

Bitterne Local

History Society



Established 1981

'Keeping Bitterne's History Alive'

Registered Charity No. 1005127

Bygone Bitterne

Spring 2022 Volume 156

See page 6



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

Annual membership subscription - £14.00; second person at same address £6.00 (no magazine)
Concessionary (under 18 & over 80) - £8.00; Overseas membership - £20.00

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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BYGONE BITTERNE PUBLICATION DATES

We have decide to revert back to the original dates of publication for our magazine. This means that this year we will be publishing in July but subsequently in September and December, then in March, June, September and December of 2023. Closing date for submissions for publication are always the date of the Saturday meeting the month prior to publication.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER — *Ian Abrahams*

Dear Friends,

Thank you to all who have renewed their subscription this year – your support is much appreciated.

The attendance at our meetings has been variable since Christmas, understandably after two years of disruption, circumstances may change but we do hope that more friends will gradually return. In January Paul Stickler invited us to be 'The Jury' in the case of the murder of an English actress who was pushed through the porthole of a ship – a fascinating story which he told very well. In February Andrew Negus continued his series of talks about Winchester, he was as enthusiastic as ever and we all learnt a lot about the history of Winchester and how it developed over the years. March saw the long awaited (due to Covid) visit of Alan Matlock who spoke about the building of Spitfires after the Supermarine works bombing. A very good attendance enjoyed a most entertaining talk about how production continued at numerous locations around the area. Alan and his colleagues in the 'Spitfire Makers' group are endeavouring to get a plaque placed in all the places where production took place and we wish them every success.

Thank you to all who are keeping our shop open and therefore enabling Stewards to open our Museum, we continue to welcome visitors from near and far. Our special thanks to member Bruce Kettle who has been sending off the crisp packets we have been collecting to raise funds, sadly the scheme has now been discontinued as you should be able to recycle them in all supermarkets by now.

In March we decided to support the Disasters Emergency Committee who are helping people in Ukraine – one of our volunteers has family there so we have special reasons to give our support – we sent a large consignment of winter clothes and your monetary gifts at our meeting amounted to over £50, thank you very much.

Our Museum has welcomed a new volunteer, Adam New is helping with our archives and we thank him for what he is doing to make our records more easily accessible to visitors. Recently we were able to loan some of our artefacts to some young students who were making a film set in the 1950s.

We are again running our Lion Cup Competition and I would encourage you to think about entering, I am sure that many of you have a story to tell! Details are on our website and on page 10 of this magazine.

Finally, we are looking at ways to commemorate Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee in June. We hope to plant a tree somewhere in Bitterne later in the year and to have an event (probably a cream tea) on the Jubilee weekend – with a competition for the best home-made crown!

With all good wishes,



DONATIONS OF PHOTOGRAPHS — *Steve Adams*

At the Heritage Centre we frequently receive collections of photographs for which we are always grateful and would encourage anyone who has images of our local area to either donate them or let us copy them. Work is now underway to digitise our collection so that it will be more widely available.

However, sometimes we get a very disappointing collection come in; the photographs look fine and are obviously old. The problem is that there is no information with them – no date, no names, no places, nothing. Unfortunately unless they show something immediately recognisable they are virtually useless to both us or anyone else. .

Please look to your own collection and put some details on the back of each print using a soft pencil. Even if they do not come to us then your children and grandchildren will thank you for it for years to come.



CHARITY SHOP NEWS — *Ian Abrahams*

Sales have been good since Christmas – except in the very bad weather when nobody wanted to go out! Thanks to our loyal band of volunteers we have been able to keep open on a regular basis – something our customers do appreciate.

We have welcomed two ‘new’ volunteers in recent months, both of whom have had much experience working in the, sadly closed, Salvation Army charity shop. Many thanks also go to those who have been doing ‘extra hours’ behind the scenes



preparing items to go on our new stand at the Mercantile Flea. Our week-long book sale there earlier in the year raised £399, thanks to all who helped. Over their special ‘re-launch’ weekend in January we staged a mini exhibition which was much enjoyed by all who visited. Many thanks to Russell and Mike for their help with this.

As I mentioned earlier we now have our own stand at the ‘Flea’ from



which we are selling local publications as well as a varied selection of items from our Charity Shop – do pop in and have a look. My thanks to Jill who has done most of the pricing and labelling – no small task.



