

Bitterne Local

History Society



ESTABLISHED 1981

'Keeping Bitterne's History Alive'

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. 1005127

BYGONE BITTERNE

WINTER 2017 VOLUME 139



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Princess Mary's Christmas Box
See page 2

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BITTERNE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month (September — July) at 7.00 pm in the United Reformed Church Hall, Bitterne Village. Visitors are welcome (£3.00 per meeting).

Annual membership subscription - £14.00;

Concessionary (under 18 & over 80) - £8.00; Overseas membership - £17.00

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily the views of the Society but those of individual contributors

THIS MAGAZINE CAN BE PRODUCED IN LARGE PRINT OR ELECTRONIC FORMATS
PLEASE CONTACT THE EDITOR

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COVER

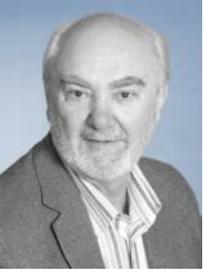
A picture of Princess Mary's Christmas box sent to serving soldiers and sailors in World War One. The contents of the box varied as supplies of many items was short and varied by destination. From the Illustrated War News of 4 November 1914 'Princess Mary is appealing for help to send a Christmas present, from the Nation, to "every



Sailor afloat and every Soldier at the front". Appeal letters were sent to 7,000 homes with more than 5 servants, 1,500 social clubs, 1,500 golf clubs, 1,000 schools and 2,600 Masonic Lodges.

The collection raised £193,667.4s.10d.





DEAR FRIENDS - *From the Chairman*

Dear Friends,

I will start off with some local news:

The Red Lion – the extended outdoor seating area has received planning approval by the Council. The Lion statue is recognised as a community asset and will be carefully cleaned by a specialist stonemason. A heritage information plaque will be installed on the east-facing side of the plinth outlining the history of the Lion sculpture. BLHS is pleased that our requests have been acknowledged and will be acted upon.

And now to some recent events:

On 9 September we held our annual Heritage Open Day and I am pleased to say the weather was much kinder this year than last – which helped. On the 200th anniversary of her death it was appropriate that we had our own Jane Austen (Celia Mayo) to welcome visitors. We were also honoured with a visit to our Heritage Centre from our local MP, Royston Smith, who had some kind words to say about us on Facebook: *“I was really pleased to visit Bitterne Local History Society on Peartree Avenue as part of Southampton Heritage Open Weekend. They do a brilliant job in promoting and recording the heritage of Bitterne and the surrounding area and I would very much recommend visiting their museum and shop.*

While visiting, I had the opportunity of looking in the 1931 Kelly’s Directory and I was somewhat surprised to find that the first owner of my house was a Mr Roy Smith. Something of a coincidence! Why not visit and find out who lived in your house?”

On behalf of BLHS I would like to express special thanks to Southampton & District Transport Heritage Trust for providing a vintage bus link to Bugle Street, Southampton throughout the day, with opportunities to stop off at Southampton’s Old Bowling Green, SS Shieldhall and the Tram & Dunkirk Little Ships workshop in the Docks and a Heritage Fayre at St Joseph’s Church Hall. I would like to say a big thank you to

all those who worked so hard both before and on the day to make the event such a great success. The theme this year was 'Big Houses' and I must commend Martyn Basford on his extensive research on the subject, which helped with the preparation of the display.

I am not sure what is happening next year yet but I will keep you posted. What I do know is the Heritage Open Day in 2018 will be on 15 September, a week after our AGM, which is much better for those of us who are actively involved in both.

On 9 September, at our AGM, our Treasurer, Carol Masters, announced that BLHS has once again achieved a financial surplus for the year, which is excellent news. After the meeting we enjoyed a Southampton history quiz diligently prepared and presented by Joy Bowyer. Congratulations go to the winner, Anna Welch for demonstrating the extent of her local history knowledge.

On 30 September Hampshire Field Club & Archaeological Society's Local History Section had an Autumn Outing to Bitterne. BLHS hosted the event, which included two talks, a guided walk of Bitterne, and an optional visit to Bitterne Parish Church. Also on the programme were: a visit to our museum in Peartree Avenue in Bitterne and a heritage bus trip to Woolston, which included a guided walk along the shoreline. Thanks again to S&DTHT for the vintage bus trip. I must say I was very impressed with all the various contributions on the day, which goes to show what we can achieve as an organisation when we set our minds to it. Well done and thank you to every single person who helped create such a tremendous team effort. I have had some very positive feedback from some of our guests from HFC, which is heartening.



