



WESTENDER

JANUARY—FEBRUARY 2006

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 3

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LOCAL LEGENDS (2)

ARTHUR WELLESLEY BIGSWORTH



ARTHUR WELLESLEY BIGSWORTH IN R.N.A.S. UNIFORM

The second of our local legends is Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth. Born on 27th March 1885, the son of Arthur Wellesley Bigsworth Snr. and Kate Box. He received training as a Merchantile Marine officer, later joining the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant. He joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1914, serving in France and later Belgium. On 17th May 1915 he became the first officer to succeed in dropping bombs on a German Zeppelin airship AT NIGHT!

Promoted to Squadron Commander he became the first officer to destroy single handed a German submarine off the Belgian coast on 26th August 1915. For these and other acts of bravery he was awarded the DSO and bar and later the AFC. In later years he became Director of Equipment at the Air Ministry from 1931—1935.

It was whilst working at the Air Ministry that he met and worked with Capt. W.E.Johns who wrote the famous Biggles books, basing his hero on Arthur and his wartime exploits and it is rumoured his work for military intelligence. Arthur whose father was also named in honour of the Duke of Wellington (his father and grandfather were great admirers of the Duke) was a resident of West End for many years; in his early life at the age of 16 years he was listed as living at Firgrove House in Moorhill Road. He married Kathleen Eleanor in 1920 and continued living at West End. His name and wartime details appear on the West End Roll of Honour which is situated in the Parish Centre. He passed away on 24th February 1961.

West End Local History Society is sponsored by



**WEST END
PARISH
COUNCIL**



THE CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES 2005

A Review by Stan Waight



The December meeting took the long-accustomed form of a social evening. There was a good turnout, and we were arranged around tables of four, a convenient number to make up a quiz team. And this year we had not one, not two, but three quizzes! The questions were many and varied, and the story in which blanks had to be completed by the insertion of a car marquee or model was particularly testing and amusing.

The food was also varied and plentiful, and the Committee had provided wine and soft drinks to accompany it. For me it was the beginning of the calorie-rich festive season, but I'm sure we can all be excused a bit of a blow-out at this time of the year.

In between the food and the quizzes (not to mention the raffle, in which the prizes never seemed to end) John Avery used the most up-to-date technology to put on a picture parade of West End. This was made up of photos taken from our archive, and included rare, if not unique, shots of people and places in the parish in the long-ago.

The evening was going so well that it was in grave danger of overrunning our allotted time in the Parish Centre. It was one of the best I have enjoyed for many a long year, and that seemed to be the general opinion of all the members attending.

Our thanks must go to all the Committee for arranging such a splendid party, but there should be a special 'Thank You' to Nigel for acting as Master of Ceremonies for the rest of the evening after Chairman Neville had kicked off with his welcome to one and all.

THE IVES FAMILY & THE WEST END CONNECTION

Kindly donated recently to the museum was a transcript of memories of his earlier life written by John Ives. It makes fascinating reading and I have extracted some of the information below. The Ives family appears to have originated from Camberley in Surrey with many members of the family involved with the church. Shortly after 1900 John's grandfather and his two sons decided to emigrate to Canada. They settled near the border with Alberta and Saskatchewan at the time of the building of the trans-Canada railway. His father returned to England briefly to get married and his new wife joined him with her young daughter in 1916. On January 4th 1919 John was born in Edmonton, Alberta. His father died when the influenza epidemic swept the world just three weeks after he was born, and he along with his mother, sister and grandfather then set up home. They lived at a place called Streamstown near Lloydminster and life was hard with extreme winters. His grandfather sold their property in Streamstown and shortly after John returned to England. His grandfather had a brother named Alfred, who was the businessman of the family. He had a building estate agency in Camberley, another in Bournemouth and the Telegraph Wood Estate in West End, Southampton. He had been advised by his doctor to take life easier and hence made a world trip

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WHERE IS IT?