BERT WARNE AWARD

Bitterne Local History Society Vice President and long-time member, Bert Warne, pictured on the occasion of his receiving the 'Freedom of Southampton' from another of our members, The Mayor of Southampton, Councillor Alex Houghton. This is in recognition of Bert's continuing efforts to ensure that the Far East prisoners of war from WWII are not forgotten. He is apparently now allowed to march through the Bargate with a loaded rifle if he wishes!



MUCH TO DISCUSS

Denise Hacking (shop volunteer) and Lesley Hallet (née Crook) pictured in our Museum reminiscing about Lankester and Crook. You may remember Denise's father worked for them (see article in our Spring 2020 Bygone Bitterne). She brought along a copy of the Lankester and Crook Catalogue from 1913, a hefty volume illustrating the many items they sold. Various archives from the company are deposited at the Southampton City Record Office and it is hoped that one day a history of the firm might be published.



DO YOU REMEMBER HENRI ARGOUARCH? — *Peter Jones*

Was it in the 1990s or perhaps later when I saw him in his beret pushing his heavily laden bicycle near Bitterne? A woman nearby exclaimed: “Blimey its Johnny Onion. I haven’t seen him for years”. I was suddenly transported back to my 1960s childhood when the Frenchman was a regular figure in the area. Once, while he was with a customer, us kids started fiddling with his plaits of onions which were slung over the handle bars of his bike. They started to fall and roll down the pavement. Johnny started shouting and we scarpered.

Our Johnny Onion was Henri Argouarch (c.1935-2004) who came from



the Roscoff area in Brittany. He started selling onions in Wales during the late 1940s before coming to Southampton in the early 1960s. Aside from Southampton, he would go as far afield as the New Forest and the Meon Valley.

Hampshire magazine reported that he was still working as late as 2002. Thanks to the French photographer Magali Delaporte, we have a record of Henri’s life in Southampton which can be seen on the Bitterne Local History

Society website under 'Local People' in the *Galleries* section. One of her evocative pictures is shown here; Henri pushing his bike up Cutbush Lane. Magali spent two years with Henri here and in Brittany. As well as her



photographs, in *The Book of Bitterne: From Roman Town to City Suburb*, she wrote of his frugal life doing his rounds and living on mostly home cooked stew:

"He rented a room and a garage for £50 a week and stayed until every single onion was sold. He never took time to see the sights as he was here only to sell onions. Every Wednesday and Sunday morning, he prepared the onion strings in his garage, weaving the stalks into the traditional plaits to make up bundles weighing 3.5kgs". Henri would carry around twenty bundles at a time – that's over 150 pounds. Yet he did have some pleasures; fish and chips on a Saturday night and a few pints in Portswood where he lived. There was also banter with customers. In a 1996 *Daily Echo* feature on Henri, one of his regulars said: "I like to practice my French on him and he answers in English, so we have a bit of fun".

Johnnie Onions or Onion Johnnies are not just part of the folklore of Southampton. They travelled all over the UK and were even mentioned in the hit comedy series *Steptoe and Son*. Onion Johnnies were farmers and agricultural labourers and first started coming across the Channel in the 1820s due to low prices for their produce in France. First in small boats then in ships, but the journey could be perilous. In 1905, the SS *Hilda* on its Southampton to St Malo run sunk in a storm just outside St Malo's harbour. Among the drowned were some seventy Onion Johnnies

returning home.

Once in Britain life was still hard for the itinerant Bretons. They would leave their homes and their families for months at a time, hawking their onions door-to-door. Some of them were just lads – Henri was 14 when he started. Their hey-day was the inter-war years though they were welcome after the war because of rationing. However, they could bring tears to the eyes of local greengrocers. *The Western Daily Press* in 1950 reported little entente cordiale in Bristol. According to one local trader, Johnny Onions were a “gross and glaring injustice to the retail trade” and accused them of “unhealthy habits – sleeping on boats or in dockyard sheds, cadging wigs and spectacles from our benevolent National Health system”.

Others were more sympathetic to the onion-sellers and thought their lives were worth examining. The BBC in 1957 made a documentary called *Onion Johnnie* filmed in Brittany and the United Kingdom. Two years later British Pathé News did a short feature on them which is available online. There have also been radio plays about cross-Channel love affairs between English women and Johnny Onions which actually happened in real life; *Au Revoir Johnny Onions* from 1998 and in 2005 *Five Summers and Johnny Onion*. Moreover, thanks to Hampshire market trader Pascal Créach, there are two videos on the internet which feature our Johnny Onion. The best one *Henri Argouarc’h in Southampton and Yves Gallou in Port Talbot* (in the Breton language) shows him working in his

garage and selling onions in Portswood and Highfield.