Dr Cheryl Butler gave an excellent talk at the BLHS meeting on 14 October entitled 'Jane Austen's Southampton' (photo opposite). Cheryl is becoming one of our regular speakers and never disappoints. The topic was very apt for this bicentenary year, celebrating the life of Jane Austen and the talk was very well received.

Our meeting on 11 November began by observing a one minute silence for Armistice Day. This was followed by an illustrated talk about the "Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War" by Jan Gillespie, a project officer for the Maritime Archaeology Trust. The talk was focused on the current research being carried out on the many wrecks off the south coast of England. This proved to be very interesting.

This issue of our magazine is published on the day of our pre-Christmas bash in December which no doubt will be reported on in the next issue.

Other matters:

BLHS are now on Facebook thanks to our Magazine Editor, Steve Adams, and I am pleased to report that we are getting lots of 'hits' – so if you haven't already looked – check it out.

BLHS now sell local history books online from our website, **www.bitterne.net** - a good place to look for Christmas presents may I suggest? Thanks are once again due to Steve Adams for making this new facility available.

To the Future:

On 13 January BLHS have a talk by Gordon Lewis entitled 'Land of Pure Delight', which is about the life and times of Isaac Watts, who was born in Southampton and who became a prolific hymn writer. I am sure we will learn a lot more about him at this meeting – so please come along.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter





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SOUTHAMPTON'S VANISHING POLICE STATIONS – Jim Brown

During the 1950s, when I was a serving County Borough police officer, there were active police stations in Bitterne, Portswood, Shirley and the Civic Centre, covering each of the three divisions, "A" (HQ or Central), "B" (Shirley) and "C" (Bitterne) (Portswood was a sub-division of 'A' Division).

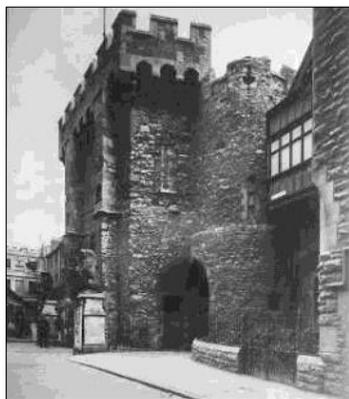
Each station had an emergency driver 24/7, available to answer 999 calls within his division or sub-division, plus in the mid-1960s, a divisional motor cyclist (of which I was one for a time) working 8am-4pm and 4pm-midnight. Every station also had cells for prisoners. Sections of 12 to 15 officers worked a 5 shift system (6am-2pm; 2pm-10pm; 10pm-6am; 8.30am-4.30pm and 5pm-1am) and the divisional detective officers, stationed in each station, had an intimate knowledge of the area.

There were thus plenty of uniformed officers available to answer emergency calls within each division, as well as several Traffic Department motor cycles and cars equally available 8am-midnight.

With the absence of police stations in Southampton today, only one large building close to Dock Gate 10, there is nothing like the same sort of response and available officers. However, a look at some of the stations, ancient and modern, may be of interest.



It was in 1836 that the first



Two views of the Police Station adjoining the Bargate

real Southampton Police Force came into being. Its first 'Inspector of Police' was John Thomas Enright, an Inspector in the Metropolitan Police, a common practice for the newly emerging local small forces. He received a salary of £150 a year, to include all expenses incidental to the office, and did not receive an increase until 1861 when it rose to £200. He then held the rank of Superintendent of Police.

The new Force in 1836 was 24 officers strong and had their station house at 135 St Mary's Street, on the corner of James Street, as well as that adjoining the west side of the Bargate, sometimes recorded as 186 High Street.

Other stations followed; Ascupart Street on the corner with Jail Street (adjoining the Gaol House) - this later became the Borough Police Property Office; Northam Police Station at 131 Northam Road; Portswood Police Station at 206 Portswood Road and Shirley Police Station at 390 Shirley Road.

The Force retained the earlier accommodation at the Bargate, the south face of which was rebuilt in 1865, until they left 9 November 1933 to take up residence in the specially created Civic Centre police and law courts accommodation (right). The photo shows the entrance to the Law Courts in the centre of the west face (on the right). Either side, at the front, are the long police offices, with



The newly built Civic Centre including Police Station. The cell corridor (right) and inside one of the 17 cells. A sad day after the station closed in 2011, to be replaced by a museum.





The old Shirley Police Station in 1952. It dated from 1858 and was originally a Hampshire police station. The replacement station (below), on the same site and currently awaiting replacement by a Lidl store.



The police box in Paynes Road, Shirley (left), formerly Freemantle Police Station. It was part of a police house on the corner of Queenstown Road.



Right: Vacating the 1858 Hampshire Police Station in Bitterne (photo March 1963) that was still in use until replaced in 1965 with the building below.

