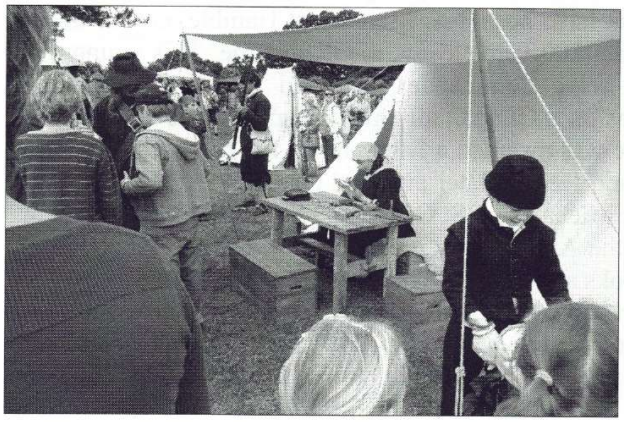
WEST END CARNIVAL 2010







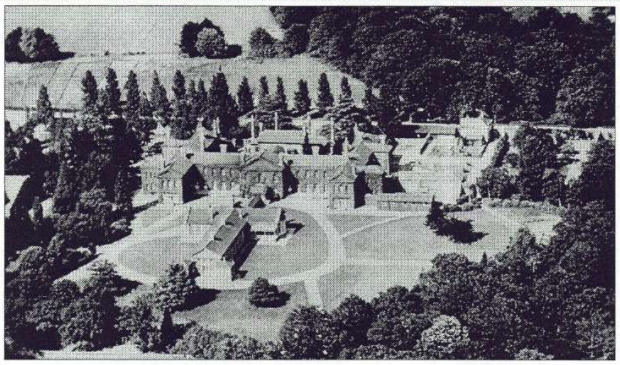






NOTES FROM A CONSTABLE'S POCKET BOOK - 7

By Roy Andrews





Left: Victoria House ("D" Block) prior to closure. **Right: Victoria House today as part of the Hampshire Constabulary complex**

In the early 1980's, I was working at the Hampshire Constabulary Headquarters in Winchester where amongst other things I was involved each year in designing a police exhibition, housed in a sixty by forty feet marquee, which was displayed at all of the large County Shows. Having been given a theme by the Chief Constable, a small group of lesser mortals, me included, came up with ideas for the display which I then translated into a scale cardboard model for the Chief's approval, before work could start on the real thing.

However it still came as something of a surprise when, one day, my then boss, Chief Inspector Barry Burton, breezed into the office and said he had just been talking to the Chief Constable, John Duke. Mr Duke was endeavouring to persuade the Police Authority to buy Victoria House at the now redundant Army Hospital at Netley as a training school. This we already knew. The Chief Constable's problem was that he felt the Police Authority members were having difficulty understanding from drawings what he envisaged for the site (that is not quite how the Chief phrased it but will do for a nice history society newsletter!) Mr. Duke had therefore asked if I could make a model of the building and show the layout of all the rooms in the two storey building. Barry Burton had said of course I could but had now dashed back to the office to see if in fact I could.

What does one say in that situation? It had to be yes, although I had no idea what the building looked like. Relieved, he explained it was a large H shaped building on two floors and the Chief would like to be able to take the roof off and show all the rooms on the first floor, colour coded as to their use and then remove that floor to reveal the ground floor similarly colour coded.

And how long did I have in which to build this detailed scale model I asked. He would like it for the next Police Authority meeting in eleven days time was the reply!

A mild case of panic then set in and so all other work was dropped. I went to the training department and got detailed plans of the building to see what I had let myself in for. I contacted the police spotter plane and asked that as and when they should fly over the hospital could they take a few photos and I got permission to visit the site.

The main hospital building fronting onto Southampton Water had been demolished many years before but tucked away in the trees behind this stood Victoria House. This had been built as a psychiatric hospital and was smaller than the main hospital although built to the same architectural design. Nearby was a second building which had housed the senior medical staff. It was these two buildings I had to model. The army had not long before abandoned Victoria House so it was in quite good condition, complete with padded cells, in the area where the bar is now, and scratched names on the window glass of long ago patients. Behind Victoria House, where the police playing field is now, was then still all the huts which made up what was known as the Red Cross Hospital. Barry Burton had a look in these and was amazed at how much equipment the army had left behind; he said that except for a bit of dust, an operation could still have been carried out in the operating theatres.

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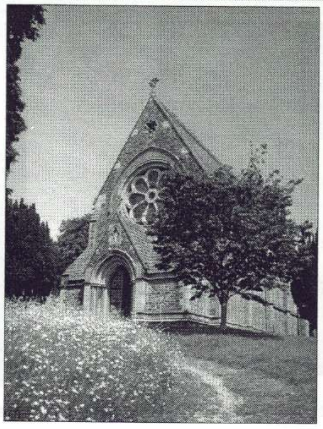
THE JULY MEETING

A Review by Stan Waight











TOP
Privett, Itchen Stoke and Colemore churches.