In the post-war years their numbers greatly declined and most of those left turned to motorised



transport. Irene Pilson who lived in Bitterne for some 50 years recalled in her 1984 book *Memories of Bitterne*: “The Johnny Onion Men are still with us, but becoming rarer year by year. Always cheerful, whatever the weather or vagaries of the trade”. There may be very few of them now but their sweet, pearly pink and long keeping onions are highly prized and can retail in shops for seven pounds upwards per kilo. They have been awarded the esteemed *Appellation D’Origine Contrôlée* designation which acknowledges their unique nature. There is even a museum devoted to them: *La Maison des Johnnies et L’Oignon de Roscoff*. Whoever thought a humble vegetable could be so rich in social history.

The author would like to thank Magali Delaporte, staff at the Bitterne Local History Society Heritage & Research Centre and Local Studies, Southampton Central Library.

The video is at

<https://pascalonions.pagesperso-orange.fr/johnnie%20videos.htm>



THE LION CUP 2021

Once again the BLHS is running its Lion Cup Competition to encourage an interest in the history of the area of Southampton East of the River Itchen. Entries can be in the form of essays, poems or photographs but must be based on research, personal stories of events or buildings, etc.

Closing date is 31 July and entries will need to be accompanied by an Entry Form which is available on our website, along with the rules, or may be collected from our shop.

The winner in 2021 was Peter Taylor whose entry was titled *Canadian Convoy* and reproduced in the Autumn 2021 edition of *Bygone Bitterne* and is also on our website along with all the previous winners’ entries.



BITTERNE BOY: CHILDHOOD — *Barrie England*

The first part of recollections written for Barrie's friends and family that, I am sure, will be of interest to others. Continued in our next issue.

The century I was born into in 1942 was very different from the one in which I and many others will die. The Battle of Britain had been won and the Battle of Normandy was yet to be fought. At the age of three or four I saw army lorries lined up in Southampton, waiting to cross the Channel to support the invasion.

My cousin Jack, my mother's nephew, fought in Burma during the war and had passed through Germany on the way home and had acceded to my request for a mouth organ. He rummaged through his kit bag, interrupting his mother's warm welcome, to find it for me. I was later disappointed to find that it needed more than random sucking and blowing to produce a tune.

On marriage, my parents moved to rented accommodation at 9 Brook Road, Bitterne. There they lived until my mother had to enter a geriatric hospital following several strokes, and until my father died there of heart failure. It was my home for the first twenty or so years of my life.

At the nearby crossroads, Mrs Symes ran a grocery shop, where she cut off cheese from a block with a wire, and where biscuits and sweets were sold from boxes and jars, and sold by weight. The Fox and Hounds was opposite and the butcher's shop stood on a third corner, run by the Rolfe



family – my father was frequently complaining about the quality of their produce. Further up Brook Road lived an

An earlier view of Brook Road



The Old Bitterne Brewery pre-war

old lady known as Jane Russell, who wore Edwardian dress, as she presumably always had .

Just beyond the northern end of Brook Road was the Bitterne Brewery pub, badly bombed during the war. I can just about remember it before it was pulled down and rebuilt. It has since been demolished.

We had chickens at the bottom of our garden. We called them Pip, Squeak and Wilfred after some *Daily Mirror* cartoon characters. Next to their run was the air raid shelter. I don't remember ever being in it, but I do remember standing on top of it when, some time after the war, the air raid siren sounded, as some kind of practice, I suppose, and I was much distressed until my mother heard me and took me indoors.

I have two or three other very early memories. One was being passed over the garden wall, either to or from the house next door, where Auntie Edith, my grandmother's half-sister, lived with her husband, Fred Ravenscroft. When Edith died, Uncle Fred had a series of housekeepers and finally married one of them, a short Welsh lady, Mrs Phillips.

