



WESTENDER

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LOCAL LEGENDS (13)

WILLIAM JEFFERIES COLLINS 1856 - 1939



William Jefferies Collins was born in London in 1856, the son of a successful businessman Benjamin Collins, who ran the bookbinding business of Benjamin Collins & Sons of London. He married a music teacher, Mary Martin, and they had a total of six children; Ada, William, Herbert, Ethel, Martyn and Ralph. The Collins building firm seems to be traced back to 1900 when W.J.Collins demolished their original family home at Fortis Green in North London and prepared the grounds for building development. Of his sons, Herbert became the well known architect (who was also responsible for our museum building, once the village Fire Station), William also became an architect, whilst Ralph became a builder and tragically Martyn was killed in Flanders during the Great War.

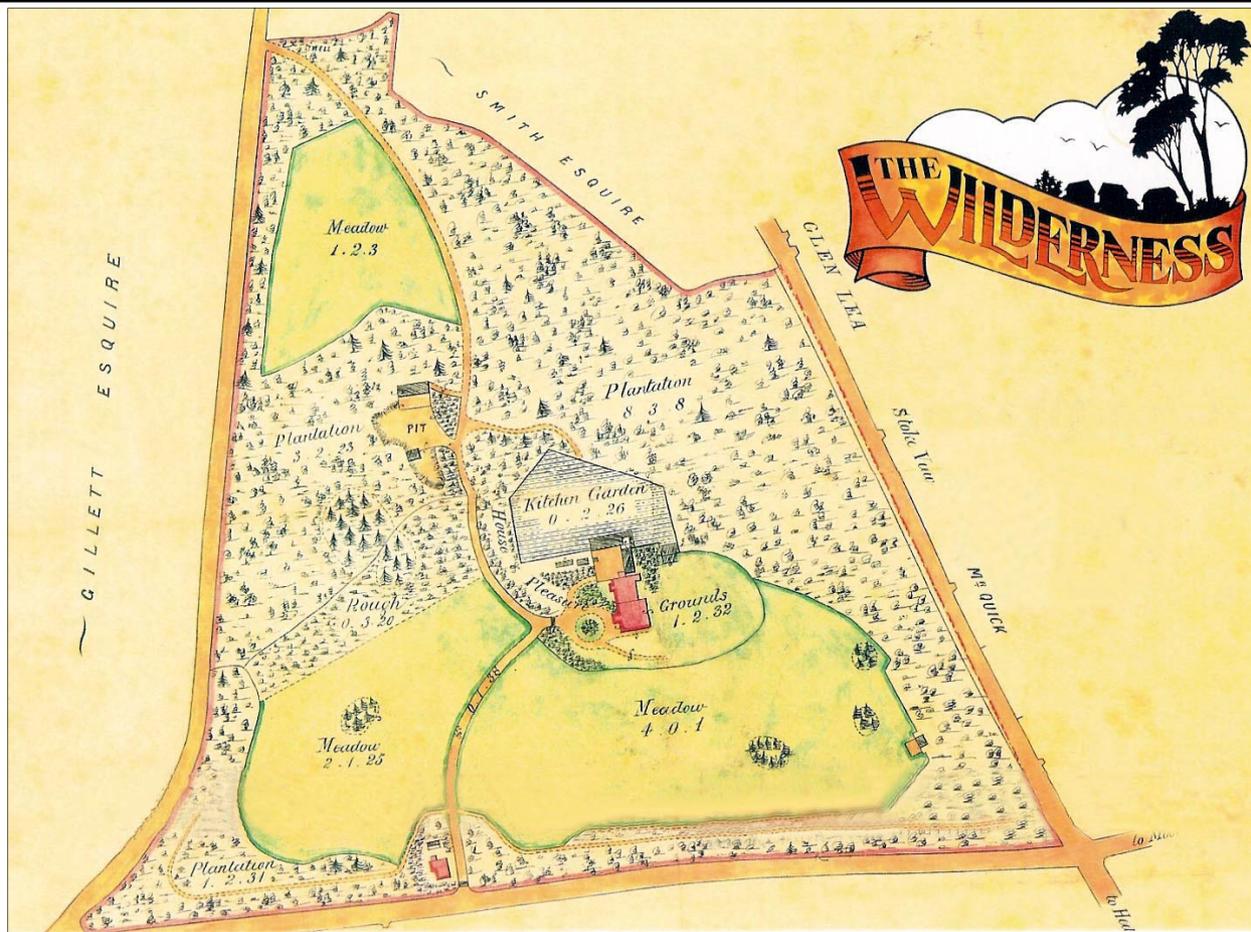
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Continued from front page