WELHS Vice Chairman Bill White has recently acquired the postcard shown above. The card appears to be one published by local postcard producer Rood Brothers and is clearly annotated on the face as you can see “*High Street, Westend, nr. Southampton*”. This is a mystery, as the scene is definitely NOT our West End. There appears to be probably a Wesleyan or Methodist Church on the right, opposite a building with the sign reading “The Red House”. Next to the church there appears to be a grocers/general store and next to that a barbers shop with a hanging sign which reads “Haircutting, shaving & shampooing”. A delightful street scene but it is not our West End (or Westend as it was known earlier). Bill would be obliged if any of our readers could identify where exactly this street scene was. Bill can be contacted direct or through the editorial address on the front cover.



TELEGRAPH WOOD ESTATE

Two views of Telegraph Wood Estate taken in the early 1920's when the area was being opened up and roads put in prior to building work. The sign in the left hand picture advertises Alfred Ives selling plots freehold as well as sand, gravel, leaf mould and timber. *(The full set of pictures can be seen in our museum)*

MAYOR TURNS ON WEST END'S CHRISTMAS LIGHTS



Left: THE MAYOR OF EASTLEIGH, COUNCILLOR BERNIE WRIGHT TURNS ON THE LIGHTS AT THE PARISH CENTRE Right: THE TREE ILLUMINATED



Above: EASTLEIGH BRASS BAND & SALVATION ARMY SINGERS Below: THE MAYOR TALKING TO LOCAL PEOPLE & PARISH CENTRE ILLUMINATIONS



Eastleigh Mayor Councillor Bernie Wright visited West End Parish Centre on Friday 2nd December 2005 to officially turn on the Christmas Lights. Between 6 and 7pm Parish Councillors and local people along with the Eastleigh Salvation Army Band and Singers gathered at the Parish Centre in spite of the wet weather to celebrate and sing carols and partake of refreshments.

MORE TALES OF THE OLD PARISH HALL

Joe Molloy (as re-told to Pauline Berry)

Joe Molloy, 'he of the long memory', has further reason to remember the old Parish Hall in West End other than for the popular Friday night dances in the 'twenties' (*see Westender Number 11 Volume 4— May-June 2005 'Friday Night Fever <in West End>!!*). His amazing recall goes back to his first trips to the old Hall (on the Netto/In-Excess site on the corner of Chapel Road and the High Street) with his mother during the First World War when he was a very small boy!

His father Patrick Molloy was away fighting in the war and his mother Ellen took the young Joe to this well-used community hall for the regular live entertainments which took place there.



ABOVE: 367 DRIVER PATRICK MOLLOY, RFA, WW1.

TOP LEFT: REUBEN FRAYS 'ROSEMOUNT STORES' SEEN IN THE 1950's.

BOTTOM RIGHT: TOWER HOUSE (THE WHITE BUILDING) AS SEEN IN 1999.



One can see how important any form of entertainment must have been to keep their spirits up, before the advent of television and radio. These 'concert parties' consisted of songs, poems, sketches and early silent films which were enjoyed by one and all who attended the packed venue in return for a few pence.

These first moving pictures would have been shown, flickering away in the darkened hall, on a screen erected hastily on a makeshift stage. Charlie Chaplin was one of many popular 'stars of the screen' who caused much hilarity with his amusing antics! One must not forget that Reuben Fray at 'Rosemount Stores' also ran a small cinema behind his shop (corner of Barbe Baker Avenue and the High Street) to meet the demand of avid cinema-goers in the 'twenties' and beyond.

Joe, however, remembers seeing the live theatrical sketches on the Parish Hall stage. He can still recall the amusing 'war' sketches and scenes, like the 'Old Bill' character jokes with candles lit on the darkened stage, and tin baths being banged to reproduce the sound-effects of war!

