



# WESTENDER

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CHRISTMAS ISSUE

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## HOW IT WAS (2) WEST END HIGH STREET



WEST END HIGH STREET

The above illustration is an idyllic view of the High Street in West End looking towards Shotter's Hill and dates to the early 1920's. Produced by local postcard photographer Rood Bros it shows the old National School on the corner of Chapel Road and High Street on the left. The school dated back to 1838 and became the Parish Hall when the school moved to Hildene in 1904. Note the roads are still compacted dirt with no pavements! Following on from the Parish Hall are a series of cottages up to the white building which was the original West End Brewery with the crossroads with Upper and Lower New Road just behind the gentleman standing in the roadway. The main building on the other side of the road is Langford's, the general store and Post Office.

West End Local History Society & Westender is sponsored by



**WEST END  
PARISH  
COUNCIL**



## EXAMINING THE SEABED OF THE SOLENT & WIGHT

A Review by Stan Waight



Above: Rebecca Causer. Right: Underwater survey

Despite the average age of our members and the nature of our Society, no-one could accuse us of being a stuffy lot. Nevertheless Rebecca Causer blew into our October meeting like a breath of fresh air and belied the sober title of her talk. After the meeting there were remarks such as “lively”, “bubbly”, “excited” and “infectious”, and she was all of that. There were many amusing moments too.

Rebecca said that it was to be her last public appearance, for she was leaving her job as Projects Officer with the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology at the end of that very week to do other things, including going off to New Zealand to live for a while.

The technological approach to underwater archaeology is quite similar to that to the land-based variety, except that its divers have to cope with currents and poor visibility. While the object of the Trust is to survey and protect submerged sites, it also operates along the foreshore. Rebecca’s work included visits to schools and children are even taught how to dive.

The Trust works closely with the aggregates industry, which is bound to report archaeological finds. The modern world uses masses of aggregates (sand and gravel to you and me) - mainly in the construction industry, but also for landfill and coastline management - and 20% of it comes from the seabed. Sophisticated technology is used for surveys and the Trust is called in whenever there is a perceived threat to archaeology.

Aggregates were deposited 18,000 years ago by fast flowing rivers known as paleochannels that ran through the same areas that our ancestors lived and hunted in, and many artefacts were deposited too. Not only that, but the rising sea level inundated and preserved existing settlement sites. Rebecca touched briefly on Britain’s eventual separation from mainland Europe and the question ‘How did we get here’.

The Trust looks at sites with many factors in mind, such as human evolution, technological development and environmental change. And its view of the marine historic environment is not just to do with submerged landscapes - it is also concerned with shipwrecks, of which there are at least 4,000 in the Solent area alone. Although its role is to dive and record rather more than to involve itself in extensive archaeological ‘digging’, many interesting artefacts have been brought up.

It was typical of Rebecca’s almost breathless presentation that she got quite excited when describing the hand axes that had been found, and the Roman amphora that still contained olives. Her presentation included a short video and a number of electronic slides, but to me they were secondary to the talk itself, which was rattled off without notes.

Contrary to expectation, it proved to be quite a remarkable evening.

## THE FASTEST LANDLORD IN WEST END?

by Pauline Berry



**ABOVE**  
A typical Benny Hill pose

**RIGHT**  
Newspaper cutting from The Southampton Guardian dated  
Wednesday 1st June 1988 relating Benny and Nelson's  
reunion



In the middle of recalling memories of his schooldays, former West End resident, Joe Molloy, suddenly changed course and told me about one of his school friends, Nelson Brown. Nelson, born about 1911, one of three brothers, including Victor and Jack, lived at Shirley Cottages on the High Street. The row of terraced cottages are still standing and they lived in the end one next to the old forge which used to be opposite the gates of Hatch Grange. Joe recollects the sparks from the forge whilst the blacksmith, Mr O'Brien, shod one of many horses brought there.

Following a military career, Victor (Vic) Brown became a priest and Jack, like his brother Nelson, worked for British Rail in Eastleigh. Nelson and his wife Irene settled in Eastleigh and took in lodgers about the time of the Second World War to make ends meet. One of the lodgers staying at 'The Nook' was a young man named Alfie Hill.

Alfie worked at Woolworth's in Eastleigh when he was about sixteen and left soon after, to become 'the fastest milkman in the West'. Ring a bell? Yes, it was Benny Hill in his early days, when he was trying to break into show business. He worked for Hann's Dairies and delivered milk in the Eastleigh and Bishopstoke areas. Benny later recalled adding the bill of customers who couldn't pay onto a richer customers account!