William Jefferies Collins became a speculative builder, with a very shrewd business sense, making a fortune out of buying up land adjacent to recently opened railway lines, on which he built houses for the growing middle classes in the suburbs of North London.

In 1911 W.J. Collins moved to Southampton later occupying "The Wilderness" house and estate on the corner of Church Hill and West End Road until 1939. Around 1922 Herbert and his wife Anne also moved to West End and for a few months occupied the gate lodge to "The Wilderness".

An interesting partnership developed over the years in the Collins family; "W.J." frequently provided the funding, whilst Herbert designed the houses and the building work was carried out by Ralph – an early version of "keep it in the family". Throughout his time in West End he generously contributed to many local charities and deserving cases, making the grounds of "The Wilderness" available to many local events and taking a particular interest in the development of The Boys' Brigade and the Girls' Life Brigade. In 1922 for instance he donated £10,000 for the new Brigade headquarters in Cranbury Terrace, Southampton. He was a generous supporter of the Royal South Hants and Southampton Hospital and was made a vice-president of the institution and a member of the Management Committee from 1927 until 1937. He also gave generously to the Children's Hospital of which he was a vice-president as he also did for the YMCA among countless other good works.

He served as a Parish Councillor for Westend, was a valued member of the Rotary Club of Southampton and one of the oldest members of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce. He served for a time on the Southampton Town Council and was a member of the Court of Governors of Southampton University College (as it was then known). In 1929 Mr and Mrs Collins celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. William Jefferies Collins died in May 1939 aged 84 years old. It was said of him, "...acts of generosity and kindly thought for those less fortunate than himself in whose welfare he always took a practical interest". A fitting epitaph for a very kind, generous man.

MEMORIES OF THORNHILL - Part 2

Roy Andrews

Pre-amalgamation with Southampton in the early 1950's Thornhill bungalow town where I grew up was very rural being surrounded by fields and woods, the remains of Thornhill Park Estate.

To the south and east were the fields of Candy's Farm which was situated near to Thornhill roundabout on the A27. A big attraction to small boys was situated next to the farm, behind a high corrugated iron fence was a winter storage yard for a travelling fair. There could be found caravans, lorries and bright painted trailers of showmen's rides.

Another attraction in a field off Kanes Hill in the playing field of what is now Kanes Hill School was the body of a Southampton double decker tram still in its wartime grey paint.

As for the rest of the farm fields they seem to be mainly arable. I remember watching tractors harvesting the cereal with pre-World War 2 equipment which could equally as well have been pulled by horses. After the harvest, haystacks were built the old fashioned way in a square with a pitched roof. We kids would then be chased off by the farmer's girl when we used the top of the haystack as a slide.

At the bottom of the valley, below the fields and under the ridge on top of which now is situated Hightown was a water meadow the like of which is rarely found today. I would often wander through it in soggy sandals among a glorious array of multi-coloured flowers many as tall as me, looking for the numerous butterflies which inhabited the area.

Across the road from my bungalow which faced west towards Southampton was a grassy, boggy area with large patches of blackberry brambles. Through this ran a stream running parallel with my road which was fed by a number of springs at the top of the road near to the locally famous 'Swinging Tree', which stood by itself in open ground. Already dead when I first remember it the tree got its name from the long ropes which could be thrown over its branches to create swings. These as you swept out high over the land sloping away below you was one of the most frighteningly exhilarating experiences any small boy or girl could experience.