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Later, in the early 1920's when he was nine or ten years old, memories flood back to Joe of the rehearsals he took part in for the concert parties in the basement of Miss Synges home in Tower House (where the scenery was also kept). This white house still exists today in Tower Place off Upper New Road. Joe had to wear the costume of Oliver Cromwell for a sketch, and to shamefacedly wear a pair of brown knickers, kindly loaned by Miss or Mrs Acton of 'The Glen' in Church Hill. How embarrassed he was!

The late Charles Sillence, the local historian, related in a newspaper the startling event which affected several local residents, including Mrs Ellen Molloy, who had crowded into this large house 'The Glen' for a house sale or auction about 1927 (possibly after Mrs Acton had died). The floor, on which these enthusiastic bidders were standing, suddenly gave way under the weight and they fell through the boards into the room below. Luckily no-one was badly hurt and Joe's mother, although bruised on the legs, survived to tell the tale!

If you can elaborate on any of these stories please contact Pauline Berry on 023 8046 2490.

SCHOOL RECORDS COME TO THE MUSEUM



Shown above are some of the items handed to WELHS museum for safe keeping by St. James School at West End recently. We have been extremely fortunate in being entrusted with these items which date back to 1862 and include School Admission Registers from 1862 to 1952 as well as a Summary Register for 1924 - 1929, the door knocker taken from the Old Parish Hall which was built in 1838 as the villages National School which would have been on the Resident Master's front door facing the High Street. Also included was a reading card (undated) for Standards V, VI and VII entitled "*The Pied Piper of Hamelin*". This archive will be invaluable for family history research as well as highlighting what school was like all those years ago when children had to pay for the privilege of education.

THE ROYAL BLUE COACH RALLY

John Avery

Each summer coach and bus preservation enthusiasts head off to certain towns to meet up with fellow devotees. I was asked to produce a postcard for the Dorset Transport Circle and as a result I now get invitations when their coach is out and about.

This summer I joined them on the Royal Blue Coaches Anniversary run from Bournemouth to Exeter and we took all the pre-trunk roads route passing through the villages of Dorset and Devon.



Readers who can recall our rather fine Hants & Dorset coach station will no doubt also place the fine dark blue and cream livery of the Royal Blue fleet. Later when the National Express was formed, the traditional livery on the old coach lines was dropped in favour of the all-white colour. For those of you able to view the newsletter on the WELHS web site take a peak at these pages in colour!

I travelled on the coach on the far right of the picture above. The Royal Blues were operated jointly by Southern National and Western National and had a fine record of speed, comfort and reliability and most importantly safety. Built in 1952 by Eastern Coachworks of Lowestoft, OTT 98 was fitted with a Gardner diesel engine famed for their smooth operation and their extraordinary longevity. Based at Penzance the coach would travel up to London Victoria and travel back down to Cornwall the next day - remember before motorways and modern roads and especially pre power steering and automatic gear boxes this was by considerable effort by the driver. The gear box as some older members will be able to re-call was a "crash box" and difficult to master at first. Under a licensing agreement with the Traffic Commissioners when the Blues got to Portsmouth, Southdown took over the route to Brighton. Sometimes this was a change of coach but more often than not a Southdown driver took over the driving of the Royal Blue. The Southdown drivers were used to pre-select semi automatic boxes so sometimes passengers became somewhat concerned at the crashing and grinding noises as the new driver settled in. OTT 98 used to average 92,000 miles a year when in service, on our trip to Exeter she was a little short of wind climbing the hills and we sometimes had a small train of patient bemused motorists behind.

At Bridport when we all met up for a coffee and comfort break there was the opportunity to try out other coaches for the rest of the journey so I boarded a 1949 Bristol half cab in the livery of Wilts & Dorset. A delightful cherry red and chocolate finish, the coach is owned by a man and his wife and its preservation is a fine tribute to their dedication.