Benny looked up his former landlord 'who was like a Dad' in 1988 and of course the Press went too. Nelson recalled Benny being a live-wire even then. 'He would play his guitar and drums for hours in his bedroom, strumming along to the radio'. In those days Benny would sing and play on the bandstand in the park and occasionally perform in a concert at the Town Hall. Nelson remembered his comic turn dressed as a vicar which brought the house down. During this reunion in 1988, when they quaffed champagne, Benny and Nelson recalled the war-time meals they shared.

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*'There wasn't a lot of money but there was always good grub'. 'Plenty of food and plenty of fun. That's all you needed unless you're evil minded!'* they both agreed.

Joe never met Benny, but, one day about 1990, when he was crossing the parks in Southampton near the Cenotaph, he spotted *'an unusual type of person'* strolling along in front of him. He was wearing a very smart tailored jacket and wearing a broad-brimmed hat jammed down firmly on his head. As Joe passed this man he recognised the chubby faced features of Benny Hill, lost in thought. Joe didn't speak, but the sight of this famous comedian, brought a smile to his face which is not surprising.

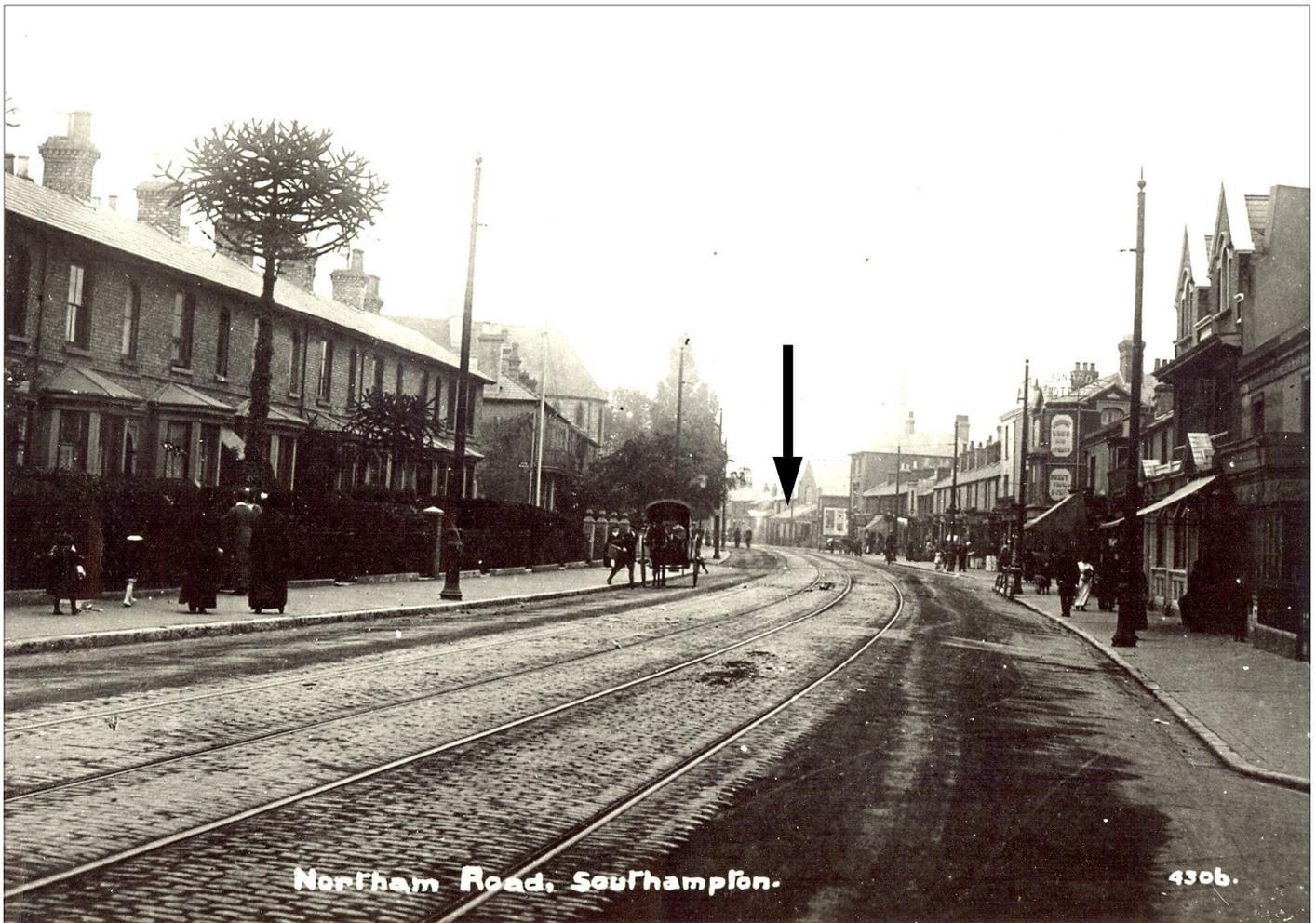
Benny Hill, was living a reclusive life-style at the time, mainly to avoid the Press, living in his parents old home in Westrow Road. He died, unfortunately, in 1992, aged 68 years old. Local admirers of this international star are still campaigning for a statue to be erected. At least there is a memorial plaque to him on the west end of the Swan Centre in Eastleigh.