Left:

**VIEW OF THORNHILL WOOD
AT THE TOP OF
TENNYSON (now Farringford)
ROAD**

Photo taken in the 1940's

The spring fed stream ran the length of my road, now called Farringford Road, where just beyond the bottom of the road it formed a very large pond which had been created by a brick dam built across a low valley approximately where the shops in Hinkler Road are now situated. The dam built in the days of Thornhill Park House thus created a haven for wildlife; ducks, frogs, newts and a magnet for small boys to fall into, which I did on more than one occasion.

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Beyond the stream and parallel with my road was a strip of woodland made up of rhododendron bushes surrounding oak, chestnut and fir trees. Fifty years on, some of these still survive among the council houses.

Beyond this woodland was a large area, of many acres of tall grass and bracken, both of which by the end of each summer were tinder dry. This often attracted the local arsonists which resulted in the attendance of the Fire Brigade; Bill Butt on the West End fire engine was related to Dad by marriage. As well as helping to beat out the flames once out we would all be lined up by the local constabulary as they endeavoured to establish who still had the box of matches in their pocket.

From this grassland westward for the rest of the way to Bursledon Road again many acres the land became more like heath land covered in heather, Silver Birch and Scots Pine. Here also lived adders, the only poisonous snake in this country which we children learnt to be wary of and avoid.

To the south of the heath and grassland in a line back from Bursledon Road to the ornamental pond was more woodland hidden, in which were two large pits from which had been extracted gravel at some time, perhaps during World War 2. I used the steep sides to hone my small boy mountaineering skills. In the woodland next to the ornamental pond and where St. Christophers church stands today was a large orchard which belonged to a house which stood close to today's junction of Pepys Avenue and Hinkler Road. I can still remember going into the barn of this house after the apples had been harvested and seeing layer upon layer of bright red apples, the scent of which remains with me to this day.

And so that was my playground as a small boy, hundreds of acres we roamed all day without fear, except that is when the gypsies with their horse-drawn caravans set up camp in the woods. We children well knew that gypsies ate children and so we played in our gardens 'till they moved on.

The concluding Part 3 will appear in the next issue of "Westender" Ed.

MISTER TAMBOURINE MAN.....



PARISH CHAIRMAN NEVILLE DICKINSON JOINING IN WITH THE SALVATION ARMY GROUP AT THE PARISH CENTRE

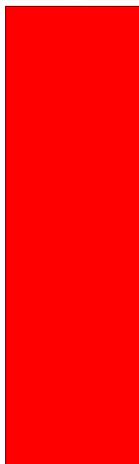
On yet another wet and windy evening, Zoe the West End Carnival Maid of Honour, switched on the Christmas lights in the village on Friday 30th November 2007. She was ably assisted by the Chairman of the West End Parish Council - Councillor Neville Dickinson.

Over 100 parishioners attended. The mulled wine and mince pies were duly consumed and the revellers sang along to and were entertained by the Salvation Army from Eastleigh. During the entertainment provided by the Salvation Army some of the local children as well as our Parish Chairman Neville joined in playing the tambourine - as the above pictures show, Neville proved to be "a natural" with the tambourine! Thank you to all the Parish Staff who made the evening memorable in spite of the atrocious weather.

Leading up to Christmas on 15th December the Annual Childrens Party and on 16th December the Annual Senior Citizens Party both proved to be a resounding success - well done West End! It's nice to live in a village community that takes care of all its residents.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

A Review by Stan Waight



What a pleasant evening it was!

I came to the conclusion a long time ago that, despite our average age, the members of the West End Local History Society are a very jolly lot. The December meeting proved that yet again.

The programme for the evening, introduced by Chairman Neville, was Quiz, Entertainment, Eats, Entertainment, Quiz and Raffle, in that order. This has become the traditional pattern, and, as always, it went down very well.

I thought that the quizzes, devised by Nigel and supervised by Lin, were just a touch more difficult than in previous years (and that's not just because I wasn't on the winning team!). And some of the answers were quite surprising, particularly the collective names of animals.