The Royal Blues were occasionally snowed up especially in Dorset in the more severe winters we experienced a few years ago. Askers Roadhouse (now defunct) on a hill 3 miles out of Bridport often was an unexpected overnight stay for coach travellers. Travelling back from Plymouth by car on one occasion I got stuck in a snow drift and with about 6 other motorists boarded a stranded Royal Blue coach who was able to keep his engine running providing warmth to us all until a snow plough arrived. A few months later

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I returned the courtesy by picking up the driver of a Royal Blue coach which had broken down when the oil pump went and drove him off to search for a telephone box on the A35. No mobile phones in those days, now you would have at least 10 or so passengers ringing home to say "I'll be late for tea".



The 1949 Bristol coach displaying on hire to Royal Blue. During holiday periods coaches were hired in firstly from Tilling/British Transport Commission operatives and also from contractors outside of the group.

OTT 98 went into preservation but that was a working retirement as rallies in Scotland, the north of England, Bristol, Basingstoke and Exeter was the way she spent her summers. The transport enthusiasts stored her in a farmer's field near Weymouth and about 5 years ago disaster as jobs broke in, managed to start the engine and drove it across fields and through a too narrow gateway causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. The coach took 18 months of voluntary labour to get back into the normal state of repair. Her half hour of fame was when it was featured in a "Z-Cars" episode. The "baddie" escaped police attention at a motorway service station by climbing onto the luggage compartment on the roof. There were folding aluminium steps the width of a house brick on the rear of the coach. Hard to visualise in these health and safety conscious days but drivers had to climb onto the roof to place and remove passengers heavy suitcases in all weathers. Traditionally these roof carrying types of coaches were known in the trade as "camel humps". When I received my customary Christmas card this year from a friend at Weymouth there was the sad news that OTT 98 would be facing a bill of £6,000 to keep the 53 year old coach roadworthy and Dorset Transport Circle are hopeful that a transport museum or collection might be able to house the coach as a static display.



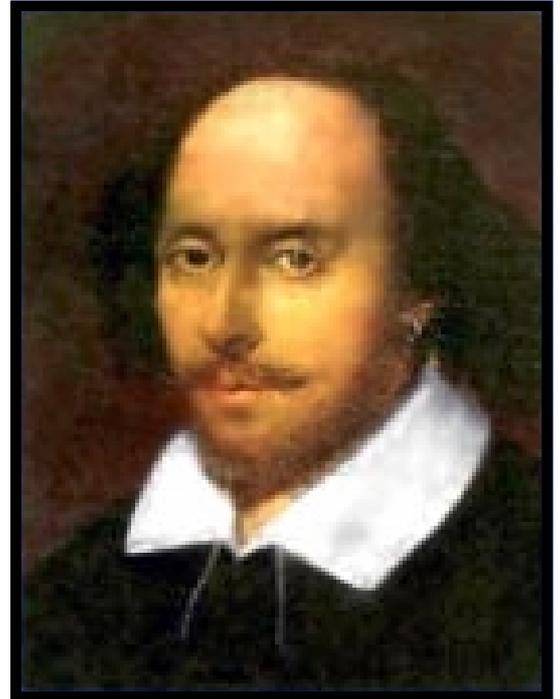
A welcome stop-over at Exeter for these "senior citizens"

Did Shakespeare come to Hampshire?

A review by Stan Waight



ABOVE: THE REMAINS OF THE GATEHOUSE AT TITCHFIELD ABBEY.



RIGHT: ONE OF MANY PORTRAITS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

This was the question posed by George Watts when he addressed our January meeting, and he proceeded to put forward a very plausible case for saying ‘Yes’. George is an accomplished speaker, and he demanded our attention throughout his hour-long talk despite a limited number of visual aids.

Shakespeare (1564-1616) is a world-wide subject of continuous research, and George reckons that around one book per month is written about him. For all that, the known facts about him and his life are relatively few and anything vaguely relating to the bard has been dredged time and time again for substance. Every issue is a mystery and authors reach widely differing conclusions, but George’s case was based on thirteen reasons for believing that the playwright and poet spent time in our county. His evidence was divided into four categories - the probable, the possible, the speculative and the unlikely - and the dates of the sources from which the evidence was drawn are very important. Figuring largely in the story were the Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton, and his mother the former Mary Browne. Their family seat was Place House, the former abbey at Titchfield, where a room was called ‘the Play House’ in a map of 1610.