## HISTORIC LOCAL COTTAGE GETS A LIFT!



Work has recently been completed on "Ghuznee Cottage". Built in 1851, it is one of the few old cottages left in West End, but suffered badly from subsidence on the left hand corner as can be seen from the top left hand picture. A specialist firm has now completed the rebuilding of the bottom half of the cottage on the left hand side and apart from a lick of paint all appears complete. You will notice the window frames all now fit and no more sloping window sills etc. Our congratulations must go to the owners for getting this work carried out instead of selling out to a developer, and having the historic cottage demolished to be replaced with yet another block of flats! Incidentally, the name "Ghuznee" refers to the Battle of Ghuznee on the 23rd July 1839 during the First Afghan War.

## SO THIS IS WHERE THE CANOPY CAME FROM!



The top photograph shows the origin of the canopy that ended up at Frays Stores in West End. Thanks to help from WELHS member Bill White I can quote from the excellent book *“Dream Palaces - Going to the Pictures in Southampton”* written jointly by Bill White, Sheila Jemima and Donald Hyslop: The cinema in the top picture was ...*“built for Mr Gough, whose family owned the nearby ice factory, this*  
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*neighbourhood cinema opened in September 1914, a few weeks after the outbreak of war. Its situation, on the corner of Northam Road and Clarence Street, prompted an unsuccessful plea from St. Augustine's church against Sunday opening..... A later owner was Captain Clements, who also owned the Regent. The Northam cinema changed its name to the Queen's Theatre in 1930, when it was bought by Mr and Mrs Iles for £1,200. They in turn sold it to a London company. The name was again changed, this time to the Roxy. It eventually closed in 1934 and was stripped of all its fittings to be used as a warehouse by Strides, wholesale salt merchants. The building minus its canopy, was still in use up to the 1950's when it was demolished for re-development of the area".*

It would appear that Reuben Fray purchased the canopy and supports and re-erected it at the front of his store in West End sometime prior to 1953, as we have the lower photograph in colour on the previous page showing it in place at the time of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, hence the flags. Where the rather ornate clock with multiple faces came from we at present do not know but if anyone has any information about this we would be pleased to hear from them.

**Why not visit our Museum and Heritage Centre on the corner of  
Orchards Way and High Street in West End  
Open on Saturdays between 10am and 4pm**

**DO YOU RECOGNISE ANYONE HERE?**



Can anyone identify any of the gentlemen in this picture? Taken outside the old Westend Brewery in the High Street, it is a wonderfully detailed image from our archive. Can anyone identify who the charabanc's belonged to and who the drivers were? Please contact the editor with any information. Many thanks Ed.

## AN ARMCHAIR TOUR OF THE HAMBLE VALLEY

A Review of Novembers meeting by Stan Waight



Our meetings seem to be ever more growing in popularity, for one short of the fifty turned up for a programme billed as 'An Armchair Tour of the Hamble Valley'. I must admit to being a little confused when Geoff Watts opened his talk with the crest of Eastleigh followed by a slide of the River Itchen at Bishopstoke - but then I'm easily confused these days!

All became clear, however, when Geoff explained that the term 'Hamble Valley' encompasses the whole of the tourist area of the Borough of Eastleigh, and he proceeded to give us a series of anecdotes on the parishes within it. As usual, he spoke fluently and without notes, but his presentation and first class slides contained so much detail that it is impossible to report on it in full.

The bishop's mitre in the crest represents Bishopstoke, where the anecdotes included comment on the church, the Itchen Navigation and the house of the painter Mary Beale.

The two narrow black bands represent railway lines, recalling the historical importance of railways in Eastleigh itself. They also reflect the cable making activities of Pirelli, another of the town's large employers. In between these lines the black and white chequered strip recalls that Eastleigh was once a Manor held by the Chamberlains of the Royal Exchequer. The winged wheel in the centre suggests the theme of progress and transport, with memories of aviation in Eric Moon's 'Moonbeam' and R.J Mitchell's 'Spitfire'.