As for the entertainment, we welcomed the return of Mark Ponsford - and were not disappointed. Isn't he an energetic bloke? And with what skill he accompanies himself at the piano? His repertoire is varied, so that although his theme was just the same as last year's there was no repetition of items. His two-session programme was well suited to an ageing audience, and he passed easily from Noel Coward to Flanders and Swann, via Judy Garland and Stanley Holloway. The items included such old favourites as "Don't put your daughter on the stage Mrs. Worthington", "Uncle Harry" (the would-be missionary), "Somewhere, over the Rainbow" and "The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God" (I was a fan of Stanley Holloway, and particularly enjoyed "Albert and the Lion"). How does he remember all the words of those items he delivers at great speed? A bit of poetic licence laced with a little inuendo all went to make his contribution a very agreeable one.

The members brought along a surprisingly wide variation of food (more than enough mince pies this year!), and the wine and soft drinks provided by the Society made up a very fine spread indeed.

Everyone seemed reluctant to go home after such a pleasant evening, and our hearty thanks go to all the Committee members for eventually sending us on our way in such high humour.

THE GOLDEN AGE OF POSTCARD COLLECTING

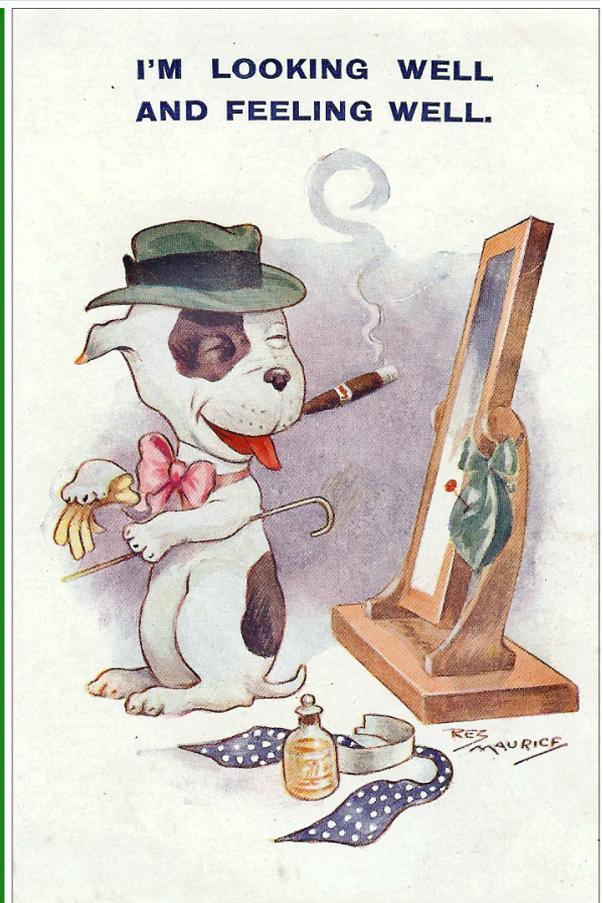
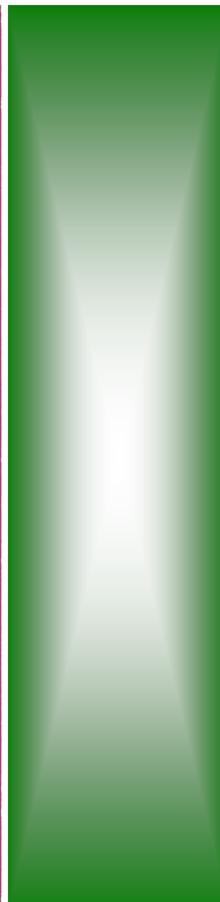
Pauline Berry

Collecting old picture postcards is now an ever increasingly popular hobby, relatively inexpensive and taking up little space. Old postcards are collectable for a variety of reasons: the pictures are instant snapshots of the past, a slice of social history permanently frozen in time. Not only the picture or photograph, but also the stamp, postmark, message and address are of interest to many, if only to tell us what was important to the average person a century ago.