Southampton was a collection of bomb sites, with purple Buddleia incongruously growing from the ruins. Pig bins were a common sight on the streets, where residents were invited to deposit waste food for the farming industry. A lamp lighter rode round the streets on a bicycle with a long pole with which to turn on each light at dusk. Norman Frenchmen also pedalled the streets, laden with onions for sale [see *Peter Jones' article on page 7*]. Other bicycles were turned to use as mobile knife grinders. Rag and bone men drove horses and carts to collect any valuable refuse,

calling for 'Any old iron'. Milk was delivered by horse-drawn floats, as they were known. A local delivery man with dwarfism, Roley Rocket, plied his trade with a pony and cart from what was, I think, a bicycle repair shop. A man called Frank Hobbs, cycled around Southampton from one side to the other, collecting insurance premiums, including from my parents. I've no idea what benefit they ever got from it. My father received his wages in cash in a pay packet. Much of it went on rent, either collected, or taken personally to the landlord's home. They paid for gas and electricity by putting shillings in a meter. No shillings, no gas or electricity.

I was born on 22 May 1942, at Folly Farm, a Lutyens/Jekyll property in Sulhamstead, Berkshire, where my mother had been evacuated to avoid bombing raids on Southampton. I am descended from a long, long line of manual labourers and domestic servants on both sides of my family. My cousin and I were the first in our family to go to university.

Bitterne had several pubs in the centre and around it. The nearest to our house was the Fox and Hounds on the corner with Pound Street, half way down which was The Firs. Pound Street was so called because there was a pound at the bottom for stray horses.



The Fox & Hounds pub

Food and clothing were still rationed. Cheap furniture bore the utility mark. Most people had no telephone and had to walk to the nearest public call box, the red ones, with their buttons A and B, one to get through and the other to get your money back. A non-local call required making a special request to the operator.

Food was unappetising if, on the whole, nutritious, even if cheese and butter in plenty were thought wholesome. Eggs came in powdered form, unless they were pickled in a bucket. The dominating colours were brown and grey. No aubergines, no peppers, no avocados, few bananas, no wine. Meat and two veg was the standard main course, followed by something like sponge and custard, with trifle on Sunday, if you were lucky, and if there were guests. In that case the meal would be taken in the early evening and be called tea, the chief element being salad with Spam or tinned salmon. No doubt many suffered from poor diets, but there were no food banks then. I was a fussy eater, being content to have a lunch of crisps and a Mars bar. A special treat for me and, I believe, others, was a kind of sugar sandwich, known as 'buppy sugar'.

And yet, signs still proclaimed that Southampton, as the home port of many international shipping lines, was the Gateway to the Empire, and maps on school classroom walls still showed many parts of the world coloured red. As Lord Curzon, the Viceroy from 1899 to 1906 had said, with prescience, 'As long as we rule India, we are the greatest power in the world. If we lose it, we shall drop straight away to a third-rate Power.'

Televisions were for the rich and those who lived in, or near, London. Broadcasts had started before the war, which interrupted progress. A television aerial, originally shaped like the letter H and later as an X, was a status symbol. The sets were large wooden boxes with tiny screens. To start with, there was just one BBC channel, with ITV beginning a few years later, all in black and white, of course. The earliest programme I remember was 'The Grove Family', the original soap opera, although being on the non-commercial BBC, it didn't sell soap, or anything else. My parents didn't have a television until later, so we all went to my uncle's house to

Archie Andrews with Peter Brough



watch the coronation in 1953. The avoirdupoisly challenged Queen of Tonga was much admired for not having the hood of her carriage raised as a shelter from the rain during the procession. When asked who the little man sitting opposite her was, Noel Coward is alleged to have said, in words that would not have gone down so well today, 'That's her lunch.'

Most households had a radio, or wireless as it was then known, on which they had heard the ominous words of Neville Chamberlain on 3 September 1939 saying we were at war. The radio played a large part in the nation's lives during and after the war. It was the channel for Churchill's rousing oratory, but also a main source of entertainment. Those of my generation will perhaps remember *ITMA*, *Up The Pole*, *Educating Archie* (featuring a radio ventriloquist!), *Mrs Dale's Diary*, *At The Luscombes*, *Take It From Here*, and, enduring still, *The Archers*.

Cinemas were also very popular, filled though they were with clouds of tobacco smoke. Some cinemas, including The Ritz in Bitterne put on children's shows on Saturday mornings for one shilling [5 p] There was usually a western and a cartoon. '*Casablanca*', '*Brief Encounter*' and '*This Happy Breed*' remain classics of the period.