The sheaves of corn on either side of the bishop's mitre symbolise the rural and agricultural nature of the Borough, and Geoff explained that the clock on the church tower at North Stoneham only had one hand because the workers in the field didn't need to know the minutes!

Botley is not represented in the crest, but we were told why the church was moved from its old site to one more convenient for the parishioners, and of the verbal feud between William Cobbett and Parson Baker.

On to Bursledon and its tradition of shipbuilding - hence the medieval ship at the bottom of the crest. There was also the bizarre story of the empty mausoleum there, which a lady had built for herself and her already-dead husband. The man was exhumed and his disintegrating coffin was enclosed in a new one - only to find that the new one was too big for the mausoleum doorway. He and, ultimately his wife, had to be buried outside.

Finally, the lilies at the top of the crest represent St Mary, the patron Saint of the lovely little church at Hound.

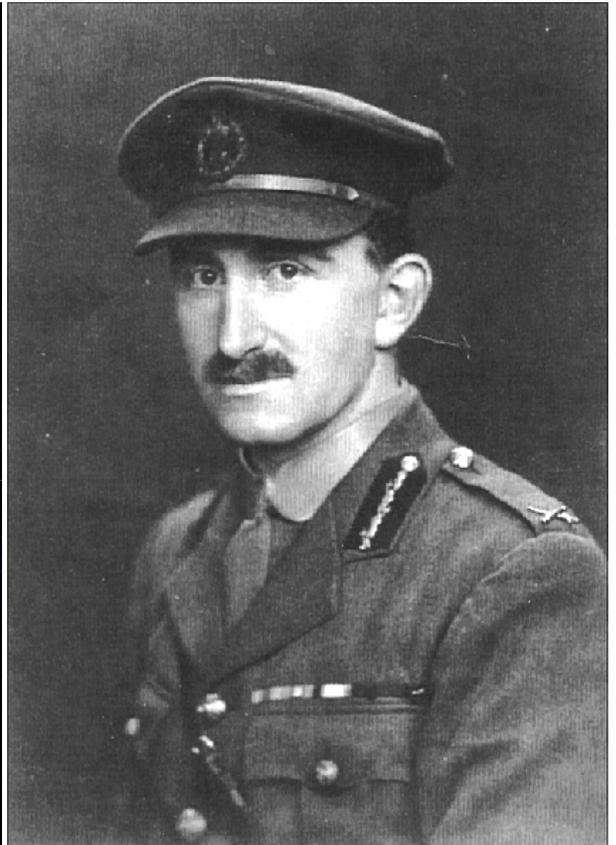
Perhaps we should be heartened by the Borough's motto, which may be translated as "The Welfare of the People is the most important Law".

Taking the crest as a theme for his talk seemed an excellent way of presenting an interesting series of slides and Geoff's undoubted knowledge of his subject. I think we were all very impressed.

**IF YOU HAVE ENJOYED THIS YEARS TALKS CHECK OUT NEXT YEARS  
EXCELLENT SPEAKERS  
THERE IS A COPY OF THE PROGRAMME FOR 2009  
ON PAGE TEN**

## LOCAL HERO'S MEDALS GO UP FOR SALE

by Nigel Wood



WINSLOWE HOUSE, WEST END

The impressive group of medals and orders above came under the auctioneers hammer at Spinks on 20th November 2008 as Lot 64. Impressive they definitely were but with much more significance to us here in West End as they were awarded to one of West End's own hero's, Brigadier General Sir George Henry Gater.

Included was his uniform, various documents and photographs and the array of medals and orders included his DSO with bar, Knights Grand Cross of the Order of St.

Michael and St. George including collar chain, Knight Commander's Order of the Bath neck badge, Great War 1914-15 Star, War and Victory medals, French Croix de Guerre and Commanders neck badge of the Croix de Guerre. His Victory medal had the mentioned in despatches oakleaf indicating his FOUR mentions! The Great War over, he relinquished his commission on 14th January 1919, and returned to civilian life being the only British General to have held a Diploma of Education!

Sir George Henry Gater was born in West End in 1886, his father a solicitor owned Winslowe House, he became one of the youngest Generals in the British Army and but for the end of the war he would almost certainly have commanded a Division instead of a Brigade. He was a leader that led from the front and was very well thought of both by his men and other commanders, a very rare combination! He was also wounded twice during the war. In World War 2 he served as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, amongst his many other posts. He died on 14th January 1963 at Oxford. For further information about Brig. Gen. Gater visit our museum in West End.