I found it intriguing to hear that, among his many grants by Henry VIII, the first Earl of Southampton was Bailiff of Snitterfield, a small manor just to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon. Snitterfield was the home of Shakespeare’s grandfather, and the first earl employed a number of the Shakespeare family at his London house - ‘probable’ evidence. Also among the ‘probables’ was the fact that two of Shakespeare’s early poems were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, while the ‘possibles’ included mother and son references in his sonnets. Henry VI had associations with Titchfield, and George suggested that Shakespeare may have been commissioned to write the play of that name for that reason (another ‘possible’). Was the fair mentioned in *Love’s Labours Lost* really Titchfield Fair, and was there any significance in the marriage of a Hamlet Glasspole at Titchfield in 1610 (both among the ‘speculatives’). An obscure reference to Shakespeare’s employment as a school teacher, coupled with a grammar school marked on the 1610 map of Titchfield and now identified as a timber-framed building with dendrochronological connections with Henry VI’s reign must, I think, fall within the realms of ‘speculative in the extreme’. Furthermore, George discounts any claims of Shakespeare connections with Wilton House as ‘unlikely’.

Come again soon George!

Continued from page 2

in 1924, during which he visited the family in Canada, but collapsed and died whilst he was in Toronto. He was buried in Canada and later exhumed and re-buried in Camberley. He had no children and after leaving his wife well provided for he left his estates to his ten brothers and sisters. Alfred Ives had previously put in the roads and the water and gas utilities on the Telegraph Wood Estate in West End and there were eight or ten houses that had been built but not sold. In May, either 1928 or 1929, his grandfather and mother decided to return to England and they lived on the West End Estate that his grandfather had inherited on the death of Alfred. In West End they regularly attended Mr St.Barbe Baker's Mission Hall in Beacon Road as well as John attending the Sunday School there. John took a job at Armstrong Whitworth's aircraft factory in Hamble and his grandfather and mother built a house for themselves in Western Road. Needing assistance with the building work, John left his job and went into the building trade. The house was finished in 1939 and they moved in just before war broke out in the September. Nothing else was sold before the war as they waited for the plots inside the Borough of Southampton to go first. At one time he offered land for sale at £1 per foot of frontage but never sold a plot! The West End Estate was divided up into 9 or 10 lots and as the other family members weren't interested in building he bought most of them up and eventually built some 50 houses and bungalows there. During the war years he joined the Royal Artillery and served overseas, surviving Dunkirk and later becoming a prisoner of the Japanese after Singapore fell, he was forced to work as a prisoner on the infamous "Burma Railway". The transcript makes fascinating reading and there is also a copy available for you to read in our museum.

On this day (1st.February) in.....

1895 John Ford, American director of action-adventure and western films, born at Cape Elizabeth in Maine as Sean O'Feeney or O'Fearná.

1900 Stephen Potter, British writer of humorous books, born.

1901 Clark Gable, American film actor and Oscar winner, born at Cadiz in Ohio, the son of an oil man.

1908 Carlos I, King of Portugal, was assassinated.

1915 Stanley Matthews, the legendary English footballer, born at Hanley in Staffordshire.

1915 Passport photographs were first required in Britain.

1920 The North West Mounted Police changed their name to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE

March 1

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

plus

**A LOOK AT OLD WEST END ARCHIVE
IMAGES**

April 5

THE CUCKOO IN THE PHEASANT'S NEST

(Southwick House and D-Day)

Madeleine Selby

May 3

THE CAPTAIN'S LADY

(The Tale of the Indomitable Mrs C.B. Fry)

Ron Morris