Cars were rare luxuries. Some had motorcycles, but most of us had to walk, take the bus, or cycle everywhere. My father had an accident on his motorcycle, which put him in hospital in Basingstoke for several weeks. To visit him, my mother and I had to take the bus into Southampton to catch the train, followed by another bus to the hospital, and then do the whole thing in reverse to get home.

The election of 1945 surprisingly rejected Churchill, regarded by many as the man who had won the war. In his place, the government of the new Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, ushered in a programme of social reform, the like of which had never been seen before and which changed the lives of many of us. Free education and free health for all at the point of delivery were now firmly established.



Midanbury Lane, when it was safe near the middle of the road.



The Albert Terrace bus stop, gone forever underneath the by-pass.

Good view of Pound Street junction and Bitterne Motor Works.





Constructing the
Bitterne By-pass

How many can
remember real
steam rollers
flattening the
fresh tarmac?



Who has bought
bread from
Lanes Bakery in
Commercial
Street?



I joined the army for my National Service, at the age of 18, on 20 July 1950. I had previously matriculated at Taunton's Grammar School, so the authorities, in their infinite wisdom, posted me to the Royal Army Educational Corps, (RAEC). I then did my basic training with the 1st Battalion the Kings Royal Rifle Corps (KRRC), known as the 60th Rifles, at Bushfield Camp, Winchester. On enlistment all recruits had to take the oath of allegiance to King George VI, in earlier times this was known as "*taking the king's shilling*".

The 60th Rifles were responsible for the basic training of some of the RAEC, others were trained with the Welsh Guards at Beaconsfield. We had three months intensive training in how to kill in various ways, bayonet, Bren gun, Sten gun, hand grenade and, of course, rifle! As a rifle regiment the Lee Enfield .303 rifle was almost worshipped and there were many marksmen in the KRRC, several of them champions at Bisley, where top-level shooting competitions were held.

It was an offence akin to murder to have a dirty rifle, and this resulted in my first experience of being on a charge and then punished, otherwise known as '*jankers*'. The background was that we had been on a night exercise that involved wading through the River Itchen in full combat gear, carrying our rifle. We returned to Bushfield at 6.00am and were told to parade at 6.45pm in best uniform for an inspection. I passed mine, the inspecting officer having checked my rifle in some detail, but a comrade some way after me was asked to remove the spring from the magazine, when a tiny speck of rust was found. To my horror, we were then all told to remove the spring from our magazines and lo and behold, mine also had a very tiny speck of rust! This resulted in a sentence of seven days confined to barracks, carrying out fatigues every day.

This involved having to parade outside the guardhouse every morning and evening, with the other defaulters, when we were allocated various duties. Such mind-blowing duties as renewing the whitewash on the

brick edging strips along some pathways, or cutting the grass edgings with a large pair of scissors! One of the more welcome duties was peeling potatoes and preparing vegetables for the Sergeant's or Officer's Mess. At least one was warm and dry, with something to nibble, the other duties were carried out in the open regardless of the weather.

On my first defaulters' parade, when it came to my turn the Provost Corporal (one of the regimental policeman) screamed at me *"Go in the guardhouse and get a brush"*. I ran as fast as possible into the guardroom, opened a cupboard and grabbed the first brush I saw. When I returned, still in mortal terror, the corporal looked at the brush, saw I had in my haste collected a wire brush, and again screamed at me – *"Go to the rear of the guardroom and scrub the dustbin – I'll teach you to do what you're told"*.

I then found an old rusty dustbin, full of refuse, that I had to first empty out, and scrub with the wire brush. Directly I eased off the scrubbing, as my arm started to ache, the Provost Corporal heard the change in noise level and screamed out for me to scrub harder. By the end of an hour my entire body ached as it never had before, and my hatred of the corporal built up to the point where I could cheerfully have murdered him.

My initial basic training eventually came to an end and we were posted to Bodmin, Cornwall, to receive our educational teacher training. When we arrived at the station we were joined by a similar collection of RAEC recruits who had been trained with the Welsh Guards at Beaconsfield. The marching speed of rifle regiments was 140 to the minute, compared to the standard rate of 120 to the minute, quite a difference, so when Bodmin's Company Sergeant Major formed us into two groups, to march us to the camp several miles away, there was absolute chaos.

The Welsh Guards trained recruits in front marched at their usual ponderous pace, whilst we behind them from Bushfield marched considerably faster, bumping into the rear of the Guards group. We had to stop, ordered to go to the front and lead the group, whereas we tore away leaving the other half a hundred yards behind. The CSM swore and



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screamed, but no matter what he did the Guards group deliberately marched even slower whilst we marched ever faster. It was the best fun we'd had since joining up.