This closed July 2016 and is currently the subject of a planning application to build a four-storey development consisting of 34 retirement apartments.



the police station entrance at the south side. The two main Law Courts are the large blocks either side of the Clock Tower, with the smaller Coroner's Court underneath the Clock Tower (The two main courts were transferred to London Road in 1987). The block on the north face was occupied by the Criminal Investigation Department, with detectives having a large office adjoining the cell corridor.

I just cannot understand how closing so many Police Stations is considered to be efficient. During a major investigation, such as murder or terrorist attack, a large team of detectives need to be housed with large-scale effective communications. With Southampton now only having Portswood and the Dock Gate Headquarters available, I fail to see how two such major incidents could be dealt with effectively, but then I am not a modern senior police officer, only a mere retired ordinary copper!



The public entrance, at the Civic Centre Police Station just prior to closure. A section parading before duty and (left) a 'police pillar', the only means of communication whilst on the beat.

Woolston Police Station, 47, Portsmouth Road, later replaced by a school. (I do not recall it being this size. The right hand side and the rear portion in Porchester Road, housed police pre-fabs for serving officers in 1952.)



Portswood Police Station, built 1849 and a police station since 1873.

And its replacement, opened 1965 and recently refurbished.



Police Training School, Hulse Road, (left) opened 1941, behind which was the traffic department and garage, built 1959. In 1967 they had 5 patrol cars, 7 personnel carriers, 5 CID vehicles, 1 prison van, 16 Triumph motor cycles, 2 dog vans, and a mobile office.



AN EDUCATIONAL AFTERNOON by Alan G Clark

One late afternoon, deep into the summer holidays, my school friend Ken and I were exploring some wooded farmland near Hedge End. The year would probably have been 1954, when we were eight years old. As we crossed a field I noticed a number of crusty, straw coloured patches on the grass, each measuring about twelve inches in diameter. I asked Ken, who had elder brothers, what they were and he explained that they were 'cowshit' and I would be wise not to tread on them, for although they appeared dry, underneath they contained thick brown liquid. He demonstrated this by poking one with a stick, thus disturbing a swarm of golden-bodied flies, which rose as a cloud before settling back to resume their feed.

By this time, we too were getting hungry and so turned for home. As we walked along Bitterne Road towards the Bittern Public House, we passed a grit container by the side of the road, this being for use on icy pavements and roads in winter months. Deep in conversation and unthinking, I scooped a large handful of grit as we strolled by. On our left as we walked was a terrace of houses, one of which had the front door wide open exposing a long, narrow, linoleum-covered hallway. To this day I don't know why I did it, but one moment the grit was in my hand and the next it was rattling the length of this hallway. Even then I thought little of it and we continued our leisurely saunter. This peaceful state of bliss lasted less than ten seconds before an extremely irate lady seized me by the collar and frogmarched me back to her house. I was ordered to get down on my knees and pick up every last piece of grit. The air was full of the smell of chip fat, which presumably was the reason the front door had been opened. I must have been down there for half an hour collecting each tiny fragment of stone, all the time guarded in expressionless silence by two small children, half my age who peered, one head above the other around the kitchen door. At one point the father of the household arrived home from work, pushing past me and saying tersely to his wife, "What's he doing here?" Half hearing her explanation, I expected further repercussions but nothing happened and eventually the hall was inspected and with dire

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warnings ringing in my ears I was at last released. One hundred yards further on I found Ken waiting for me, eager to hear my story but I was feeling shaken and it took me the whole walk home, if not to recover from, then at least to compartmentalise my shame.

That evening, around half-past-six I was sitting at the dining room table, having tea with my parents. My father asked me what I been doing that day and I replied that Ken and I had been exploring and had seen some cowshit. My parents paused their eating; my father put down his knife and fork before informing me in forceful tones that he didn't want to hear any language like that in his house and he would have expected better from me. It was a considerable time before I managed to convince him that I had honestly believed it the correct term, but eventually he was pacified and goodwill was restored.

I believe I might have forgotten to mention the grit.



THE BLHS FACEBOOK PAGE by Steve Adams

I suspect that a good many of our readers do not 'do' Facebook, possibly because they are unsure of joining something which reputedly has some privacy issues. One does not need to be a member, however, to view an 'open' Facebook page; it appears as a normal web page.

The BLHS Facebook page has several stories a week viewable on it. Some are general pieces of history, many of which are anniversaries of historical events ranging from the death of King Alfred the Great to Sooty's first appearance on television and the last voyage of the Queen Elizabeth. Other items may be general items from history - a short film from 1954 about Bitterne's Violet Robinson (a local chimney sweep), the resting place of the Grace Dieu (so far seen by over 9,000 people), images of our shop window and events we are involved in. Have a look for yourself at www.facebook.com/BitterneLocalHistorySociety.