Ordinary messages which we would telephone, text or e-mail today, such as “*See you again this Friday morning Mabel*”, or “*The weather is awful but we walk on the sand every day*” or “*How is Uncle Bert and his screws?*”. Some are poignant messages to loved ones going to war and others appear to be coded, sent between lovers.

Austria and other continental countries were quicker than us to use picture post-cards as a means of communication. By 1894 the Post Office in Great Britain permitted their use with a message (on the picture side) with an attached stamp. By 1902 things improved greatly when the reverse side was divided, for the purpose of a message and address, on a postcard of a standard size at last.

From this time on until the First World War, an explosion of cards were posted on a weekly basis. They were cheap, sold in shops and by travelling vendors, needing only a halfpenny stamp at first. Luckily many were saved by their recipients and ended up in their albums. The picture subjects were then hugely varied: local scenes, royalty, children, beauties, animals, comic sketches and even serious accidents (rail, mining etc..). By the time World War One arrived, numbers diminished but heroic and patriotic post-cards were popular both serious and comic.



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National firms like Raphael Tuck, Valentine and Frith etc.. published post-cards in huge quantities, but after the war they never quite regained the same popularity, allowing the increasing use of the telephone, telegram etc.. There was less variety, although scenic views and cheeky, comic cartoons, such as those of Donald McGill still thrived. Bonzo the dog and chubby children drawn by Mabel Lucie Attwell were always in demand.

One can still purchase these old cards through collectors' fairs, advertisements and web-sites, for prices varying from £2 to £25 for rarer scenes. Special subject cards such as the Titanic disaster, the Suffragette Movement, sporting and social history scenes can command very high prices, depending on condition.

Be warned, once you have embarked on your specialist collection this can become a passion and you are soon caught by the bug! We continue to search for further post-card scenes of West End which we know exist somewhere. These include certain street scenes, public house, group photo's, the South Stoneham Institution etc. Farming scenes are in short supply. If you have any which we may beg, buy or borrow to copy, please check first to see if it is one we are looking for. Our archives will be all the richer for their inclusion!

ARTICLES WANTED FOR PUBLICATION

We require articles for "Westender" - either short or long items, specific studies or general historical pieces. You don't have to be a member of the society to contribute, or a qualified writer, in fact, we would welcome input from any of our readers, home or abroad. Articles to be sent to the Editor at the address shown on the front page or e-mail it to the Editor at westendlhs@aol.com - Your contribution would be much appreciated. Ed.

THE JANUARY MEETING

A Review by Stan Waight



THE BOOK OF
BITTERNE
From Roman Town to City Suburb
BITTERNE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Keith Marsh produced what, for me, has been the best PowerPoint presentation to date. The slides were simple, but colourful and beautifully done. He talked from trigger notes, but we would never have known if he hadn't told us.

Having said that, this first talk for 2008 was billed as 'The Book of Bitterne - From Roman town to City Suburb', and it was a little disappointing not to hear more about the historical development of the 'village', as Keith called it. It was, indeed, a talk about a book. The book contains a 'Timeline of Major and Local Events' (c1500 BC - 2006), but the Roman town of Clausentum wasn't mentioned in the talk and there was little coverage of the period until the era of photography.

The Bitterne Local History Society advertises the book on its website, saying:

"Bitterne comes alive in this wonderful new book. The weddings and celebrations, schools and businesses, clubs and societies, worthies and characters, churches and chapels and pubs and pastimes – reveal Bitterne as a vibrant community."

and it certainly lives up to that. It is lavishly illustrated with photographs, some engravings and a few maps, and one of our newer members was delighted to find a photo of her late husband with his Beechwood School class of 1979.

Keith talked about people and houses and churches and schools, about the by-pass and the Stoneham Union here in West End. Topics included Bitterne at war, service in the community, a bit about pubs, the Diapers of Bitterne, the Riverside Park miniature Railway, and a host of others that drew murmurs of pleasure from members of the audience. It was a trip down memory lane for those who were born and bred in the area and an enjoyable evening for the relative newcomers.

WEST END CARNIVAL AND WEST END PARISH PLAN

West End Carnival will be held on Saturday 21st June this year, the theme for the procession is to be "Musicals", and we have great hopes that even more people will get involved. We also hope the weather will be kinder to us than last year!