We received intensive classroom training and at the end of the first month those who passed the first examination received their first stripe to become lance-corporals. At the end of the second month we became full corporals, and at the end of the third month we who survived became the proud owners of three stripes as sergeants. This was to ensure we had the appropriate authority when we were posted to our regiment as army schoolteachers. We were then individually interviewed by the commanding officer and asked where we would prefer to be posted.

As I had taken German at school I asked to be posted to Germany, to the BAOR (British Army on the Rhine). I arrived at Hanover, via a boat-train from the Hook of Holland, my very first trip abroad, and was given a choice of available regiments that needed an education sergeant.

I was surprised to learn that whilst I had been in Bodmin, the 60th Rifles had also been posted to BAOR and were stationed in Paderborn, a small village in the North Rhine Westphalia area of Germany. I was delighted to learn that they needed an education sergeant and so requested a posting to my former training regiment. This was granted and in due



course I arrived at their barracks, former SS ones, on the outskirts of Paderborn.

When I arrived at

Accommodation huts at Bodmin

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the entrance, carrying my suitcases, who was on duty at the guardroom? None other than the Provost Corporal who had tormented me with the wire brush! He did not recognise me but, in view of my three gleaming white stripes, detailed a Rifleman to carry them for me and escort me to my personal flat in the barracks. I said nothing to him but resolved to wait until I had him in my classroom. This took place the following week, once I had settled in.

The army had recently decided that all wartime ranks had to obtain their appropriate army certificates of education to retain their rank. The warrant officers, CSM (Company Sergeant Major) and RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) – the most important and feared non-commissioned officer in every regiment – had to obtain the Army First Class Certificate and other ranks the Army Second Class Certificate. There was a second RAEC sergeant, 'Taffy' Barton, who joined me within a matter of days, and we both worked hard at attempting to get the various ranks to pass their respective exams.

My hated Provost Corporal appeared in my class in due course, anxious to qualify and at my mercy. However, by then I had understood that what he had done was part of instilling discipline into a soldier and was part of what was really a game. I was now a sergeant and part of the same game. I also found that the Corporal was actually quite a decent chap and I was never tempted to inflict anything on him, such as exposing his ignorance of things to the rest of the class.

One incident that remains fixed in my memory was on a Sunday afternoon. I had been drinking heavily throughout the week-end, this was the accepted custom in the sergeant's mess, and I eventually staggered back to my billet. This was the end flat on the third floor of what had been former SS barracks, built identical to the UK terraced apartments found on council estates. I had been having a friendly disagreement with a fellow sergeant, Sgt Ross Cromerty, DFC (yes, that actually was his name!). Ross had obtained his decoration as a glider pilot during the war and I was always conscious that as the baby of the

mess (only just turned 18) I had not earned my stripes, as had the remainder of the mess. Ross had teased me that I had never fired a shot in anger or been under fire, and



The Quarters in Paderborn

I had responded by pointing out that I had gone through the Southampton blitz, hearing every one of the 3,000 plus bombs drop, without any means of fighting back.

However, as I lay in my bunk, I heard what appeared to be a shot coming from the parade ground outside, with a simultaneous thud on the outside of the building. I then heard a second shot, simultaneous with the crash of breaking glass and a cloud of dust coming from over the top of my door that led to the outside corridor. I immediately rolled out of my bed, looked at the top of the door and saw there was a large crater in the plaster and then looked at the window, which had a neat hole drilled in the centre. I cautiously crawled across to the window, peered carefully over the windowsill and saw Ross, standing in the centre of the parade ground, waving a .22 rifle in his hand and shouting out *"You've been under fire now Brownie!"*

Men were frantically running towards him and I saw him placed under arrest, led away in a badly drunken state. He was subsequently court-martialled and reduced to full corporal.



Jim's adventures during National Service will be continued in our next issue.

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From April 1997: Delving into Old Bitterne History by *Margaret Sandells*

In early January, as Church Secretary [United Reformed Church, Bitterne] I was given a letter from Mrs E. Carson of West London to look for any information about her family in the Church archives. The clues were as follows:-

Her great-great-Grandfather, John LUMB, married a Mary FLETCHER in Southampton in 1838. Mary's father was Isaac FLETCHER, a Bookseller of Southampton.