HMS ZUBIAN AND TRIBAL CLASS DESTROYERS by Martyn Basford

The speaker at our recent monthly meeting, Jan Gillespie of the Marine Archaeology Trust, talked about the Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War and mentioned the story of an incident of two vessels that did not, although damaged, become wrecks at the bottom of the sea — I give more details below emphasising the ‘local’ aspect.

The great success of HMS Tartar (Yard No 425) - being powered by Steam Turbines and fueled by oil boilers made a good start for the Southampton shipyard of John I Thornycroft in 1907 under their new regime, having recently moved from Chiswick. She was followed by two similar destroyers, the Amazon (471) and the Nubian (501). The 'Tribal' class, although officially termed ‘ocean-going destroyers’ to distinguish them from the smaller ‘coastals’, had in fact a radius of action of only about 1,500 miles and this low endurance rendered them suitable only for coastal work. The ‘Tribals’ were, however, the mainstay of the famous Dover Patrol in the First World War.

The Nubian was damaged by a torpedo on 27 October 1916 which wrecked her forepart. Having drifted ashore, she was salvaged. The Zulu, (built by the Tyneside yard of Hawthorn Leslie) had the opposite combination of a sound bow and a damaged stern after she hit a mine on 08 November 1916. Both were towed to Chatham and the after-body of Nubian was joined to the bow of Zulu. The place where the two portions were joined was between the third and fourth funnel. The new HMS Zubian, as she was termed, was credited with sinking the German submarine UC 50, by depth charge, on 04 February 1918.

The success of the smaller ‘Gadfly’ class, later termed ‘coastal destroyers’, had paved the way for the much more ambitious ‘Tribal’ class whose designed speeds of 33 to 34 knots made them the fastest British warships of the day. When the first group were ordered the Admiralty offered a premium of £10,000 for a speed in excess of 1 knot above the contract stipulation of 33 knots. The detailed design was left to the individual builders, so

there were considerable differences between the ships. Thus, the Afridi was only 250 ft in length, in place of the 270 ft of the Tartar. This shortening was excessive and the Afridi proved to be the slowest of

HMS Zubian



the class. The Mohawk, built by John Samuel White & Co. of Cowes, was one of the first to run her trials and she came back to the Solent proudly wearing the traditional fighting cock at the masthead that indicated a record speed. The Tartar soon followed and came back with a similar effigy, for she had pushed up the record to 35.67 knots.

Both the Mohawk and the Tartar had exceeded the contract speed by over a knot but at first the Admiralty would pay the premium only for the faster Tartar. Both ships had run their speed trials off the Maplin Sands and the Admiralty claimed, quite correctly, that both ships had benefited by about a knot from running in shallow water. The Tartar was therefore considered to have exceeded 34 knots as a true deep-water speed, but not the Mohawk. The Maplin course was, however, an approved measured mile at that time, so both firms obtained the coveted premium. The Tartar was the first Thornycroft ship to have four funnels. All the earlier destroyers were given two funnels with the exception of the three-funneled Albatross. The original reason for preferring two funnels was in order to give a profile similar to contemporary torpedo boats and delay enemy identification of a more powerful opponent. The rated power of the Parsons-type turbines of the Tartar was only 14,500 s.h.p., whereas the actual power developed on the mile was 22,500 s.h.p. It may have been this discrepancy that misled certain foreign builders into grotesquely underpowering some near copies of the 'Tribal' class which were intended for similar speeds.

Bibliography:

Barnaby, K.C., *100 Years of Specialized Shipbuilding and Engineering*, (London, 1964)



HAND CART APPEAL - Ian Abrahams

Some readers will know that to publicise our Heritage Weekend opening we use one of the handcarts in our collection and I thought it would be interesting to look at its history. This particular one was used by R.C. Payne & Son to carry ladders when they did decorating and building work. I discovered it in their yard in the late nineteen sixties and Bob kindly allowed it to be used by the then Bitterne Community Service run by the local churches. As well as visiting the elderly, shopping, and gardening we used to collect, chop and deliver firewood. The picture with your President, in 1972, shows it loaded with wood outside the church in Dean Road, Mr Alan Whittaker of Bursledon Road did the signwriting.