LEFT
Little Sombourne church
RIGHT
Freefolk church interior

The July meeting began with Chairman's announcement that the scheduled talk by Madeleine Selby at the September meeting had been cancelled. Instead, Mrs. Anne Baxandall, MBE, will talk about 'The Gunpowder Plot'.

Neville then introduced the evening's speaker, Dr. Frances Hurd, who is the head of the Hampshire section of The Churches Conservation Trust. The advertised talk - 'The Churches Conservation Trust in Hampshire and Sussex' - didn't sound that appealing, but turned out to be very interesting. The Trust currently looks after 343 redundant churches, in counties from Northumberland to Cornwall, that have been considered to be of exceptional historical, archaeological or architectural importance, despite some of them being Victorian.

Founded in 1969, the Trust has an income of £5 million, of which £2 million comes from the Church of England. But these grants have been frozen since 2001 - money is always tight, and conserving buildings is incredibly expensive. One recent project cost half a million alone, and that was just to stabilise a church tower. These ecclesiastical buildings are still consecrated, and the aim is at least to keep them watertight and stable. The main enemies are damp and vandalism.

After recounting the history of the Trust, Dr. Hurd went on to show slides of many churches in Hampshire and Sussex that are being conserved, and her enthusiasm for her job shone through her rapid-fire commentary. The slides were first-class and showed the features and characteristics, good and bad, that have warranted preservation. Artefacts, stained glass, works of art and even famous people were all mentioned. One particular subject was the church at Selsey which stands on the site of the original church of St. Wilfrid the evangelist.

The lively, and unexpectedly interesting, talk was quite short; it only lasted just over half-an-hour, and ended with an appeal for practical help from volunteers - gardening, cleaning and, of course, money.

For those of you who have access to the internet, the Trust's website at *visitchurches.org.uk* is worth a visit

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So with tools and modellers' ply wood I set to, using a scale of about thirty feet to the inch. I worked on it all day and in the evenings at home and throughout the two weekends I had available. I even roped in my wife Angela to make dozens of foam trees.

When finished, Victoria House was overall approx. 15 inches by 15 inches and came apart as the Chief had requested. The dozens of windows would have been difficult to model at that scale so I painted them on. The second building was about 2 inches square and they both sat on a base board which was about four feet by three feet to show the walled heavily wooded grounds to the building.

Yes I finished it, just, and on the appointed day took the model to the HCC Offices in Winchester for the Police Authority meeting. Thereafter every few weeks I would get a call from the Chief's office and take the model to the next Authority meeting.

In due course the Police Authority members were persuaded by the Chief to apply to the Home Office for a grant to purchase the whole of Netley Hospital site from the Ministry of Defence which is what happened. The police then retained about a third of the site, including Victoria House, for their use and the rest of the site Hampshire County Council took responsibility for and created The Royal Victoria Country Park.

And so on a summer's day when I take my grandsons to the park for a walk and an ice-cream and I see the many visitors picnicking, flying kites, playing ball or just generally enjoying the fresh air, I like to think that I played a very small part in making it all possible.

FROM OUR ARCHIVE.....
DO YOU KNOW WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE OR WHERE IT IS?



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

We are getting together information about the Home Guard & Auxiliary Units in West End in World War Two. This is an area sadly neglected in our archives and we would be happy to hear from anyone who has information, memories, photographs or artefacts who could share them with us. Please contact Nigel Wood on 02380 471886 or e-mail at westendlhs@aol.com - Your help would be much appreciated.

OBITUARY



DEREK AMEY

1934 - 2010

It is with sadness we have to report the death of Derek Amey on June 17th.
One of the founder members of our Society, he was our conscientious Treasurer for 10 years. Brought up in Bournemouth and with his love of music, it is understandable that he was a keen supporter of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.
Derek had a passion for transport of all kinds and worked for Hants & Dorset Buses and later, as a VAT Officer for HM Customs & Excise in Southampton Docks.
His health problems did not prevent him being involved with U3A (University of the Third Age) in recent years.

Derek was a regular worshipper at St. James' Church where his funeral was held on June 30th. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Pat, daughter Elizabeth and family.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE....

September 1
CHANGE FROM PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED TALK
THE GUNPOWDER PLOT
Anne Baxandall MBE

October 6
ICEBERG RIGHT AHEAD!
Geoff Watts

ON THIS DAY.....

On this day (4 August) in.....

1265 The Battle of Evesham took place, in which Simon de Montfort was defeated and killed by Royalist forces led by the future King Edward I, during the Barons' War.

1792 John Burgoyne, British general in the War of American Independence, who was forced to surrender at Saratoga in 1777 to General Gates, died.

1870 The Red Cross Society was founded in Britain by Lord Wantage.

1917 Captain Noel Chavasse, of the Royal Army Medical Corps, the second of only three to be awarded a bar to the Victoria Cross, died from his wounds.