John LUMB was an Independent Minister without charge when the family moved to Bitterne about 4-5 years after they were married. I put on my BLHS hat and rang Jim Brown, our Vice-Chairman, to ask his advice. Within about half an hour he phoned me back to say that he had found the family in the index of the 1851 Census, and he would look up the full Census to find the family's address and other details. He not only looked at the Census but also at Kelly's Directories and found that by 1823 Isaac Fletcher was in business as a Bookseller at 143 High St. By 1834 he had taken his sons into the family firm and expanded its services. By 1843 he had taken a partner named FORBES and for many years their company names were embossed on the spine of the local Street Directories. During this period the Revd LUMB and his family moved into 'Monte Repos', Bitterne. This house was located on the south side of what is now Bitterne Precinct, immediately adjacent to the Abbey National Building [*recently Santander*]. The site is now the access road called Angel Crescent leading to the rear of Sainsbury's. 'Monte Repos' was at one time occupied by school teachers when Bitterne School was built nearby, but by 1918 it had been demolished and replaced by a garage, later called 'Bitterne Motor Works', (photo on page 50 of 'Bitterne Before The Bypass'.) This was, in turn, replaced by Gusters Ltd and the right hand side of this shop is where 'Monte Repos' stood. This can be clearly seen on page 52 of the same

book.

The 1851 Census indicates that by then the Revd LUMB was running a small school at 'Monte Repos', with his three oldest children among the pupils. Two of his children were named after their Grandfather and Mother, with FLETCHER as a Christian name. This follows an old Scottish custom. The details in the 1851 Census are as follows:-

John LUMB an Independent Minister without a pastorate; his wife Mary LUMB and six children aged from 4 months to 11 years plus a Housemaid, Cook and six 'Scholars' aged from 7 to 12.

My husband went searching for the marriage and found it in the very first register after compulsory registration was introduced in July 1837. This took place in the Independent Chapel (known to our older readers as Above Bar Congregational Church, which was on the site of what is now Marks & Spencer in Above Bar before the blitz of 1940) on the 25th July 1838. John LUMB gave his profession as Dissenting Minister. As expected, Mary LUMB was the daughter of Isaac FLETCHER, Bookseller.

Mary and her husband John LUMB boarded the 'Mary Ann' at Portsmouth at the end of August 1838 and sailed as missionaries for Madras. Mary was already pregnant when she arrived in Madras and their son Isaac was born there in June 1839. By this time John was seriously ill with a form of typhoid with jaundice and gallstones. After many weeks on the verge of death he recovered but was advised to leave India, and they left for England that autumn. Their second child was born in Woolston in 1841 and their second daughter, Mary, in Weymouth. John's health was poor and he had to leave his position in Weymouth and by 1845 they were settled in Bitterne. The family moved on from Bitterne and John is recorded as a Minister in Reading and Ross on Wye before ill health forced his retirement to Islington. He died in 1884 and his wife Mary in 1897 and they are buried in Abney Park cemetery near Stoke Newington.

This is an abridged version of the article. The complete version with all names and dates as published in 1997 is on the 'Online Resources' page of the BLHS website.

OTHER LOCAL SOCIETIES

Please contact societies directly for current information.

West End Local History Society

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

4 May CUNARD HISTORY & GLAMOUROUS STARS by Steve Hera

1 Jun PEOPLE ON PLINTHS by Tony Cross

6 Jul We Landed by Moonlight by Dr Henry Goodall

Contact: 02380 471886

www.westendlhs.co.uk

Bishop's Waltham Local History Society

Meetings at St Peter's Church Hall, SO32 1EE at 7.30 pm

19 May HENRY VIII & THE TREATY OF WALTHAM 1522 by Tony Kippenberger

16 Jun THE HISTORY OF CHICHESTER HARBOUR by Prof Colin Duncan-Jones

21 Jul THE NAPOLEONIC CONSPIRATORS OF ODIHAM by Paul Chamberlain

info@bishopswalthamsociety.org www.bishopswalthamsociety.org.uk/

Lordshill & Lordswood Historical Society

Meetings at Manston Court, Lordshill, SO16 8HF at 10.30 am

12 May AGM + QUIZ

9 Jun BUILDING SPITFIRES WITHOUT A FACTORY by Alan Matlock

14 Jul WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR MUM? by Dave Allport MBE

Contact: 078 6634 8032

Hampshire Genealogical Society

The Southampton Group is currently closed. The nearest groups are now Fair Oak and Romsey, see their website for details