The other photograph shows it being used by the local youth club at Southampton Carnival in 1974, not only was the cart pushed from Mayflower Park to Southampton Common, but we pushed it from Bitterne as well! The picture shows Tony Kingston outside 71 Bursledon Road (where we kept the cart in Mrs Austins garage, who can be seen looking from the landing window). Some years ago the solid rubber tyres needed replacing and Ted Broomfield and Bert Gatehouse got this done for us. Sadly the cart is much in need of a repaint so if you have an empty garage and would like a challenge do let me know! Thanks, Ian



MERRY OAK YOUTH CLUB - Ian Abrahams

Recently myself and member Alan Budd were invited to Merry Oak Youth Club held in the old school hall – which brought back memories for me! Alan spoke to the young people about the war years when he was a child and we took various artefacts to show them – questions were numerous, and they really enjoyed our visit.



“Our members (aged 9 - 12 years) were enthralled by the resources introduced by Ian and Alan, and by the information shared regarding our local areas during the two World Wars.”
Alan Marshall,
Secretary, MOYA



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MORE MEMORIES by Jim Brown

Left: The BLHS History Fair 2009.



Above: Early days for BLHS – who can tell me when and where?



Left: Violet O'Rourke and Mildred Russell receiving commemoration plates for 19 years service on the BLHS Committee in 2001.

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Above: One of our first adverts – the company who helped me set up the BLHS website.



Left: A BLHS Brownsea Island Trip in 2004.

Programme.



Bitterne's United Committee and Friends

New Year's Party

To our Guests

The Olde Folke of Bitterne



Wednesday, January 26th, 1938
in the Church Institute, Bitterne.



Rev. BASIL ALLEN, Vicar (Presiding)

supported by

Rev. ROBINSON (Congregational.)



"Love thy Neighbour."
Again, to our dear friends, we say,
Come, join the happy throng,
We're going to have a joyous time,
For Love's our Greatest Bond.



RECEPTION COMMITTEE:

Mr. C. E. Bristow. Mr. E. Ventham.

OFFICIALS:

C. E. BRISTOW (Chairman.)	Mrs. F. VENTHAM
W. A. SHEPHARD (Vice-Chairman)	(Hon. Sec.)
E. J. TAYLOR (Treasurer.)	42 Chatsworth Road, Bitterne.

NEW YEARS PARTY – 80 YEARS AGO

This event for the 'Olde Folke' of Bitterne was organised by members of Bitterne Tradesmens Association which was a very active group in pre-war Bitterne. The local churches were obviously involved as well – does anyone know what the '30-50 Club Variety Company' were? Note the event took place on a Wednesday half day closing!

The tables heavy laden,
The covers now removed,
Reveals to thee—good homely fare—
So friend—tuck in—and prove.

MENU.

JOINTS.

ROAST BEEF. HAM. TONGUE.

VEGETABLES.

POTATOES (HOT.)

SALAD. BEETROOT. TOMATOES.

WHITE AND BROWN BREAD AND BUTTER.
SMALL MILK ROLLS.

SWEETS.

CHRISTMAS PUDDING (HOT.)

SWEET SAUCE. CREAM.

MINCE PIES (HOT.)

FRUIT JELLIES. TRIFLES. CUSTARD.

FRUITS IN SALAD. CREAM.

DESSERT.

FRUITS (VARIOUS.)

TEA. COFFEE.

The Chairman, feeling very Gay,
Will Toast you in his hearty way.

The Toast - - - - Our Guests

In climbing the Hill—that leads to the goal—
May we ever be Ready—to Help—some weary poor Soul.

Like the Lark—these Songsters Sing,
Full of Frolic their voices ring,
To give you sheer delight,
So, all join in—Sing their refrain—
T will please them—then, they'll sing again
Those "Old Time Songs"—to-night.

The 30-50 Club Variety Company.

Part One—

1. DORIS WOODFORD, Pianoforte Solo.
2. Councillor W. F. PENNY
(Amusing Songs and Ditties.)
3. Monologue, "is Pipe" (*Bransby Williams*) A. G. WITHERS
4. Community Singing,
REX DEAR, GEOFF PAGE and GLADYS THEW.
5. GLADYS THEW, Soprano.
6. REGINALD E. GOODALL, Baritone.
7. BARBARA PAGE, Popular Songs.
8. Monologues, HARRY G. THEW.

INTERVAL.

Part Two—

9. DORIS WOODFORD, Pianoforte Solo.
10. REGINALD E. GOODALL, Baritone.
11. The 30-50 Club Dramatic and Variety Company.
12. "Old Time Music Hall."
We expect you to join in the Chorus.

AULD LANG SYNE.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

And now dear friends before we part
This kindly message take to heart—
T will help you on your way—
Seek Guidance from the "One above."
Have Faith, and Trust, then "His Great Love—"
Will guard you—Day by Day." C.E.B.



EVENTS & TIMES.

2 p.m.—By the courtesy of the Directors and Manager of "The Ritz," Bitterne, all are invited to attend an Afternoon Matinee from 2 to 5 p.m.

5.30—Dinner, etc.

6.30—A Welcome by The Mayor—
(Councillor G. E. H. PRINCE), The Mayoress
and the genial Sheriff.
Supported by our Local Representatives.

6.45—Harmony.



The Committee and Friends thank all for your
kind acceptance of their invitation and
wish you now

"A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR."

C. E. BRISTOW,
Chairman Old Folk's Party Committee.



Here are the words of the monologue performed for the 'Old Folke' by A.G. Withers. It was originally performed by Bransby Williams, a regular on the music hall stage .

'IS PIPE by Charles H Taylor & Cuthbert Clarke

You're not as 'andsome as you
was,
Old pipe, if truth be told,
But we ain't parting just becos,
You're black, and worn, and old.
I'm not in many many ways,
The cove I used to be;
And ain't a flattering when I says,
You're stronger now than me.
You cost a bob at first, maybe;
You ain't no fancy touch,
But there, you're worth as much as
me,
And that, Gawd knows, ain't much.
We draw'd together from the fust;
We knows each other's ways;
And you're a pal as I can trust -
That's somethink nowadays.
She give yer to me, my old gal -
My gal wot used to be;
Wot 'appy times we 'ad old pal,
Eh? 'er and you and me!
Times lightly passed, like 'arf a
ounce
Of 'bacca, keerless drawn

An' blown away, they all amounts
To somethink when they're gone.
She says: 'Yer won't forgit me Bill!
I knows yer, I can tell;
But sometimes of a envening will,
You act I'm there as well?
An' when you're smoking quiet,
Will you talk to me? Becos
I might be very near you, Bill.'
Supposin' now she was!
She's gone to heaven, and that's the
place
Where all the past's forgot.
So some religious covey says —
Who knows a blooming lot!
Lord! if I thought she could forgit
Them days wot used to be -
Well it 'ud 'urt above a bit,
Old pal, eh? you, and me.
Let's wait a while — what must be
must,
The time ain't far off when
You'll be ashes, and I'll be dust,
For ever, an' ever, Amen.





**September 1992 — A BOY AT WAR 1939 - 45 by Bitterne Incomer
'Bitterne Incomer ' was the late Harold Blackmore.**

War is an unpleasant thing, as anyone who has read Simon Weston's "Walking Tall" will know. Yet it has by-products which have to be acknowledged, a unifying of purpose, a rapid development of character brought about by responsibility, the overcoming of fear, and the breaking down of barriers. At the tender age of nine, my ideas were suddenly beset by new thoughts. A tranquil life, only upset by the trauma of tests at school, based upon the certainties of "Pax Britannica", of King emperor and the flag was disturbed. True, adults had been unusually quiet and thoughtful for some time, and there was concern over problems in far away places, but surely that was where they would stay as had the suffering in Spain (I knew where that was!) Nobody would want war, that was certain. Annually, at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, silence WOULD fall and the survivors of that terrible war and those who knew and respected them would think of them and their fallen comrades and thank God for peace.

Next door to us, staying with Bert Gatehouse's family, was a young German cyclist on an exchange visit. He was recalled home and had no illusions as to the reason. It was, I am told, a regretful parting. In a society based upon unquestioning respect for authority, emotions, I am sure, were mixed. It was felt that something ought to be done about the injustices (we didn't really know what they were) of the Germans' actions, balanced against the horror and dread of further carnage as that experienced within many living memories. Although much of this went above the head of children, the sense of adult worries permeated to the young. Mostly though, it was the noting of the unusual, the exciting. The Bitterne drill hall became more active and uniforms multiplied as reservists were called up. Excited young men became more purposeful and the older ones appeared in the uniforms of the A.R.P. and Rescue Squads were formed in anticipation of the air raids expected. Plans and advice for the Civil population started to trickle through as to what to do (or not) in the event of war. War was declared . . . and nothing happened. More advice, the supply of air raid shelters, Morrison, Anderson or community and, of course, gas masks.

Eastleigh airport, which had been mainly concerned with an hourly flight (during the summer months) to the Channel Islands by Dragonfly or Rapide aircraft became busier and military aircraft multiplied. Schools closed and children were evacuated, many not unhappy, but accepting placidly, it was, after the initial upset, a necessary adventure. I was billeted with my brother in "digs" that were far from ideal, and the change of atmosphere was a shock to the system. It was not that those upon whom we were thrust were unkind or uncaring, but simply lacking in intellect and rather resentful of having other people's children thrust upon them. We soon sensed this and it did little to replace a caring home. School consisted of a mere half day, and although we retained our original teachers, there was an atmosphere of being intruders and a lack of facilities, even given the rudimentary equipment of pre-war schools. At this time the dashing young officers of the fighter squadrons were receiving some publicity to bolster public confidence and it was something of a shock to meet the son of this modest home and find a sergeant, a Spitfire pilot. Not many realise that at the time of the Battle of Britain, some 50% of flying personnel were of this rank. He was a nice unassuming sort of chap and no wonder his parents were inordinately proud of him. I do hope he survived. After about a month, our parents, probably missing our mischief, decided to return us to more familiar haunts. Most of my old playmates had attended Bitterne School, whilst due to pressure of space, my brother and I had attended Sholing Boys. This meant that we had been evacuated to different areas. Since many of their parents had taken the same decision as my own, it was a relief to get together again. Schooling now presented a problem; St. Mary's College being one of the few that were open. My parents somehow found the money for the fees and I must say the experience did me no harm whatsoever. Many adjustments had to be made in order to accept new disciplines, but the commitment of the brethren to their pupils was quite remarkable. The school itself had to adapt, accepting not only pupils of several faiths, but also the commandeering of huts for Home Guard headquarters, the siting of a barrage balloon and the modification of the cellars to air-raid shelters. As was discovered by an old boy at the conclusion of the war, the Germans thought the emergency exits of the shelter were the entrance to underground explosive stores, and this, as well as the other items, were marked on their intelligence maps. No wonder the property received a few high explosive bombs and a good sprinkling of incendiaries.



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One small H.E. landed outside the entrance to the living quarters of the brethren and resulted in little but remarkable damage. On the wall opposite the entrance door and window hung a picture of the founder of the order. The wall was pocked with fragments but left the glazing of the picture unharmed. By moving the picture, a clearly defined outline of the frame was revealed. A trick of the blast or miraculous? . . . It's for you to decide.

Around this time, as I walked to school, I noticed a strange crater. I peered into it with great interest, as did later a bomb disposal team. They could find no evidence of an unexploded bomb and the hole was filled in and forgotten. It was about two feet in diameter and some twenty feet deep. I do sometimes wonder. It was sometime later that a Walrus aircraft, lost in low cloud, hit the balloon wire and crashed at the junction of Little Lances Hill with the loss of all crew. The balloon was then removed on the grounds of safety of the pupils, but it was left to the brethren and senior pupils to remove the concrete anchor blocks. At least we recovered the football pitch. The war which had started so quietly, began to go disastrously wrong and few were deceived by reports of strategic withdrawals. Just how badly became obviously when Itchen College became a reception centre for French soldiers evacuated around the time of Dunkirk. We became aware of these men who were just beginning to emerge and venture onto the local streets. I am afraid we pestered them for autographs and uniform buttons. They were friendly but bemused. I suppose that some of them joined the Free French whilst others were repatriated. After a couple of days they dispersed and we saw them no more. We were lucky that the family suffered no casualties during either the 1914-18 war or the 1939-45 war. It could easily have been different. A paternal uncle served in the Merchant Navy and later in the Royal Naval Air Service in the 14-18 war without incident. Later in his career, back in the Merchant Navy, he arrived in Rio two days after the Graf Spee had been scuttled. A maternal uncle was nearly captured by the Turks at Gallipoli (who were not renowned for their prisoners) being the last out of the trench over-run by the attackers. My father, serving in the Merchant Navy (1914 ...), was torpedoed off the Isle of Wight. To his dying day he did not understand how he escaped. He was working in the (propeller shaft) tunnel of a cargo ship near the point of impact. He could only conclude that he was swept through the hole made by the explosion in an air bubble. Loud noises thereafter disturbed him, indicating the effect on his nerves.



OTHER LOCAL SOCIETIES

West End Local History Society

Meetings in West End Parish Centre, Chapel Road, SO30 3FE at 7.30 pm

3 January MAKING OUR MARK: CHALK CUT FIGURES IN
 ENGLAND by Andy Skinner

7 February BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT: GARRET & HAYSOM
 by Geoff Watts

7 March SALISBURY: A TALE OF TWO CITIES PART 3
 by Andrew Negus

Contact: 02380 471886

Botley, Curdridge and Durley History Society

Meetings held at the Reading Room, Curdridge, SO32 2HE at 8.00 pm

26 January SOUTHAMPTON PASSENGER SHIPS AND DOCKS
 by Jake Simpkin

23 February A TREASURE IN THE READING ROOM, THE MILTON
 SHIELD by John Hamon

16 March WINCHESTER PART 1 - BISHOPS, BUILDINGS &
 BONES by Andrew Negus

Contact: 01489 691777

City of Southampton Society

Meetings at Edmund Kell Church Hall, Bellevue Road, SO15 2AY at 7.00

22 January SOUTHAMPTON IN BLOOM by Jeanne Taylor

28 February AGM & SOUTHAMPTON AREA TALKING ECHO
 by Chris Litton

26 March THE MARY ROSE by Margaret Braddock

Contact: info@coss.org.uk

Hampshire Genealogical Society

Meetings held at Roman Catholic Hall, Commercial St, Bitterne at 7.30 pm

15 January WINCHESTER PART 3: BISHOPS, BUILDINGS AND
 BONES 1600-1850 by Andrew Negus

19 February FAMILY HISTORY WITH HELP ON WRITING AN

ARTICLE by Chris Lightfoot

19 March 'STROPPY WOMEN' IN SOUTHAMPTON
by Dr Cheryl Butler

Contact: 02392 387000

Millbrook Local History Society

Holy Trinity Church Hall, Millbrook Road at 7.30 pm

4 January THE MILLIONTH YANK by Jake Simpkin

1 February SOUTHAMPTON MAISON DIEU (Hospital of God's
House) by Geoff Watts

1 March THE IMITATION GAME: BLETCHLEY PARK
by John Hall

Contact: 023 8077 0148

Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Meetings at the Underhill Centre, St. John's Road, SO30 4AF at 7.45

8 January HAMPSHIRE'S FIRST PILOT by Mike Gibson

5 February HISTORY OF HYDRAULICS by Steve Skinner

5 March THE SOUTHAMPTON & SALISBURY CANAL
by Jon Sims

Contact: 01962 855200



HISTORY AND HERITAGE CLUB

Forthcoming trips:

6 April Day trip to Highclere Castle, Entrance and tour, details to
follow. Please give me names at BLHS meetings.

May Day trip to Bucklers Hard, tour and cruise. Details TBC

For more details of the Heritage and History Club and their trips please
contact Mary Abraham. See her at BLHS meetings, telephone: 02380
394930 or email: maryabraham_22@yahoo.co.uk.



PRESIDENTIAL PATTERN – Ian Abrahams

Dear Friends,

‘Many a false step is made by standing still’, so said one of the thought for the day posters which I have been putting up weekly in our church porch for some forty years – prior to this it was done by the late Sid Philpott who used to cycle down from Thornhill – even in his eighties – to change them over! Back to the thought – it very much applies to our museum in recent months as we have been changing round the displays – a move precipitated by the need for a new carpet. My thanks to all who have been involved in helping and can I encourage you to visit and see a much more open display area with changing themes.

We have also had to rationalise our collection of artefacts and sadly dispose of various items we are no longer able to store. This has mainly applied to the ‘Museum of Horticulture’ which I had established at Mayfield Nurseries and following my retirement in June had to be closed. Many of the items had come from the old Sydney House (Corporation nursery) in Peartree Avenue which closed in 1982.



Finally, I would like to thank Mr Brian Oliver and Keith Marsh who have been repainting some of our old street nameplates with a view to displaying them in our museum.

Jill and I would like to wish you a very Happy Christmas and good health for 2018 – the 25th Anniversary of the opening of our Museum and Charity Shop – shall we have a party?

Ian



CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

**Bitterne United Reformed
Church (above Iceland)**

**Saturdays 9th, 16th and 23rd December
and Wednesdays 13th and 20th**

10.00am to 12.00

**The church will be full of
decorated Christmas Trees**

**and Father Christmas
will be in his grotto.**

(not Wednesdays)



2017 BLHS CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Jan 13	LAND OF PURE DELIGHT The life and times of Isaac Watts	Gordon Lewis
Feb 10	A 'TONGUE IN CHEEK' TOUR OF MEDIEVAL / OLD SOUTHAMPTON	Don Robertson
Mar 10	BYGONE BITTERNE	Ian Abrahams
Apr 14	NAPOLEONIC PRISONER OF WAR WORK	Tony Cross
May 12	PIRATES, PRIVATEERS AND A WEDGE OF GOLD	Dr Cheryl Butler
Jun 09	SILK STOCKINGS AND SPITFIRES	John Smith

**Deadline for contributions to the Spring Edition
is Saturday, 10th February**

Please send contributions to the Editor, Steve Adams
blhs.editor@gmail.com
or address them to me at the Heritage Centre

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OPENING TIMES

Monday Closed

Tuesday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00 pm

Saturday 9.30am - 1.00pm

BITTERNE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

CHARITY SHOP

including viewing of Museum displays

Monday — Friday 10am-4pm

& Saturday & 10am-1pm

HERITAGE & RESEARCH CENTRE

Stewards available to help at the following times

Monday & Tuesday 1pm-4pm,

Wednesday 10am-4pm,

Thursday & Friday 1pm-4pm

Or by arrangement — telephone 023 8063 7967

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