We hope to be stage a "Village Fete" type of event on Hatch Grange after the Carnival procession which will start at the end of Barbe Baker Avenue as usual, go up Quob Lane, across Chapel road and then into Hope Road, turning left into St. James Road and at the top go right into the High Street, then right into Chapel Road, finishing outside Hatch Grange just past the Parish Centre.

The new title for the West End Parish Plan will be "West End Wishes...", the Steering Group is up and running and hope to exhibit an outline plan at the West End Carnival for parishioners to comment on.

THE FRAY FAMILY ARCHIVE



ABOVE
Mr Reeves at Hickley farmhouse,
photograph taken in 1915



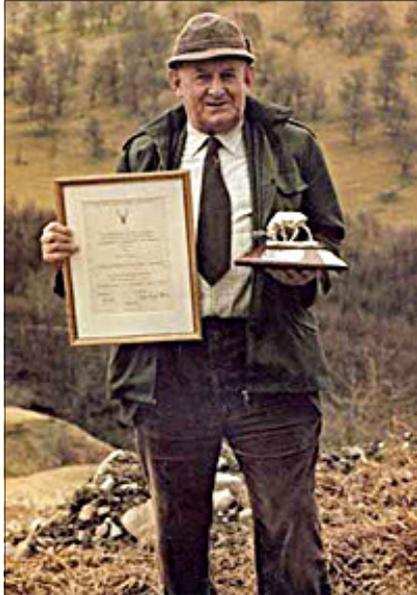
LEFT
Schoolchildren and teacher
group taken at Westend
National School (corner of
Chapel Road and High Street),
Photograph taken c.1890-1900

We have been extremely fortunate to have had access to the local Fray family photographic archive which belonged to Vera Fray through the good offices of her daughter Linda Glasspool (nee Fray). The photo's include a large number of carte de visite dating back to 1870, as well as numerous wedding groups, local personalities, local buildings, and many photographs of Fray family members in the Great War. Amongst this collection, are the two photographs shown above; the only surviving photo of Hickley Farm from 1915 and one of only two known class pictures from the old National School taken we believe around 1890-1900. Our grateful thanks to Linda for her kindness and help.

Ed.

OBITUARY

PETER HORWILL CARNE



Long standing member of West End Local History Society Peter Carne sadly passed away on 4th December 2007, aged 83 years old. A former journalist with The Echo newspaper, he was a leading light at The British Deer Society for many years and an avid writer, being author of many books and articles related to Rambling, Countryside and local matters as well as writing the definitive book about British Deer breeds. Although confined to a local Nursing Home for some time prior to his death, Peter will be sadly missed by many local people, being described by one WELHS founder member as “a real gentleman”. His funeral service took place at St. James’ Church, West End on Monday 17th December 2007 at 12.00 noon, followed by interment at West End New Cemetery. Our condolences, albeit belated, are extended to his wife Gladys, son Richard and grandchildren Heather, James and Joseph.

On this day (6th. February) in.....

- 1665 Queen Anne was born at St. James’s Palace, the second daughter of James II by his first wife Anne Hyde.
- 1783 Lancelot Brown known as ‘Capability’ Brown, English landscape gardener, noted especially for the gardens at Blenheim and Kew, died.
- 1840 The Treaty of Waitangi was concluded by Captain Hobson, between Britain and the Maori chiefs of New Zealand - proclaiming British sovereignty and protection.
- 1918 Women were first permitted to vote in elections to the Parliament at Westminster - their first vote actually came in the General Election on 14th December 1918.
- 1924 Billy Wright, English footballer and international with 105 caps, born at Ironbridge in Shropshire.
- 1931 Fred Truman, Yorkshire and England cricketer, born at Scotch Springs.

THE NEXT MEETINGS ARE

March 5
OLD SOUTHAMPTON
Jill Daniels

April 2
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
and Images from our Archive

May 7
500 YEARS OF PORTSMOUTH ROYAL DOCKYARD
Madeleine Selby