Contact: 077 6940 5195

www.hgs-familyhistory.com/

Hound Local History Society

St Edwards Church Hall, Grange Road, Netley, SO31 5FF at 7.30 pm

27 May THE LOCAL STORY OF THE SPITFIRE by Stephen Hoadley

Contact: 023 8045 3641

www.hugofox.com/community/hound-local-history-society-13390

Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

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

None currently listed

Contact: 01962 855200

www.hias.org.uk/meetings.htm

Botley, Curdridge and Durley History Society

Meetings at Diamond Jubilee Hall, Botley, SO30 2ES at 8.00 pm

22 Apr KING HENRY VIII, EMPEROR CHARLES V & THE TREATY OF WALTHAM

Contact: 01489 691777

www.botley.com/history-society

Millbrook Local History Society

Holy Trinity Church Hall, Millbrook Road, SO15 0JZ at 7.00 pm

5 May THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1951 by Simon Gomm

2 Jun QUEEN'S PLATINUM CELEBRATION – Invitation Only

7 Jul SOUTHAMPTON & THE LINERS by Jack Wilson

Contact: 079 8131 9376

millbrookhistory.webs.com

Romsey Local History Society

Meetings in Town Hall, Market Place, Romsey SO51 8YZ

11 Apr THE LOST SOLDIERS OF FROMELLES 1916 by Professor Margaret Cox

28 Apr A MID 14TH CENTURY LADY OF LANDFORD AND HER GOODS.

by Professor Chris Woolgar

Contact: romsey.history@gmail.com www.ltvas.org.uk

Hampshire Archives

Hampshire Archives & Local Studies, Sussex Street, SO23 8TH

25 Apr RESEARCHING THE HISTORY OF YOUR HAMPSHIRE HOUSE

Online Talk, 6.00 pm, £5 per person

9 May FILM SCREENING - SHINING A LIGHT ON 9.5 MM FILM, 6.00 pm

23 May BEHIND THE SCENES TOUR, 2.00 pm & 6.00 pm, £10

30 May THE QUEEN IN HAMPSHIRE: A PLATINUM JUBILEE RETROSPECTIVE,

6.00 pm, Online Talk, £5 per person

Contact: 01962 846154

www.hants.gov.uk/librariesandarchives/archives/



FROM OUR COLLECTION

Empire Day Certificate presented in 1916 to Lily Gurman.

During the first World War children were encouraged to get involved in fundraising through the Overseas Club and certificates were issued to acknowledge both gifts, usually mittens, socks etc., or money raised for gift boxes for sailors and soldiers so they could have some of the comforts of home while fighting abroad.

This Certificate was presented on Empire Day 1916, but they had also been issued in 1915 and for the Christmas of both years, all with different designs. This certificate shows the allegiance of the countries of the world (and territories occupied) to either the Allied or Enemy cause. Empire Day was instituted on 24 May 1904 in the UK and was renamed Commonwealth Day in 1952.

The Overseas Club was established in 1910 'to promote the unity of British Subjects the world over', and in 1918 it amalgamated with a similar organisation to form the Royal Over-Sea League. Its patron was originally



King George V and royal patronage has continued to this day; it was granted the addition of 'Royal' in its title in 1960 on its Golden Jubilee.

Lily Gurman [Rosa Lillian Gurman] was born in Bitterne in 1910. Her father, Charles was in the Merchant Navy and she lived in Whites Road, Bitterne, later moving to West End. She was a member of the BLHS from 1982 until her death in 1987.



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BLHS CALENDAR

MONTHLY MEETINGS

All meetings for the year are listed on our website along with Further Details of the talks and Speakers

May 14 **MAGIC BRUNELS** Prof Tony Pointon

Jun 11 **RADIO TIMES' BROADCASTING MEMORIES**
John Pitman

Jul 9 **CANAL HISTORY AND CANAL ART** Terri Robinson

Aug **NO MEETING**

Sep 10 **THE LIFE OF WINSTON CHURCHILL** John Richards

Deadline for contributions to the Summer Edition
is Saturday, 11 June

Please send contributions to the Editor, Steve Adams
blhseditor@gmail.com
or address them to The Editor at the Heritage Centre
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BITTERNE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Saturday 10 am 1 pm

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Check our website for updates

www.bitterne.net

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