### On this day (3rd December) in.....

- 1795** Sir Rowland Hill, English educator and pioneer in postal services, born at Kidderminster in Worcester.
- 1857** Joseph Conrad, English novelist, born in Berdichev of Polish parents as Teodor Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski.
- 1894** Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish novelist, author of 'Treasure Island' and 'Kidnapped', died on the island of Samoa in the Pacific.
- 1919** Pierre Auguste Renoir, French Impressionist painter, died at Cagnes-sur-Mer.
- 1967** Christiaan Barnard performed the first heart transplant operation - Louis Washansky received the heart of traffic victim Denise Darvali, at Groote Schuur Hospital at Cape Town, but died 18 days later.
- 1980** Sir Oswald Mosley, English politician and leader of the British Union of Fascists, died in exile at his home near Paris.

## OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we have to report the death of member Maurice Thomas Clark, who passed away suddenly on 2nd October 2008 at Southampton General Hospital, aged 80 years. He regularly attended our meetings and was always there to encourage us. A former Superintendent of Ordnance Survey, he more recently was to be found assisting others to understand the intricacies of computing at West End Library. His funeral was held on Thursday 16th October 2008 at Southampton Crematorium, East Chapel. Our sincere condolences go out to his family on their loss, he will be much missed by all who knew him.

## OBITUARY

It was with sadness that we learned that former member of WELHS Brian Frank Cook, husband of Maureen passed away recently (October), aged 68. Our sincere condolences go out to Maureen and her family on their loss.

## PLEA FOR MORE LOCAL HISTORY ARTICLES

We need more articles of a local history nature for inclusion in Westender. You will notice that this issue is somewhat smaller than the previous one, that is simply because we need more articles, either lengthy or short we don't mind. Personal reminiscences or local history studies, without these we cannot maintain the quality of the newsletter. So, if you enjoy reading Westender, please consider writing something to contribute. Many have already done so but we need more, so please consider this plea. Ed.

## CHRISTMAS TREES GALORE

St. James Church held another even bigger Christmas Tree Festival between 21st and 23rd November this year. Your society along with many others had an entry and hopefully there will be a report with pictures in the next issue of Westender. On Saturday 6th December 2008 there will be a Christmas Market organised by St. James' Church in the Parish Centre with many stalls selling gifts, foodstuffs, bric-a-brac and seasonal refreshments, tombola and raffle etc. Starting at 12 noon it will be well worth a visit and all in a good cause.

## THE PROGRAMME FOR 2009

**January 7**

**VICTORIAN MAGIC LANTERN SHOW**

*Stan Roberts*

**February 4**

**FROM THE HEATH HOTEL TO DIBDEN CHURCH**

*An historic walk in slides*

*Gordon Chambers*

**March 4**

**HISTORY OF THE CROWN JEWELS**

*Norman Jackson*

**April 1**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

*and Images from our Archive*

**May 6**

**SHAKERS OF THE NEW FOREST**

*Philip Hoare*

**June 3**

**THE STORY OF THE SCHNEIDER AIR RACES**

*Colin van Geffen*

**July 1**

**THE LOSS OF THE SS "STELLA"**

*An insight to late Victorian society*

*Jake Simpkin*

**August 5**

**SOCIAL EVENING AT THE MUSEUM**

*(including refreshments)*

*ALL WELCOME*

**September 2**

**RIVER MEON FROM SOURCE TO SEA**

*Carol Watson*

**October 7**

**UNTO SOUTHAMPTON DO WE SHIFT OUR SCENE.....**

*Geoff Watts*

**November 4**

**WICKHAM PAST & PRESENT**

*Madeleine Selby*

**December 2**

**CHRISTMAS BUFFET, QUIZ,**

**SLIDE SHOW & RAFFLE**

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Well, its that time of year again! It seems to come round with increasing speed (must be because I'm getting older!!). The Society has had a busy year with a host of good speakers on the programme, several special visits arranged for groups to our museum and several high profile exhibits promoting the society at the Parish Centre, Eastleigh and recently at Netley. Our membership is looking very healthy and we continue to improve the facilities at the museum.

We would of course like more members to come forward on a regular basis to man the museum, but a big "Thank You" to all those who have volunteered their time this year. A big "Thank You" is also due to West End Parish Council and staff for all their support and help in the past year and to Eastleigh Borough Council who continue to sponsor us, without all this help we would be hard pressed to do what we do. It is also a time for reflection for during the year we have lost several of our older members.

But on a brighter note the 2009 Programme promises to have something for everyone, with the return of some of our favourites as well as some new faces, amongst the latter is local best selling author and broadcaster Philip Hoare who has kindly agreed to give us a talk on the Shakers of the New Forest in May. Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year from all the Committee and we hope to see you all in 2009.



**A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE**