

Alresford Articles No.4

Succeeding 'Alresford Displayed'



Alresford Historical and Literary Society



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About the Alresford Historical and Literary Society

The Society was formed in 1966 to bring together members of the local community and encourage interest in the History, Literature and Archaeology of Alresford and the surrounding areas. It has been instrumental in recording the area's history and events as evidenced by the publication of the original twenty-two original Alresford Displayed booklets. Many of our members have played a pivotal role in the ongoing social and commercial life of our attractive town.

The Alresford Historical and Literary Society holds its monthly meetings in the Methodist Church, Jacklyns Lane, where a balanced programme of talks and presentations takes place in a friendly atmosphere. Meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of the month, and it is not necessary to be a member to attend – visitors are welcome at the door for a small fee (refreshments are provided).

Selected topics give an insight into the influence that the political, social and industrial heritage has had on our Community and Hampshire. To stimulate the literary interests of the members, lectures are chosen to illustrate the work of authors and artistic personalities.

We also organise occasional group visits to interesting places.

For further information, please visit our website www.alresfordhistandlit.co.uk

Front cover:

Arlebury 1910 by kind permission of Godfrey Andrews (www.alresfordheritage.co.uk)

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Logo of the Imperial War Museum 1914 Centenary partnership.

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Contents

Welcome		p.2
1. The British Army, HQ in Alresford, 'Utterly Beaten'	Glenn Gilbertson	p.3
2. The Stratton Bates Legacy	Brian Rothwell	p.7
3. Our Hinton Ampner 1940-44	Trisha Ferris	p.16
4. The Shrave	Peter Abraham	p.21
5. George Wither's Window & Alresford's Wondrous Pond	Brian Tippett	p.25
6. Delivering the Newspapers in 1950's Alresford	Nick Denbow	p.33
7. The Tenants of Borough Farm	Isabel Sanderson	p.37
8. Dr Harold Hodgson	Brian Rothwell	p.43
9. Poetry Corner		p.44
10. Index to <i>Alresford Articles</i> Nos. 1, 2 & 3		Inside back cover

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Welcome

Welcome to the fourth edition of *Alresford Articles*, the successor to the *Alresford Displayed* series that was produced from 1976 to 1997. The aim is to produce a similar set of eclectic publications containing articles of varying lengths, largely related to Alresford and the local area's past, or written by Alresford people. Of course, the opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial team.

Alresford Articles nos. 1, 2 & 3 should now be available from the Hampshire Library Service, and an index of the contents can be found at the end of this volume.

So, we present our latest mixture, with the centenary of the outbreak of World War One lending poignancy to the army article, poetry corner and Trisha Ferris's memoir of evacuation in World War Two. The interesting articles on the Stratton-Bates Recreation Ground and Borough Farm are leavened by the tales of 1950's Alresford and Dr Hodgson, and the story of George Wither combines history and literature. Peter Abraham has again researched the derivation of a local place name.



Broad Street East - Drawing by Lawrence Wright (1960's)

We hope that you enjoy this edition – please give us your feedback, and we welcome contributions or suggestions for topics to be covered in the future. There are a wealth of stories to be told. We have prepared an advice document on how to style any contribution to make life easier for authors, so don't be shy!

Arlebury Park the Headquarters for the Defence of England - British Army “Utterly Defeated”.

By

Glenn Gilbertson



“Final Battle Near Winchester. British Army Utterly defeated.”

After the defeat of the Royal Navy in the English and Bristol Channels an invading European force of seven brigades of the line (about 35,000 men), with 164 guns, captured an undefended Winchester and seized the ridges from the Itchen at Winchester to the Meon at Warnford. The aim of their commander, Brigadier General the Hon. J. Byng, was to draw the British Army based in Aldershot to battle, forcing it to leave only a small, detached force to protect London.

The maximum possible defending force was assembled, 130 guns and some 19,000 men, commanded by Lieut.-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, who set up his headquarters at Arlebury Park, Alresford (at the invitation of the owner, his friend Mr. Walford).

A battle zone developed between the Itchen valley from Kings Worthy to Bishopstoke in the west, a line through Alresford to Medstead in the north, the Meon Valley down to Droxford to the east and a line through Bishop’s Waltham to the south; defeat for the British would mean the loss of London and then Great Power status. Fighting raged round Ropley, Cheriton and Kilmeston for five days.

The final battle began on the night of Friday 25th September and lasted for 24 hours.

¹Hampshire Chronicle 19.09.1908



Pictures via www.wikipedia.com

General Byng kept his infantry and guns well masked along the higher ground, and with scouts in the vale below to get early news of the enemy. On the other hand, General Byng all day on the Friday and until after midnight could see nothing and learn nothing of the movements going on in his front. The British defenders, on their side had got as far as the district round the village of Tichborne, from which, as a centre, they extended to right and left to Cheriton and Ovington. During the early hours of the Friday night there were several alarms, owing to the collision of some advanced patrols, which had exchanged a few shots, and then retired. At midnight the defenders crept through the deep grass to the left of the invaders' position, and, getting past the pickets, seized positions on Telegraph Hill. The post was lightly held, and without much effort to retain it General Byng's forces retired on their main body (who were enjoying a hot meal).

Daylight, as it came on, disclosed the situation at a glance. On the slopes, not many hundred yards away from the invading army, khaki-clad warriors came into view, all silently crouching. In a moment they were swarming like ants up towards the edge of the enemy position. But General Byng's army was on the alert, and they directed incessant volleys of musketry like sheets of fire right into the face of the attacking infantry. The result was massacre. The machine guns and heavy position artillery of the invaders simultaneously opened on the attackers at the foot of the slope, being replied to by the British artillery, who did their best to silence them if possible. By all the rules of war the attacking British army, unable to reach the enemy while it was still dark, had an almost hopeless task before it. The invaders, all strongly entrenched, had them in the open in clear daylight. The fire annihilated the men who were struggling to climb the ridge. The British regiments rallied, then fell back, then rallied again, but the pressure in front was too much for them. General Byng's force then took up the counter-attack, and threw themselves, wave after wave of regiments, on their adversaries below, all along the line. For a stretch of nearly four miles they bore down upon the ill-fated British with a pressure that could not be resisted. "General Smith-Dorrien and the defenders of Great Britain were fairly and thoroughly beaten."

Fortunately we are not suffering from collective amnesia or the machinations of George Orwell's Ministry of Truth. The last successful invasion of England was indeed in 1066 – or 1688 for those of a Jacobite persuasion. The story is of the major Army Exercise of September 1908,

which involved nearly all the Army in the south of England. Military attaches attended as observers from Japan, Italy, Spain, the USA and Siam, exotic guests of the Swan Hotel in Alresford.



Pictures courtesy Godfrey Andrews www.alresfordheritage.co.uk

The events were thoroughly reported in the local and national press. Much was made of the presence of the latest radio apparatus and the efficiency of a temporary military post office.

Ropley schoolchildren were delighted when an officer persuaded the headmaster to allow them to watch the Tuesday mock battle, and several wrote reports of what an exciting day it was. One of the fields being used that day was at Town Street Farm, owned by Mr Tancock – little was he to know that his eldest son was to be killed serving in Mesopotamia in 1916. A local farmer wrote to the *Daily Mail* saying that he had anticipated mass scrumping and bad behaviour, but had been delighted with the behaviour and clean language of the soldiers.



Local pictures courtesy Godfrey Andrews www.alresfordheritage.co.uk

The Hampshire Chronicle of September 19th 1908 reported that:

“The scene in Alresford will not readily be forgotten. At the railway station the officials were busy making preparations for the departure of the Guards (Irish, Coldstream, Scots, Grenadiers), wagons, horses, etc. Special trains were running, the total returning to their headquarters by wagons, horses, etc. Special trains were running, the total returning to their headquarters by rail being 2380 men, 500 horses and 100 wagons. This was an interesting sight but was totally eclipsed by the troops of soldiers, who marched through the town from the direction of the Avenue. Regiment after regiment, headed by their bands, succeeded one another in three long processions, each of which was over one mile in length. At the top of the town General Grierson ... was standing, and it was a fine spectacle to witness all the troops march past at the salute ...”



Picture via
www.wikipedia.com

On Monday a conference of the officers of the Aldershot Command was held at the Prince Consort's Library, where, to an audience of between 300 and 400, General Sir H. L. Smith-Dorrien reviewed the incidents of the recent manoeuvres.²

Alas, many of the men who took part in the manoeuvres would soon be engaged in the real thing in World War 1 - despite the lessons, attacking in daylight in the face of machine guns and barbed wire.

What of the Generals?³

Lieutenant General **Sir James Moncrieff Grierson** KCB, CMG, CVO, ADC (27 January 1859 – 17 August 1914) was appointed commander of II Corps of the BEF at the outbreak of World War 1. He was a modernist and, unlike the BEF commander Sir John French, an enthusiast for military aviation. Grierson was very overweight, and used to go red in the face from bending over, due to high blood pressure, and Edmonds later claimed that his staff were issued with penknives to bleed him if necessary. He died of an aneurism of the heart on a train, near Amiens at 7:00 a.m. on 17 August 1914. Grierson spoke French fluently, astonishing French soldiers by his knowledge of the history of their regiments and was a personal friend of Haig, the commander of I Corps, so it is possible that relations over the next few days, both between the two British corps and with the French, might have been better had he lived. His replacement as commander of II Corps was:

General **Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien**, GCB GCMG DSO ADC (26 May 1858 – 12 August 1930). He was in command of II Corps at the Battle of Mons, the first major action fought by the BEF, and the Battle of Le Cateau, where he fought a vigorous and successful defensive action contrary to the wishes of the Commander-in-Chief Sir John French, with whom he had had a personality clash dating back some years. In the spring of 1915 he commanded British Second Army at the Second Battle of Ypres. He was relieved of command by French for requesting permission to retreat from the Ypres Salient to a more defensible position. His last position was as Governor of Gibraltar.

Field Marshal **Julian Hedworth George Byng, 1st Viscount Byng of Vimy** GCB GCMG MVO DCO (11 September 1862 – 6 June 1935) served with distinction during World War I - specifically, with the British Expeditionary Force in France, in the Battle of Gallipoli, as commander of the Canadian Corps at Vimy Ridge, and as commander of the British Third Army. Byng was in 1919 elevated to the peerage. He was in 1921 appointed as governor general of Canada. Afterwards he returned to the UK, becoming Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

² *Hampshire Chronicle* 26.09.1908

³ www.wikipedia.com

THE STRATTON BATES LEGACY

By

Brian Rothwell

Introduction

Today in 2014, New Alresford Town Council owns, maintains and periodically develops the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground, which is bordered on two sides by Grange Road and Rosebery Road. There are two football pitches, a children's play area, a car park and a pavilion. It is now surrounded by houses but screened on three sides by mature trees and hedges. In 1910 the site was a wasteland and its neighbouring areas were only just starting to be developed for housing. On a grass verge next to the car park stands an engraved stone that links the two eras.

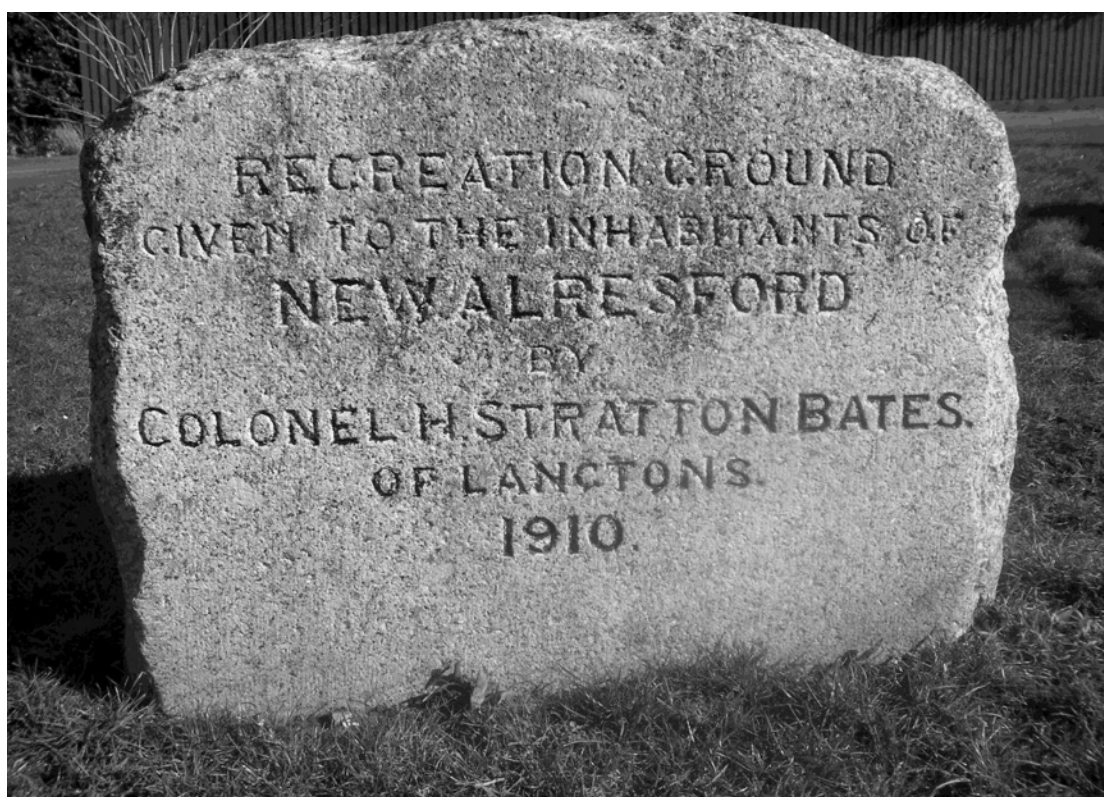


Illustration 1: The Stratton Bates Recreation Ground bequeathing stone in 2012. Photograph by the author.

The benefactor who gave the recreation ground to the town's inhabitants was Colonel Henry Stratton Bates. The son of a clergyman, he was born in 1836 and educated at Westminster School. He joined the army and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Third Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment. He spent many of his service years in New Zealand where he became fluent in the Maori language and acted as a native interpreter during the Waikato Wars of the 1860s.¹

In his retirement Henry Stratton Bates and his wife, Frances Henrietta, came to New Alresford from Gloucestershire at the start of the twentieth century. They lived at Langton House, the large estate on the corner of Sun Lane and Bishops Sutton Road. He had many outdoor interests and had been a good sportsman in his youth. In the years after he arrived in the town, he became the President of the Bowling Club and a Vice-President at the Golf

¹ Lieut. Col. Bates, Henry Stratton, 1836-1918, 22 September 2012, www.nzetc.victoria.ac.nz

Club. He acted as a Justice of the Peace and was interested in the welfare of young people.²

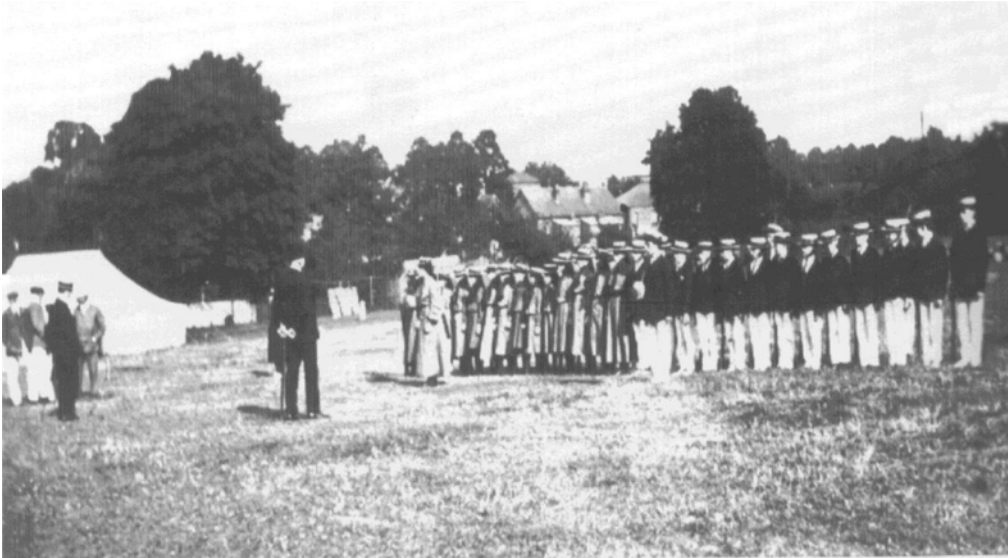


Illustration 2: Colonel Stratton Bates reviewing a parade at Perin's School Sports Day, 1907.³

The Stratton Bates legacy, 1910-1913

From the pen-portrait above, one can deduce that the colonel was an individual who wanted to be involved with, and to contribute to, his local community. In 1910 he purchased some ground to the south of Grange Road with the intention of it forming his legacy to the town in which he had enjoyed his retirement. This land was within walking distance of the town centre; close enough to warrant its use as a convenient recreational space for a majority of the town's inhabitants.

Stratton Bates, however, did not offer the land he purchased to the town's democratically elected parish council, which had first come into being in 1895. Instead he approached New Alresford Town Trust, a charity that had been created in 1890 to manage the assets and rights of the town's former governing body, which included, inter alia, The Avenue and a Fire Engine House on Broad Street. The unreformed and unelected Borough Corporation of the Bailiff and Burgesses of New Alresford had been abolished by statute in 1886 along with seventy-five similar organisations in other small towns.⁴

The land donated by Stratton Bates was given to the town trustees on the strict condition that they manage the ground as a recreation facility for the free use by all of the inhabitants of New Alresford.⁵ On 23 August 1910, the trustees voted to accept the gift and his accompanying condition, but notified the colonel that their acceptance was subject to the approval of the Charity Commission.⁶ The commissioners, however, were not initially convinced that the trustees could afford to manage the asset for public use.

In a letter of 10 December 1910, they set out the only terms upon which they would agree. First, they required that a capital budget be presented for their perusal. The

² Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 4 (New Alresford, 1978), 34.

³ Edward Roberts, *In and Around Alresford in Old Photographs*, Volume 1 (New Alresford, 1975), plate 34.

⁴ Municipal Corporations Act, 1883 [46 & 47 Vict., c. 18].

⁵ Hampshire Record Office, (HRO), 7M50/J1, New Alresford Town Trust, Recreation ground correspondence.

⁶ HRO, 7M50/B1, New Alresford Town Trust, Trustees Minute Book, 1890-1948.

trustees had to itemise everything that would be required to clear, fence, gate and layout the land as a recreation ground. And second, the commissioners demanded a rolling annual expenditure budget to keep the land up to scratch for the next ten years. On 5 May 1911, the trustees managed to satisfy the capital budget condition by resolving to spend all of their reserves, 'no more than £192'.⁷ The second condition, however, presented more of a problem.

The town trustees could not convince the commissioners that they could afford the annual expenditure to maintain the ground. The colonel had to resolve the situation by making another gift to the trustees; £100 of consolidated shares on 23 October 1911.⁸ The anticipated dividends from these shares were deemed sufficient to pay the tithe and to maintain the ground. This satisfied the commissioners but they also imposed a supplementary condition – the trustees had to set up a separate fund to maintain the recreation ground and this fund could not be raided for any other purpose. The trustees went ahead on this basis, agreeing to deposit £10 per annum into a new fund with a separate bank account.⁹

They made arrangements to clear and fence the land. Before the days of heavy portable machinery, this involved labourers with saws and scythes and the use of goats and sheep to crop the vegetation. The trustees also contacted other towns to research what sort of rules and regulations to lay down for its usage as a recreation ground. They had completed both tasks early in 1912 when they were somewhat thrown by another Stratton Bates proposal to present them another piece of adjoining land.

After yet more correspondence with the Charity Commission and more land clearance, the trustees took down one of their fences, moved it and extended the fencing on two of the other sides to enclose the 1.2 hectares that we can see today. The deeds for the ownership of the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground took more than two years to agree and complete. The document was finally signed on 26 September 1912. The ground opened for public use on 7 March 1913 with a long list of byelaws on display at the Grange Road entrance gate.¹⁰

The town trustees struggle to maintain the ground, 1913-1959

The town trustees were destined to struggle with the finances involved in running such a public facility for nearly fifty years. With no income coming in from the ground, maintenance costs had to be met from revenue derived from other sources. The main income of the trust was derived from franchising the sheep fairs that were held in the town and throughout the first two-thirds of the twentieth century animal numbers at these events were continuously declining. With their major source of income drying up and maintenance costs a problem, the trustees were also to face development costs.

If we skip forward ten years, leapfrogging the First World War, we find the trustees in an era in which more and better recreational facilities are being demanded by the public. At a meeting on 23 May 1923 the erection of a dressing room with sanitary accommodation was on the agenda at a quoted cost of £215-18s-0d.¹¹ The trustees responded with exasperation when they turned down the proposal.

⁷ £192 in 1910 equates to £18,500 in 2013. Bank of England, inflation calculator, www.bankofengland.co.uk

⁸ The cost of the shares in 1911 equates to £8,800 at 2013 values.

⁹ HRO, 7M50/J1, New Alresford Town Trust, Recreation ground correspondence.

¹⁰ HRO, 7M50/B1, New Alresford Town Trust, Trustees Minute Book, 1890-1948.

¹¹ The cost of building the pavilion in 1923 equates to £7,000 at 2013 values.

It was proposed by Dr Hodgson that the chairman draw up a paragraph for publication in the *Hampshire Chronicle* explaining the position of the trustees as regards the recreation ground and the funds available for expending on the same.¹²

That same year, 1923, the trustees tried to open up the management of the ground to a group of local users. This move failed when, to the horror of the trustees, the user committee came up with a list of demands that included:

- The goal posts be removed to another site
- A pavilion be erected on the east side, half way along
- Twelve seats be installed on the north, south and east sides
- A hedge on the east side be removed
- Trees to be planted to the south with one or two more to the west.

The minutes of the 1920s read as though the trustees were still living in the Victorian era and that the public were impatient for change. Reluctantly, some changes were made. In 1927 the byelaws were altered, 'to allow Sunday play except during the usual hours of divine service' and in 1930, 'to permit Alresford Football Club to hold their home matches on the ground'. However, instead of appeasing the town's inhabitants, these moves caused even more complaints about the state of the amenity and public agitation for tennis courts, a cricket pitch and a children's play area with a sandpit continued throughout the 1930s.¹³

If we jump forward again to 1943, we find the town trustees in the middle of the Second World War. On 14 January, a retiring clerk to the trust wrote an advisory letter to his successor:

Colonel Stratton Bates presented £100 in Consols in 1911-12 to provide for maintenance and the payment of the tithe. For some time the interest cleared the amount paid but as the tithe value increased, it fell below. The income of the Trust is not enough to cover expenditure on the Trust's other assets and the recreation ground.¹⁴

The town trust was close to being declared bankrupt during the war. It must have come as a financial relief to the trustees when the National Fire Service (NFS) requisitioned the recreation ground early in 1944. It became a rest centre for exhausted firemen who needed a respite from putting out the fires caused by the bombing of Southampton and Portsmouth.¹⁵ Huts and vehicles covered most of the available space with the obvious result that in the wet of winter the ground became churned mud and in the dry of summer, deeply rutted.

Given the decidedly shaky finances of the trust and the state of the ground, town trustee Geoffrey Searles¹⁶ must have thought that Stratton Bates would never again be able to fulfil its intended recreational purpose. On 13 June 1944, Searles raised, 'the desirability of approaching the District Council to ascertain if they were prepared to purchase the old ground for building'. The councillors of Winchester Rural District Council

¹² Dr Harold Hodgson, as well as being a medical practitioner, was also a local artist of some renown.

¹³ HRO, 7M50/B1, New Alresford Town Trust, Trustees Minute Book, 1890-1948.

¹⁴ HRO, 7M50/D8, New Alresford Town Trust, Accounts & Financial Statements, 1943. The retiring Edmund King was writing to his successor, Sidney Lane. Both were employees of the Shield & Son legal practice.

¹⁵ Colin Metcalf, *Alresford around D-Day, 6 June 1944* (New Alresford, 2004), 4.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Searles was a veterinary surgeon with a practice in New Farm Road.

were interested in the suggestion and they were prepared to pay £600 for the land. However, the Charity Commission insisted that the trust had a responsibility to provide alternative recreational facilities. A new four-acre patch of ground to the west of Henry Perin's School was identified and valued but it would have cost the trustees £800 and given the state of their finances, the Charity Commission refused them permission for either the sale or the purchase to go ahead.¹⁷

An approach was made to parish councillors early in 1945 with the view to them taking over the management and maintenance of what could have become the town's new recreation ground. But at the time the council were seeking to buy the Arlebury Park Estate that was on the market for £8,000 and, if they had been successful, this would have provided the council with not only offices but also a wondrous vista of recreational grounds for the town.¹⁸ On 1 June 1945, the parish council wrote to the trustees stating that, 'we are not prepared to take over responsibility for the maintenance of your proposed new ground'.¹⁹

The Searles' initiative had failed and it was back to square one for the town trustees. Luckily for them, the National Fire Service huts remained on Stratton Bates after the war and there were no costs associated with the ground accruing to the trust for more than five years. The immediate post-war period was the time of an acute housing shortage and the NFS huts were sequestered by the district council to be used to accommodate returning ex-servicemen and their families. Once occupied, they could not be vacated until sufficient council houses had been built. The huts were not removed until the early-1950s with the last of them being left in the corner of the ground nearest to the junction of Grange and Rosebery Roads. This served as Stratton Bates' first pavilion and changing rooms.²⁰

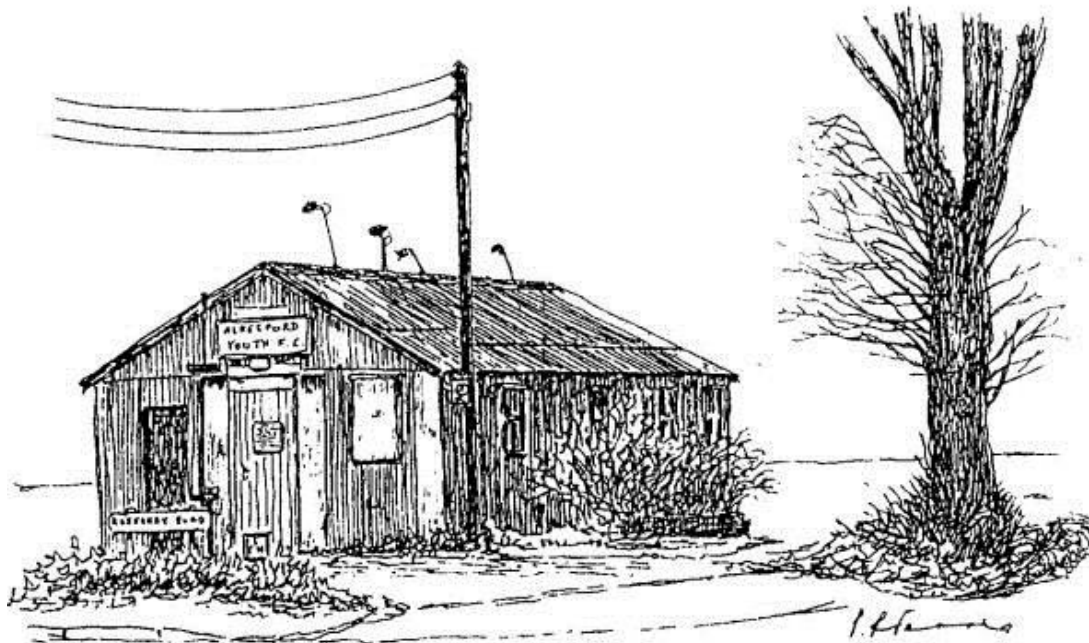


Illustration 3: A Phillip Ferris sketch of the last NFS hut on Stratton Bates, drawn in 1993.

¹⁷ HRO, 7M50/B1, New Alresford Town Trust, Trustees Minute Book 1890-1948. Sale and purchase prices in 1944 equate to £25,000 and £33,000 at 2011 values.

¹⁸ Alex Hankin, 'New Alresford Parish Council', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 19 (1994). The sale price of Arlebury Park in 1944-45 equates to £330,000 at 2013 values.

¹⁹ HRO, 7M50/J4, New Alresford Town Trust, Recreation ground correspondence.

²⁰ Sydney Pullinger, 'The Grange Road NFS Huts', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 19 (1994).

When the land was finally returned to the trust, the trustees tried to claim the cost of returning the land to recreational use from the National Fire Service. They were unsuccessful and the maintenance of the ground and its facilities remained minimal. In the mid and late 1950's, the trustees continued to struggle to meet the recreational needs of the town's inhabitants and there were many more complaints from the public about the lack of adequate facilities and the poor state of Stratton Bates. In the trust minutes of this time, vandalism first appeared as a serious issue and the detritus left behind after Guy Fawkes bonfire celebrations caused the trustees both concerns and extra expense.

The parish council takes over the recreation ground, 1959-to date

The final killer blow for the town trustees arrived in 1958. Grange Road and Rosebery Road, both bordering the recreation ground, were still compacted dirt tracks in the late 1950's and the residents had been campaigning for some time to have the surfaces tar sealed with accompanying drains and pavements. That year, it was agreed with Hampshire County Council that this would be done and that every resident would pay a proportion of the cost based on the length of the frontage of their house. The town trust, owning land with more than 600 yards of frontage onto both roads, was faced with a bill of more than £1,500. There was only £160 in the trust's Stratton Bates kitty.²¹ The trustees surrendered to financial reality on 31 July 1958.

It was resolved that the proposal to convey the estate and the interest in the recreation ground, known as the Stratton Bates, to the end that the said recreation ground may be preserved as an open space for the enjoyment thereof by the public, and for the care and management by New Alresford Parish Council, be agreed on the same basis as the trusts that are now held under Section 3 of the Open Spaces Act of 1906 are approved and carried into effect.²²

It appears surprising today that the town trustees did not take more advantage of this opportunity provided by the ownership transfer of the late 1950s. The trust's annual income had declined in today's (2014) values by more than 85 per cent from the level that it had been at its foundation in 1890. Because the town's sheep fairs were a dying industry, the trustees were still hovering on the brink of bankruptcy *after* surrendering their responsibility for Stratton Bates. Surely this should have been an appropriate time for a group of responsible trustees to consider bequeathing all of their assets, held for and on behalf of the town's inhabitants, to the parish council. The trust and council minutes of this period, however, give no indication that this possibility was ever discussed by either body.

It is probable that this was because the trust, in the period 1939-64, was chaired by George Ridley Shield, the eldest son of one of the founders of the charity in 1890, John Ridley Shield. Financial necessity may have made George Shield relinquish one trust asset, but he was not about to consider closing down the organisation that his father had done so much to create. The town trustees did not begin to discuss the possibility of closure, and handing over their other assets to the parish council, until after George Shield had died in March 1967. These discussions started the following month.

The parish council, having failed in its initiative to acquire the Arlebury Park Estate in 1945, accepted responsibility for the maintenance and the development of the town's only

²¹ £1,500 and £160 in 1958 equate to £29,000 and £3,000 respectively at 2011 values.

²² HRO, 7M50/B2, New Alresford Town Trust: Trustees Minute Book, 1948-61.

recreation ground in 1959. In return they received the balance that was left in the trust's separate recreation ground fund. There then followed a nine-year wrangle between the Charity Commission and the town trust about the £10 per year top-up that the trustees were required to make to the Stratton Bates fund under the 1912 deed. The commissioners' case was that this amount should have been handed over to the council as an annual contribution for running the facility. Alf White, clerk to the trust, 1959-89, finally resolved the issue in 1968 by writing to the commissioners, 'the Parish Council has never asked for an annual contribution and the Town Trust can't afford to make one'.²³

The 1959 timing of the transfer of the ownership of the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground to the parish council was distinctly fortunate; one year later and it would have been complicated by the 1960 Charities Act. This piece of legislation made it more difficult to transfer assets from a trust to a council. The statute made the land and the buildings owned by the town trust 'permanent endowments' of a charity. The way that this term has been legally interpreted since 1960 means that once a permanent endowment asset is declared as such, it has to stay within the charitable sector. Such an asset cannot be transferred, except to another charitable trust.²⁴

After 1960, the council could only have accepted the responsibility for Stratton Bates if it had been willing to go to the inconvenience and expense of setting up a charitable trust of its own, reporting to the Charity Commission, and with councillors agreeing to serve as trustees. Such a move was not then, and still is not, disallowed in local government circles but it is frowned upon because it involves public assets being outside the control of an elected body.²⁵ There is no evidence that the 1959 recreation ground transfer was hurried through to beat the deadline of the forthcoming piece of legislation. The urgent need to reduce their liabilities had featured in the trustees' minutes for more than a decade beforehand.²⁶

The parish council took out a long term loan from Hampshire County Council to pay for their proportion of the cost of improving the roads around the recreation ground in 1959. This loan was finally paid off in 2011.²⁷ The current pavilion on the site was built in 1994 to replace the last of the NFS huts. It was opened as part of the centenary celebration of the election of the town's first democratic governing body, as the photograph below shows (note spelling mistake).



Illustration 4: Plaque on the wall of the current Stratton Bates Pavilion. Photograph by the author in 2012.

²³ HRO, 7M50/B3, New Alresford Town Trust: Trustees Minute Book, 1961-74.

²⁴ Conversations with Quentin Elston and Samantha O'Sullivan, charity lawyers, 11 July 2010.

²⁵ Conversation with Cllr Roy Gentry, 10 December 2010.

²⁶ HRO, 7M50/B2, New Alresford Town Trust: Trustees' Minute Book 1948-61.

²⁷ Conversation with Cllr Roy Gentry, 19 January 2012.

Postscripts

After 104 years of operating as a parish council, when calculated from the time it first took office on 1 April 1895, the then serving councillors decided to re-brand their organisation in 1999. Henceforward, the name of the town's third-tier governing body, which had first been elected on 15 December 1894, became New Alresford Town Council.

New Alresford Town Trust is also still in existence today, it might be thought somewhat surprisingly in view of what has been written in this article. After the town's sheep fairs ceased altogether in 1972, the trustees had to find a new source of income or they would have been obliged to put the charity into liquidation. In 1975, they re-established the ancient tradition (granted to the Bailiff and Burgesses of New Alresford by a Bishop of Winchester charter in 1572) of holding weekly markets on the Broad Street sidings and asserting their right to charge the stallholders piccage and stallage tolls.²⁸ The town trust also still owns the land on either side of The Avenue and The Old Fire Station at 54, Broad Street.

Conclusions

With the benefit of twenty-first century hindsight, it would have been better if Colonel Stratton Bates, given the obstacles that were put in his way by the Charity Commission in the period 1910-12, had reconsidered the recipients of his legacy and left it to be managed by the parish council. Councillors could have run the facility to a better standard than the town trustees with funds provided from the precept. This would have benefited the town's inhabitants and saved the trustees almost five decades of financial hardship and dealing with complaints from the public.

The colonel, who was brought up in the Victorian era, might have had little faith in local democracy. He certainly reached backwards to the pre-democratic order by placing his legacy in the hands of the pre-1886 unelected corporation's successors that had used to govern the town. However, the reason for his choice of recipient body is more likely to have been simpler and less principled; the fact that he knew the former burgesses of the town extremely well. It is known that he served on the committee of Alresford Golf Club in the decade before the First World War with at least two of them, John Ridley Shield (solicitor) and William Hunt (architect).²⁹ They were professional men of his class, whereas the early parish councils were dominated, at least numerically, by shopkeepers and tradesmen.

Stratton Bates was proved to have made the wrong choice, in that the trustees could not afford to run an adequate recreation facility for the town in the long term. However, his still enduring gift eventually ended up in the right hands; with the parish council, although this appears to have happened more by good luck than through good judgement. Today, the inhabitants of New Alresford should be grateful to Henry Stratton Bates for his generosity, rather than seeking to criticise the expertise of his gift wrapping. The colonel died peacefully, aged eighty-two, at his home at Langton House, on 6 May 1918. We can but ponder what he would have thought about the history of the legacy that he left to the town.

²⁸ HRO, 7M50/B3/4, New Alresford Town Trust, Trustees Minute Books, 1961-74, 1974-2000.

²⁹ Robert Hedges, 'Alresford Golf Club', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 7 (1982).



Illustration 5: The Stratton Bates Recreation Ground in 2012. Panoramic photograph by Glenn Gilbertson.

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OUR HINTON AMPNER 1939 – 1945

By

Trisha Ferris



My home was in the heart of Portsmouth close to the Guildhall so air raids were a regular event because of the naval base. I was very aware of the dangers since many homes near us had been destroyed and the school I had attended was just a heap of rubble. Because of this and like many other children I was evacuated and started at a new school. For me this was to be at Hinton Ampner House where the junior department of Portsmouth High School moved to for the war years. The house was owned by a Mr R Dutton.



Portsmouth 1940. Pictures from www.welcometoportsmouth.co.uk 2014

These days when I recall that time the usual comment is “How wonderful”. In many ways it was, but for a 6 year-old only child being sent to boarding school in the country it was very scary. I was very afraid that my parents would be killed so each night I asked God to wait until the holidays and let me die with Mummy and Daddy. Bizarrely, I went home in the holidays so was regularly reminded of the dangers of living in Portsmouth. Luckily, we all lived, my parents into their nineties.

The interior of the house was not as splendid at that time. All the furniture had been removed and was replaced with school desks and tables. Blackout replaced the curtains and bedrooms became dormitories with rows of special camp beds with wooden legs. The entrance hall was used for morning assembly, a general play area when it was wet and for concerts and plays. Our favourite game was Jacks which was played in groups of two or three sitting on the floor. At that time the floor was wood. The large drawing room, we called the big room, was divided into two classrooms with a curtain. This must have made teaching very difficult. The library was out of bounds and Mr. Dutton's study was the staff room. We had our meals in the dining room on trestle tables with benches to sit on. The youngest children were taught in the attic which was not replaced after the fire. Our playground was the garden except the dell. I was caught there once by Mr Dutton, as this was his private place. Luckily he did not report me but I had a good telling off. It was worth it as I thought the dell was a magical place. In summer lessons were often taken out of doors. I remember PE on the lawn with us all in blouses and navy blue knickers, quite chilly on cool days!



Each Sunday we all went to church wearing our school uniform including our hats. On a few occasions we had to take our gas masks and once there was an air raid warning so we had to put them on. The strange noises we made brought the sermon to an abrupt end. I learnt much later from one of our teachers that the same pennies were used for the collection each week, an early example of recycling! A cheque was given to Canon Milner and he returned the pennies after each service.

As an only child I did enjoy the companionship that boarding school provided. We got to know everyone as we spent so much time together. There were a few local day girls and three boys who were taught with the youngest children. Nature walks were a particular joy, catching tadpoles and newts at Cheriton and collecting rose hips and blackberries. My love of natural history was kindled at that time.

The first dormitory I slept in was over the big east room. There was a rookery in the trees outside and the sound still reminds me of trying to go to sleep, often in tears. We were not allowed to talk or get out of bed after lights out, even to go to the loo! The youngest children had to go to bed at 6 p.m. This was very difficult in the summertime when it was light until very late. In the morning we had to strip our beds before breakfast and then make them before lessons started, remembering to do nurses tucks in the corners.

Infectious diseases spread though the school and I remember one occasion when there were only 5 children able to go on a school picnic. The bedrooms were used for different diseases, mumps, measles, German measles and chicken pox. We had to stay there until we were no longer infectious. A friend of mine wanted to go home so when she had her temperature taken she put the thermometer on the radiator. This caused quite a panic for a while. Some terms we had to miss quite a lot of lessons because we managed to catch more than one of the diseases.

We had to share baths and we only had 5 inches of water. On one evening I can remember we were all given syrup of figs, so we pretended we had terrible stomach ache and queued outside the loos. Matron didn't do that again. Each term we were weighed and measured, had head inspections and backs and feet were checked. We also had to do exercises to prevent flat feet. Hair washing was another regular event and I remember we had to dry our hair in front of an electric fire, usually in the bathroom! However I do not remember any accidents.

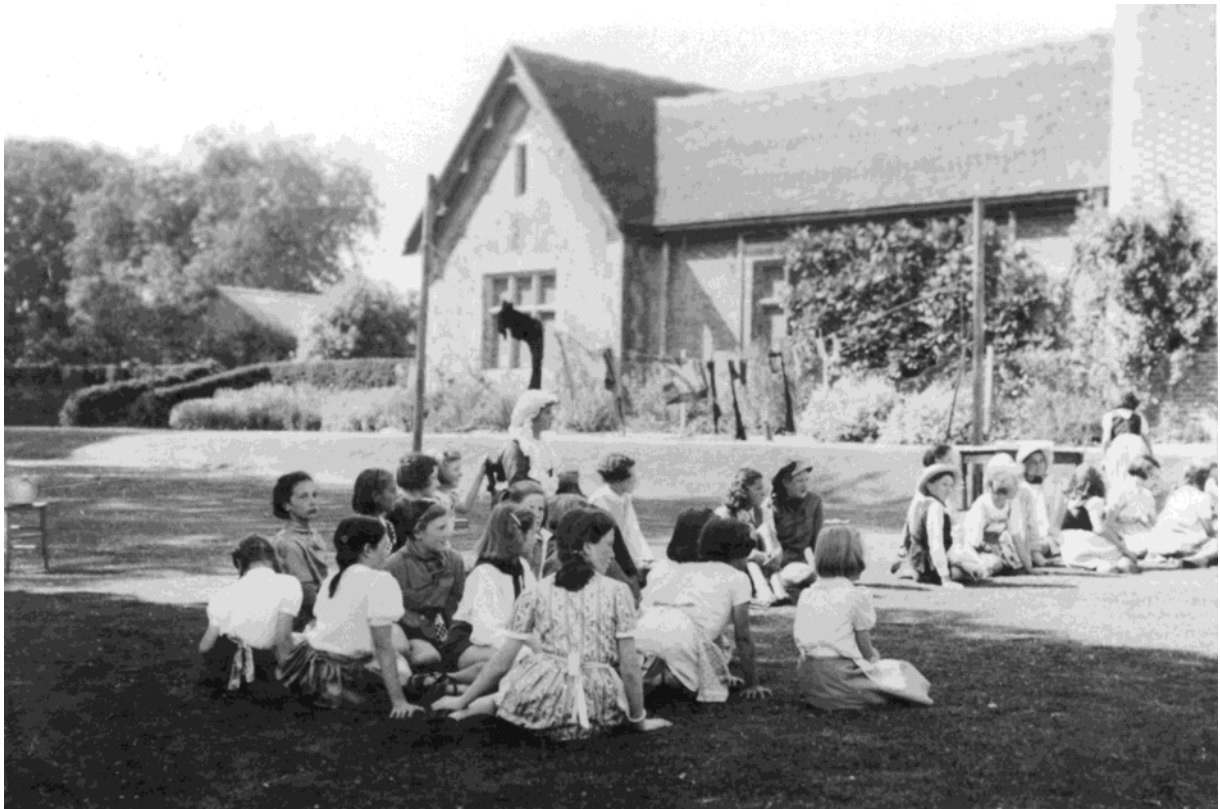
I do not remember being cold but this may be because we wore so many clothes. Vest, liberty bodice, warm blouse, thin pants and navy knickers, gym slip thick socks or stockings and cardigans. We always had to wear indoor shoes in the house.

Each week we had to write a cheque for money. This was for church, sweets, charity giving and stamps as we had to write a letter to our parents each Saturday. We supported a cot in St Mary's hospital in Portsmouth and had Barnardo boxes. Once I got into trouble because I gave the money in my box to a girl who wanted to run away. Parents were able to visit some weekends and we could go out with them. My parents came by train to Petersfield and then cycled to Hinton. If they had some petrol they came by car from Steep where our car was stored.

Rules. Talking after lights out was one of the strictest which seemed odd and the punishment was to be sent to the kitchens to peel potatoes or to tidy the cloakroom which was down in the cellar, this was cold and rather spooky. The legend of the ghost enhanced our fears. We did dares when we were a bit older like visiting friends in other dormitories. Even if we arrived without being caught sometimes matron came round the dormitories to check that we were asleep. Once I had to get into bed with a friend and another friend remembers hiding on the top of the wardrobe. We also enjoyed pillow fights or bouncing on our beds which sometimes broke and we had to find an excuse as to why this had happened. The punishment was sleeping on the floor until the bed was mended. Sometimes we had midnight feasts but there was little available to eat. Toothpaste sandwiches were on the menu. Sweets were rare treats so things like Ovaltine tablets were prized. We also collected and ate the beech nuts that were plentiful on the drive. Sadly the big beech tree is no longer there. I had a jar of Marmite that I passed round each night. We dipped our fingers in and then sucked them. When the jar was empty I had chicken pox and I did not know how to get rid of the jar. I was sure it was full of germs so I dropped it out of the sick room window into a bush!

One of my earliest memories was being unfairly punished for pushing my friend Mary into the stream in Cheriton. She pushed me first but I got the blame and had to spend play time cleaning our coats.

Staff. Although they seemed old to us they were quite young. We were afraid of some like Miss Thorn the head teacher but most were kind. Miss Martin who was in charge of the youngest girls was very strict but she took us on nature walks and taught us the names of birds and flowers. We had a wild flower competition each summer. Single flowers were put into jars and we had to identify them. There was a prize for the winner. Miss Glenister was lovely and took us out in the garden for lessons. If it was hot we sat under the big chestnut tree.



We played in the garden and made dens under the bushes but we were not allowed to climb the trees in the garden but sometimes we did. A friend remembers having to write 100 times “I must not climb trees in the garden”. We each had a little garden where we tried to grow radishes and carrots. This was in the sunken garden at the end of the lawn. In the summer we tried to make perfume from the numerous rose petals but the results were rather disgusting. We went over the cow trap into the field where there was a very good tree to swing on. The cows were often in the field, one had very big horns and we were afraid of it. We called it the Indian cow I’m not sure why. One summer we went hay making in Canon Milner’s garden, I think we just made a great mess but it was fun. I remember walking down the road on our way to the track that led to Cheriton. There was a cottage on the way that was also a store and post office, it was closed on Wednesday but our teachers were quick to point out that the spelling of “Wedesday” was wrong.

The house had a legend of a ghost so this was taken very seriously at one period. I remember ghost hunts with a particularly imaginative girl. This was done at night and I am not sure what we were going to do if we found the ghost. We were sure we could see it crossing the hall. I realised much later that it was our own shadows.*

There was one event which caused a lot of rumour and anxiety. A German plane crashed in a field near the school so we imagined there were Germans roaming in the area. If there were they would have been more afraid of us. We also had at least one air raid and we had to get out of bed and go downstairs without talking. This was another time that I was in trouble as I played out my fears, during the raids in Portsmouth, in a rather noisy way. When I tried to behave like this at school I was punished.

Some years ago I was asked by a news reporter what damage we did and where was the graffiti. When I said we did not damage or deface buildings but we respected other people's property, he found this hard to believe.

Hinton only housed the junior department of the school so from the age of 12 girls moved to the senior school at Adhurst St Mary near Petersfield. At the end of the war everyone moved back to the school in Kent Road Southsea where we were day girls.

I am lucky to live just 6 miles from Hinton and I frequently walk the same paths and fields I did as a child, such as the track where I heard my first yellow hammer singing 'a little bit of bread and no cheese' and saw for the first time the fairy slippers in the flower of a dead nettle.

This period had a profound influence on my life. Although I have lived in different parts of Hampshire I feel very at home in this area. I think living away from home at such an early age, made me independent and not to be afraid to do things on my own.

I realise now how lucky I am as I am still in regular contact with friends I met when I was 6 years old. I have arranged several reunions from 1992 onwards, photos of two of these are in the church, but numbers are now unfortunately diminished as we are all getting older.

This year 2014 will be the 75th anniversary of the junior section of PHS moving to Hinton Ampner. Sadly, there is no plaque under the tree we planted on the lawn near the church to commemorate the years we lived in the house. I hope one day this will be possible.



The author today.

* For a possible explanation of the ghost legend, see *The Haunting of Hinton Ampner* By Digby Grist in *Alresford Displayed No.12*, available from Hampshire Libraries or www.alresfordhistanlit.co.uk/publications (Ed.)



By

Peter Abraham

The housing development lying in the valley between the A31 and the Mid-Hants Railway on the eastern side of the heights of Hampshire (over 700 feet) was begun in 1932 after the strip of land was sold by Edward Knight of Chawton House. It is called The Shrave, a name which is shown on the road sign there. But who, or what, is a shrave?



There are several references to a shrave, in the Enclosure Act of 1741 but when Montagu George Knight is describing the details of the Enclosure in his 1911 book on “Chawton Manor and its Owners”¹ he implies that the Shrave then referred to the rather longer stretch of road roughly coinciding with the present A31.

“Northfield Lane was to be from the Shrave Road to the Paceway Road 20 feet wide. The lower road or Shrave, now the high road to Winchester, was to be not less than 40 nor more than 80 feet wide.”

Clearly that road has been there and named the Shrave road for centuries, but so far I have not been able to find anyone who can explain to me why that road, and the housing development at the upper end of it, is called The Shrave.

¹ Leigh, William Austen and Knight, Montagu George, *Chawton Manor and its Owners*: Smith Elder and Company, 1911

The old Pilgrims' Way linked the cathedral shrine of St Swithun at Winchester with that of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury. The first stretch was from Winchester to Alton through Alresford. Travellers negotiating the heights (over 700 feet) would have to go through the then heavily wooded "Pass of Alton". Chawton Park Wood is a remnant of those woods which were notoriously used by robbers. Rupert Willoughby² recounts the following:-

"In the 13th and 14th centuries, criminal activity on the Pass was the cause of deep concern to successive kings. It perhaps owed its proverbial bad name to one incident more than any other. In the autumn of 1248, a pair of Brabantine merchants was attacked on the Pass by 'freebooters' and robbed of 200 marks, a very considerable sum (and weight) of money. Their plight came to the attention of King Henry III, who immediately ordered a judicial enquiry. It soon emerged that the robbing of the merchants had been part of a much wider criminal conspiracy, in which members of the local gentry, and even of the royal household, were implicated.



Henry III

Some of the suspects were brought to trial on 14 January 1249, but were acquitted by a jury consisting of their own friends and neighbours. The King, who was in Winchester shortly afterwards, was appalled. He summoned the suspected abettors of the crime to his presence in the Great Hall. Twelve of them were elected to a second jury, and sworn to give up the names of the criminals. By refusing to reveal any information they were deemed to have perjured themselves and were condemned to be hanged.

A third jury decided, after some initial hesitation, to co-operate. Their disclosures about dozens of crimes that had been committed throughout the county, many of the culprits being persons of wealth and position, were sensational. In connection with the robbery of the merchants, no less than sixty-four men and women were to be charged as a result, either as principals or accessories. At least nine of them were subsequently hanged."

Despite this "highway robbery on the Pass continued to be a flourishing local industry". The preamble to the Statute of Winchester in 1285 in the following reign, states that "From day to day robberies, homicides and arsons are more committed than they used to be". The statute provided for widening of the roads to ensure that there was no cover for would-be highwaymen. Indeed the 1838 Tithe Map in the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester shows unusually wide roads marked as such by a specific conventional sign on the map.

² Willoughby, Rupert *Chawton: Jane Austen's Village* Published by the author at Sherborne St John, Hampshire RG24 9JD, 1998

One road via Ropley, descended from the eastern portion of the wood through a long, gently winding, valley towards Jane Austen's village of Chawton, where it joined the Gosport to London road which took travellers through Alton. Above this junction that road was the Shrave Road referred to in the Enclosure Act of 1741. The first part of the valley, from slightly to the north of where Telegraph Lane enters the present day A31, (on Sheet 169 of the Ordnance Survey at 67.5E & 35.5N), begins relatively steeply on either side, and thereafter its sides are progressively shallower and eventually level out. Such a formation is attributed by geologists to the melting of successive glaciations over geological time (measured in units of 100.000 years), but no doubt generations of pilgrims and mercantile traffic and weather also played their part.



But what is a shrave? A link with pilgrims who may have undertaken the arduous and perilous journey to atone for grave sin has been suggested. The reasoning here is that to *shrive* is to impose a penitential task on someone as described in the Parson's Tale in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* which discourses at length on the Sacrament of Penance and uses the word *shrive* several times. However, apart from anything else, the sound of the word is very different and there is no corroborative evidence that any of the relatively small number of pilgrims travelled specifically for that purpose.

Standard English dictionaries do not provide the answer. If one turns to the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary of Bosworth and Toller*³ one fails to find any word beginning 'sh' because in old English that sound is represented by 'sc' (such as *screawa* for *shrew*, *screade* for *shred*). However under 'sc' one finds *scaef* also spelled *screaf* or *scref*. [In trying to represent the sound of the language different combinations of letters were sometimes used by the authors of that period].

The first meaning of *scaef* given is *some kind of bird, or a cormorant!*

³ Bosworth, Joseph and Toller T Norhcote, *An Anglo Saxon Dictionary*: Oxford University Press, 1898

The next meaning of *scraef*, with its alternative spellings, is *cave, cavern, hollow place in the earth* followed by twelve lines of illustrative examples from written works of the period. If the second meaning, some kind of hollowness in the earth, is taken, then the explanation of the term *scraef* is plausible if it is describing the shape of the land, most particularly in the higher section of the road, which is distinctly hollow. This meaning is drawn from numerous references to Anglo-Saxon texts, including translations of some of The Bible, references which I have checked and which usually refer to a *cave*. If *scraef* was merely intended to describe the topography one wonders why the Old English words *hol* or *holh*, from which our present day hole or hollow are derived, was not used. It would seem to serve just as well, for the upper part of the shrave at least.

A third meaning of *scraef* in Reference 3 is a *miserable dwelling or den*. Nowadays the word *den* is linked with notions of robbery or a place of concealment, a hideout. We speak of a “den of thieves”. Indeed that is what the upper part of the *shrave road* undoubtedly was in the 13th and 14th centuries, and no doubt before and since, when the description *shrave* came into use.

That area would have provided an ideal spot to establish the robbers’ lair, from which they could emerge, without being seen, to bear down on and fleece the unfortunate traveller.

Perhaps after all the use of the word *shrave* was intended to convey both meanings at the same time: that of a den hidden in a wood in or near the extended hollow?



At last, a view of the way to Canterbury would open up for the pilgrims.

Acknowledgements.

I am once more grateful to Donald Ashdown of Ropley for extracts from Rupert Willoughby’s pamphlet and to Sarah Parry of The Chawton Library for facilitating the quotation from “Chawton Manor and its Owners”.

Modern pictures © Glenn Gilbertson

George Wither's Window and Alresford's Wondrous Pond

By

Brian Tippett

In the south transept of the church of St Mary the Virgin, Old Alresford is an impressive stained glass window with twin panels, both handsomely decorated with matching heraldic devices, classical mottos and decorative floral motifs. The Latin inscriptions at the foot of each panel explain that they commemorate Henry Perin, Gentleman, who died in 1697 and George Wither, Poet, 'obiit MDCLXXXVIII' (in fact he died in 1667 not 1688). Henry Perin was, of course, the physician who bequeathed land and funds for the foundation of the local school that, after many changes in its size and status, still bears his name. His panel is a fitting tribute to Alresford's best-known benefactor and his story has been explored in a recent issue of *Alresford Articles* (No.3 *The Weir House Edition*). But George Wither's presence is more mysterious: why is he commemorated here and, indeed, who was George Wither? Remembered mainly by academic specialists, Wither is almost entirely forgotten locally. Drop his name into a conversation and the response is likely to be, 'George Who?' And yet Wither is, along with Mary Russell Mitford, one of only two writers acknowledged by the *Oxford Literary Guide to Great Britain and Ireland* as having a special connection with Alresford. He might therefore be expected to be of interest locally and to have some appeal to local pride.

A Poem Praising Alresford Pond

Wither was better known a century ago. When Edward Thomas visited Alresford shortly before the First World War he clearly regarded Wither as Alresford's own local poet and, as a man of letters himself, saw his connection with the town as one of Alresford's most interesting features. He was so convinced of this that he was disappointed, after much searching, not to find Wither family grave stones in the local churchyard. Although he was mistaken about Wither's birthplace, he knew the poetry well enough to quote the elaborate poetic compliment Wither paid to Alresford in 1620.¹ It was this poem that led Thomas to identify Wither with Alresford and there can be no doubt that it was for this that Wither was so handsomely repaid in stained glass many years later. The lines, printed in full here and quoted in part by Thomas, form the introduction to a long sequence of poems grouped together under the title, *Fair Virtue, the Mistress of Phil'arete* and published in 1622.² The poems are written in the highly artificial pastoral convention dating back to Theocritus and Virgil which enjoyed a revival in England led by Edmund Spenser in the Elizabethan period and was taken up by many other poets in the seventeenth century. The pastoral poet typically takes on the persona of a shepherd in an idealised landscape and expresses thoughts of love and friendship in verse and song. The passage in question is the introduction to the poem.

¹ Edward Thomas, *In Pursuit of Spring* (1914, repr. 1981), pp.98-100.

² For details of editions containing this and other poems by Wither see the endnote to this article.

It sets the scene by taking us to a location which we discover to be an imaginary version of Alresford — Alresford in a Golden Age peopled by nymphs and shepherds and deities from Greek and Roman mythology who come to swim in the crystal clear waters of Alresford pond:

Two pretty rills do meet, and meeting make 1
Within one valley a large silver lake,
About whose banks the fertile mountains stood
In ages passèd bravely crown'd with wood,
Which, lending cold-sweet shadows, gave it grace
To be accounted Cynthia's bathing-place,
And from her father Neptune's brackish court
Fair Thetis thither often would resort,
Attended by the fishes of the sea,
Which in those sweeter waters came to play. 10
There would the daughter of the sea-god dive;
And thither came the land-nymphs every eve
To wait upon her, bringing for her brows
Rich garlands of sweet flowers and beechy boughs.

There is then a brief reminder that the idealised perfection of the pond contrasts sharply with its present wild and unkempt condition before (from line 21) further details of its idealised beauty are added:

For pleasant was that pool, and near it then
Was neither rotten marsh nor boggy fen.
It was not overgrown with boist'rous sedge,
Nor grew there rudely then along the edge
A bending willow nor a prickly bush,
Nor broadleaf'd flag, nor reed, nor knotty rush; 20
But here, well-order'd was a grove with bowers:
There grassy-plots set round about with flowers.
Here, you might through the water see the land
Appear, strow'd o're with white or yellow sand.
Yon, deeper was it; and the wind by whiffs
Would make it rise and wash the little cliffs,
On which, oft pluming sat (unfrighted then)
The gaggling wildgoose, and the snow-white swan;
With all those flocks of fowls, which to this day,
Upon those quiet waters breed and play. 30

And then, still mindful of the contrast between the pond's idealised perfection and its present condition, Wither assures us that this is indeed the Alresford we know. From here the river runs onwards to Winchester, the city of King Arthur and the Round Table:

For though those excellences wanting be,
Which once it had, it is the same that we
By transposition name the Ford of Arle,
And out of which along a chalky marl
That river trills whose waters wash the fort
In which brave Arthur, kept his royal court. (Fair Virtue (1622) lines 1 – 36.)

As we read on we realise that Alresford is not to be the setting for all that follows but is instead a landmark or stepping-off point from which Wither leads the reader to the poem's main location, the countryside around the nearby village of Bentworth. It was in this area, at Threddon Grange, that Wither was born in 1588 and here that he began writing poetry. He describes it as being north-east of Alresford on beech covered hills so high that it is possible to see the Isle of Wight from them at a distance of two hundred furlongs (25 miles). It is depicted as a fertile place of Arcadian beauty blessed with a profusion of herbs and sweet-smelling flowers, nuts and soft fruits, where on the high downs the shepherds tend their sheep and draw water from fifty- fathom wells. The inhabitants, Wither tells us, are a dull and unlettered community, entirely unaware until now of poetry and the arts as personified by Pan, Apollo and the Muses. George Wither claims the honour of being Bentworth's first poet; within the fictional conventions of pastoral poetry, it is Wither's alter ego, Pastor (i.e., Shepherd) Phil'arete, who spends his days tending his sheep and singing (i.e., composing love poetry):

A shepherd's lad was he, obscure and young,
Who (being first that ever there had sung)
In homely verse, expressed country loves.

The poems that make up *Fair Virtue*, *The Mistress of Philarete* take up about 200 pages in which Philarete (Greek for 'lover of virtue') celebrates all the moods of love and every conceivable aspect of his unnamed beloved's physical and moral beauty, only becoming erotic when he evokes the physical temptations he is determined as a lover of virtue to resist.

There is one other reference to Bentworth and Alresford in Wither's poetry. In a marriage poem dedicated to Princess Elizabeth (*Epithalamion*) he locates his home country, which he describes as 'Britain's true Arcadia', 'East of Caer Winn, mid-way twixt Arle and Dis.' Caer-Winn is Winchester, Arle is Alresford and Dis possibly Farnham. (Wither was later in his life to have an unhappy connection with Farnham but it is not clear why at this time he should have chosen to call it by a name which his readers would translate as meaning 'Hades'.)

Wither's Life³

Bentworth was certainly an obscure corner of seventeenth century England, but Wither was by no means the humble shepherd boy depicted in *Fair Virtue*. This was merely the customary pose of a pastoral poet. He was born into an ancient and influential family, originally from Lancashire, which from his father's time onwards had branches and extensive estates in several parts of north Hampshire. In time to come the family became better known by the name Bigg-Wither and in a famously embarrassing incident in 1802 Jane Austen accepted and then swiftly declined a proposal from a young member of the Manydown branch of the family.⁴ Wither grew up in privileged circumstances with servants at his beck and call and received the grounding in Greek and Latin normally given to a young man of his class. .

³ Some details of Wither's life can be gleaned from his poems. Other sources include Frank Sidgwick's biographical introduction to his edition of Wither's poems (1902), Reginald F. Bigg- Wither's *Materials for A History of the Wither Family* (Winchester, 1907) and the article on Wither in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, which reflects recent scholarship.

⁴ For Jane Austen's brief engagement to Harris Bigg-Wither see David Nokes, *Jane Austen* (1997), pp. 247-58.

As he tells us in another of his poems (*Abuses Whipt and Stript*) he then went up to Oxford as an undergraduate, apparently at Magdalen College. Initially distracted by the delights of Oxford and student life he eventually began to master Aristotle and other difficult elements of the curriculum with such success that he even considered taking up an academic career. But he was called home before he could graduate and then went to London to seek advancement and there became friends with several of the poets of the day who shared his interest in pastoral poetry. Wither lived from the year of the Spanish Armada to the Great Fire of London and so witnessed some of the most turbulent years of English history under Elizabeth I, James I, Charles I, Cromwell and the Commonwealth, and James II. Pastoral love poetry might seem just the right medium for the fashionable young man depicted in this portrait but Wither was keenly interested in public issues and proved to be a stern and vocal critic of the moral failings he saw all around him.



George Wither at the age of 21. The year is 1611 but the flamboyant Elizabethan style is still in fashion in marked contrast to his later portrait. Note the play on the surname, growing and withering (ageing).

As early as 1614 he wrote his first satirical poem, *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, which when reprinted in 1620 landed him in trouble. Although he did not attack particular individuals, the poem caused offence to men of power with the result that he was thrown into the Marshalsea prison, an experience he was to endure for similar reasons on two subsequent occasions. In the Civil War he sided with Cromwell and saw action as an officer in the Parliamentary army at the siege of Gloucester and the Battle of Naseby. A previous incident embroiled him in controversy. He had been put in charge of Farnham Castle and, finding it lacking the stores and weapons needed for a proper defence, he made the tactical error of leaving his post to seek reinforcements. While he was absent the castle was taken over by the Royalists. He never fully recovered his reputation in spite of publishing a detailed justification of his conduct or recouped the financial losses he suffered during the Civil War though he received promises that he would be compensated financially. He continued to write and publish prolifically in several different veins throughout his long life. He wrote moralistic and prophetic poems on public issues, warning of the dangers facing the country, as well as religious poetry in the form of hymns and versions of the Psalms. He evidently composed verse with such facility that too often his poems are long and diffuse, in complete contrast to many poems of the period by masters such as Donne, Herbert and Herrick, which modern readers still enjoy for their

compressed energy and wit. He is at his best, though not necessarily most typical, when writing within the tighter limits of a set stanza form, as in his Emblems and the poems by which he has usually been represented in modern anthologies, poems such as his convivial Christmas poem ‘So now is come our joyful’st feast./Let every man be jolly’ and ‘Shall I wasting in despair’ in which, in place of the love poet’s conventional pose of dying of love, he adopts an attitude of disdain.



George Wither in middle age in 1635.
On the left is the Wither family shield.



George Wither in old age

By the time he died Wither had by his own reckoning published over one hundred books. Publication on this scale ensured that during his lifetime he was a considerable presence in the literary world but it is generally agreed that the long and diffuse moralistic and prophetic books of his later years had a negative effect upon his posthumous reputation. Among his contemporaries his views found favour with radicals like John Lilburne and have since attracted the attention of modern historians, most notably Christopher Hill, who have depicted the English Civil War as a war of ideas as much as an armed conflict.⁵ After his death he was either satirised or ignored, but in the nineteenth century his reputation revived when the widely read essayist Charles Lamb warmly praised the earlier poems and when selections of his verse became available.⁶ In the 1870s there appeared the largest collection of Wither’s works ever yet published and in 1902 a well-edited selection of his earlier and most readable poems.⁷

⁵ See Christopher Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution Revisited* (1997) and David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics 1627-1660* (1999).

⁶ ‘On the Poetical Works of George Wither’, *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. T. Hutchinson (Oxford 1924) [vol. I], pp.227-232.

⁷ See endnote to this article.

Alresford Pond

'Hounds, hawks, and horses were at my command,' wrote Wither of his early years. Alresford Pond was within easy reach of Bentworth for a young horseman and there can be little doubt that Wither knew it from boyhood. That he should have chosen to begin *Fair Virtue* with a passage about the pond is an interesting reflection of how it was seen as far back as Elizabethan times. Evidently it was then a much larger and even more striking geographical feature than it is today. We gather from the lines quoted above that reed beds were beginning to encroach; even so it probably stretched all the way from Alresford to Bishop's Sutton and as a huge expanse of water was a local marvel known for miles around. More significantly, it was known nationally.

John Leland in his *Itinerary*, the great survey of England he undertook early in the sixteenth century, gives an account of the Itchen and its course from Alresford to Winchester and there describes the pond as 'a great brode lak, comunely caullid Alsford Pond'. Leland was probably the ultimate source for Michael Drayton's description of the Itchen at Alresford in *PolyOlbion* (Part I, 1612), the long poem in which, county by county, he evokes the rivers and scenery of England. Drayton personifies the Test and the Itchen as rival rivers in dispute with one another, the Itchen laying claim to Winchester as 'Arthur's seat', the prestigious location of the Round Table, standing at the midway point between (as he says) its source in Alresford Pond and 'Hampton, at her fall into the Solent sea':

For from that wondrous Pond(1) whence she derives her head,
And places by the way by which she's honorèd; ...
She thinks in all the Isle not any such as she,
And for a demi-god she would related be.

The contemporary footnote is interesting for its emphasis upon the pond's magnitude:

(1) 'A pool near unto Alresford, yielding an unusual abundance of water.'
(*PolyOlbion*, Second Song lines 225-42.)

Wither echoes the details given in Drayton's poem. Drayton was Wither's admired friend and poetical mentor (he names him in *Fair Virtue*) and the reference in *PolyOlbion* must have inspired him to feel that familiar local detail was worthy of poetic treatment. Having been introduced into the realm of poetry by Drayton the pond could be used as a landmark to enable the reader to locate the otherwise obscure and unknown Bentworth.

The Stained Glass Memorial Window⁸

It is not known exactly when the Perin-Wither windows were installed at the church of St Mary the Virgin, Old Alresford, but all the evidence indicates that it occurred during the incumbency of Rev. George Sumner as Rector (1850-1885). It was in 1850 that St Mary's ceased to be the 'mother' church of the old combined parish of Alresford and Medstead. As if to compensate for this loss of status the new rector re-energised the parish and initiated an ambitious programme of church improvements. By the time his incumbency ended in 1885 the church had a new organ, seating, font, lectern and pulpit. It had been re-floored and a heating system had been introduced. The building had moreover been extended with the addition of a vestry and a south transept, and Gothic stone mullions had replaced earlier wooden window frames. The Perin-Wither windows may have been installed as the building of the south transept came to completion in the 1850s, although the latest edition of Pevsner's *Hampshire* suggests a slightly later date, c.1870. In either case, some two hundred years had passed since the deaths of the two men and by then, after such a long delay, members of the community can have

felt no pressing obligation to commemorate them. Instead it seems likely that the rector and churchwardens, in the grip of their enthusiasm for church improvements, saw the new south transept as a wonderful opportunity for further enhancements. The question that presented itself was, therefore, not ‘How can we commemorate Perin and Wither?’ but rather, ‘If we have stained glass windows in the new transept, whom should they commemorate?’ Given his historic contribution to the community Henry Perin would have been an obvious choice, especially appropriate as he had lived nearby at the Weir House and his name was uttered every time his school was mentioned.

George Wither was a far less obvious choice. There is the possibility that a later marital connection between the Perin and Wither families might help to explain why the two men are remembered together in the church window. The Perin and Wither families came to be linked some years after the deaths of the two men in the person of a woman named Dorothy Welstead. Four times a widow, her first husband was Henry Perin MD (1662-94) (nephew of the school’s founder) and, after the loss of two further husbands (also physicians), her fourth was Brigadier Hunt Wither, grandson of the poet, whom she married in 1701. Hunt died in 1718 and his property passed to her. When she died in 1732 she was described as being ‘of Old Alresford’ which suggests that, with considerable inherited wealth, she remained as a formidable presence in the neighbourhood and a living reminder of Henry Perin and Hunt Wither. Her estate was administered by her daughter Dorothy, wife of Thomas Bonham and a resident of Alresford. Dorothy would have kept her mother’s (and her ancestors’) memory alive locally until she died in 1744. As Brian Rothwell shows, the Bonham family name survived in Alresford for three generations after that, until in 1814 Dorothy Bonham’s great granddaughter Betty married Edward Hopkins.⁹ Their son Edward Hopkins was a leading Alresford citizen until he died in 1868 and the fact that he dedicated a window in the south transept to the memory of his mother makes it plausible that it was he who, towards the end of his life, advocated the commissioning of the adjacent Perin-Wither window. If so he had an exceptionally strong sense of family history. Parish accounts record annual proceeds from ‘the Wither gift’ until 1914, which also suggests a residual family connection.

The Perin-Wither windows were clearly designed to please the eye as a single unit with the component parts of each panel mirroring the other as exactly as possible. Matching floral motifs form the background and the mantling around the two shields is identical in leaf shape and colour. The coat of arms for each family could have been obtained from an armorial reference book such as William Berry’s *Encyclopaedia Heraldica* (c.1838), or in the case of the Perin family from the adjacent memorial plaque to Christopher Perin and his wife. As the illustration on the back cover of this issue shows, the Wither shield is (to translate the abbreviated Old French of the armorials) ‘Silver with a red chevron between three black crescents’ and the crest takes the form of a hare upon a wreath with three ears of corn in its mouth. The design of the hare is, however, shown differently in the family history (coloured blue, erect showing only animal’s front half) and the window (complete side view in naturalistic colour). The shield itself with the chevron and three crescents dates from the twelfth century, long before the two families were linked, so the striking resemblance in the use of three crescents on both the Perin and the Wither shields is probably entirely fortuitous. If indeed Henry Perin is correctly described as ‘Armiger’ (i.e., one who is entitled to have a coat of arms) then the Perin coat of arms was in existence

⁸ For the historical context see Vincent Pemberton, ‘The Mother Church of the Ancient Parish of Old Alresford’, *Alresford Displayed* No. 24 (1981) and *The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Old Alresford* (2004) (leaflet for visitors).

⁹ “The ‘Perins’ of the Weir House”, *Alresford Articles* No. 3, pp. 13 ff.

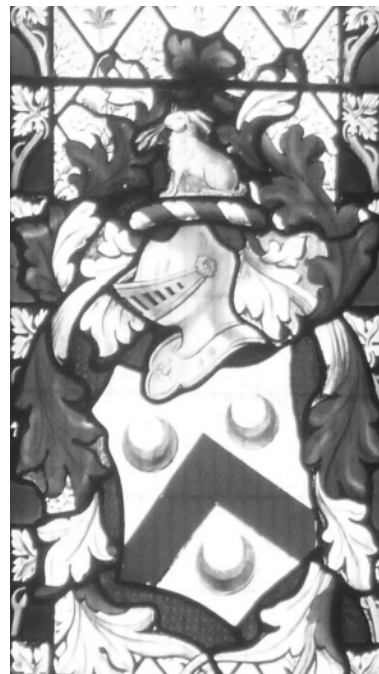
before he died in 1697. The marriage link between the two families was made four years later in 1701, which seems to rule out the possibility the Perin shield was designed in imitation of the much older Wither shield.

Each panel includes a religious motto and an inscription giving the name and date of death. As already noted, the date of Wither's death is given incorrectly as 1688 (which would have made him 100 years old when he died) perhaps by confusion with the date of his birth – 1588. The fact that a significant proportion of Wither's vast output is religious in character, including hymns and versions of the psalms, is reflected in the religious import of the Greek inscription: 'Glory to God at all times'. The words are particularly apt for they echo Wither's own claim that in a lifetime's writing he used every opportunity to promote whatever 'might most redound to GOD's Glory, and the edifying of men in Faith and Righteousness'.¹⁰

Editions of George Wither's Poetry

The most accessible examples of Wither's poetry in print are to be found in successive editions of the *Oxford Book of English Verse* and in *The New Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century English Verse* ed. Alastair Fowler. See also *The English Spenserians* ed. W B Hunter, Jr., (University of Utah Press 1977). The text of *Fair Virtue* can be found online at the web site 'Spenser and the Tradition: English Poetry 1579-1830' compiled by David Hill-Radcliffe (go to 'To the Database' and use the author index). It is given in George Wither, *Juvenilia*, 1622: 'A Collection of those Poemes which were heretofore imprinted and written by George Wither' (Scholar Press facsimile, 1970) and in *The Poetry of George Wither*, ed. Frank Sidgwick. 2 vols., London, A H Bullen, 1902. For the later poems the best source is George Wither, *Miscellaneous Works* (6 vols., Spenser Society, 1872-1878).

Alternative Wither Coats of Arms



The Wither coats of arms as in the family history (left) and in the memorial window (right).

¹⁰ I am indebted to Peter Pike for his reading of the partially indistinct Greek inscription.

Delivering the Newspapers in 1950's Alresford

Some reminiscences about 1950's Alresford, mainly from Pat Bentley, still living in Alresford.

By

Nick Denbow

Pat Bentley was born in Alresford in 1939: the memories recalled here date from his childhood, mainly focused on his travels around town as a newspaper boy in the 1950's. His Dad worked on the watercress beds in Itchen Stoke, owned by Mr Baker. The council didn't really like him working as a paper boy aged 13, but somehow he got round that: he worked for Phair's, the newsagent at the corner of Broad Street and East Street, later renamed Lawrence's.



On weekdays the papers arrived at Phair's at around 6am, in a van from Winchester, and were sorted out by Mrs Taylor and Jean Cannings. Pat picked up the paper bike from St Joan's at 7am, and started deliveries along East Street, Sun Lane and Edward Terrace, then back along Haig Road (not then properly surfaced) and Churchyard Cottages, getting back to Phair's at 7.45am. More papers were collected and delivered to West Street, the Dean and Pound Hill: his friend John Newman did Broad Street and Grange Road.

Pat arrived back at the top of Pound Hill at around 8.50am, just in time to collect his school friend Gerald Cornforth from number 42, Rose Cottage (Ref 1) and go over to school at Perin's. In the evening there was another newspaper delivery, this time of the Echo and the Standard: these Pat collected from the 4.15pm train from Winchester – and took them for sorting to Dedman's grocery shop at the corner of West Street and Jacklyn's Lane. These he just delivered around the centre of the town.

On Sundays the papers were sorted out at 7am in Wigmore's on Broad Street (where Morgan's Hardware is now): George Wigmore was a hairdresser, that also organised bus and coach trips – on one side, up the hill was Major's, a toy and drapery store, and on the other Barker's café – also with a drapery and gents outfitters. These papers were delivered with help from Gerald Cornforth: Pat did the same round as on weekdays to the east of the town, but after Churchyard Cottages went on up Station Road (not made up at that time), Station Approach and through the railway arch up Jacklyn's Lane.

Memories of the Delivery Round

In the 1950s the area around what is now called Nursery Road was a vegetable nursery, at the western end, run first by Mr Fairhead. Then the Fairheads started a builder's yard at the corner of New Farm Road, and the nursery was run by Mr Wells. At the other end of what is now Nursery Road, opposite Langton's farm (run by Mr Conway and his sons), the field there was known as the Alresford Fair field, where the annual Alresford Show was staged: Pat was in one of the local Scout packs, as most of the boys were in those days, and they sold the programmes. But they also tried to help get the vehicles out of the field after Show days, because it regularly flooded, and was very boggy. Over on Jacklyn's Lane, opposite the nursery, Grange Road was unadopted, all mud and stones, with ashes put out by the residents to fill the holes: the same applied to Salisbury Road and Rosebery Road further up.

Between Grange Road and the railway line, Pam Bailey comments that another field there, Mr Ellingham's field, was where the annual Fun Fair was held - now the Fun Fair is usually erected on the Stratton Bates recreation ground, and a bungalow has been built on that part of the Ellingham field. During WWII, the Stratton Bates recreation ground had been used as a rest area for Southampton and Portsmouth Fire Services personnel, with various Nissen Huts erected: Pam had friends whose families lived in these huts in the 1950s, until the time when Grange Road was resurfaced and most of the huts removed (Ref 2). One was left as a changing room facility for the sports field, which lasted a long time, into the 1990s!

Going up the Jacklyn's Lane hill, the town water-tower stood in a field on the right, slightly below the top, and behind where the Catholic Church and Carpenters now stand. A painting showing the demolition of this water tower and pump house in June 1955, by A.R.Wade, is now on display in the Alresford library. The records there say that the town water supply came from this field for over 50 years, using a 120 foot deep five foot diameter shaft, and below that another 45 ft of an 18" borehole. A reservoir at ground level supplied water to most of the town: the water tower, with a top water level 16 feet above ground level (and quoted to be a concrete construction) enabled the water supplies to the higher parts of the town. Access was between the houses on Grange Road: now two appropriately named bungalows have sprung up on this site. Since 1955 the town water comes from Northington.



Near to the top of the hill, before Salisbury Road, the next field contained a railway carriage, at the far corner. Pat had to walk along the path diagonally across the field up to the carriage to deliver the paper to the lady who lived there: and she had no curtains on the carriage windows. Occasionally this led to some slight embarrassment to the poor lad. The field to the West of the water tower was where Miss Toft had her stables and horse riding school. On the opposite side of the road, where the Bramble Hill bungalows now stand, there was a chicken farm.

Moving on down the hill, there were 15 houses and bungalows in the area down to the Cricketer's Pub, which included a schoolteacher - Mr Hedges - and the Chant family, who still live in Yettan, the house opposite what is now Linnets Road: there the three brothers had a car repair business. The three big houses on the left behind the Cricketer's were named Fair View, Shepherd's Down and Paddock Way, which were bought up and demolished to create the new housing estate. Dr Clark lived in one of these houses, and moved up the hill to the house on the corner of Rosebery Road: still present in Shepherd's Down, Downlea was an earlier house built for the Hasted family (butchers) and accessed by a track down to Tichborne Down. Pat recalls four houses between the Cricketer's and the field by the side of Tichborne Hospital (which is now Orchard Close) plus a track up the hill leading to Bennett's Farm. The original site of the pub called "The Cricketer's" was on the corner of Sun Lane, and became the Links Laundry: Whitehill Lane originally veered to the right at this laundry and went to the three original bungalows - on the southern side of the 'new' (1985) bypass to the town, now accessed via the underpass.

Turning up Sun Lane, there was Mr Hazelgrove's house (the butcher) and another large house where Dr Calder lived, on the site of what is now the Sun Hill housing estate. In wartime, the top of the hill (now the school playing field) had been the site for one of the searchlights on this side of town, looking for enemy aircraft, navigating at night using Alresford Pond as a landmark: Pam Bailey says another searchlight was on the Golf Course. Going over the top of the hill there was the Rectory, where Reverend Pearson lived - set well back from the road where some of the Beech Road houses are now. In the grounds of the Rectory, adjacent to Sun Lane, there was a swimming pool, and beside that there was a building that had also been used as a Scout hut. The Sun Hill Junior and Infants schools now occupy the area on the top of the hill, and they also had

an open air swimming pool down near the bottom fence, up until the 1980s, but this was built presumably with the new school. Further down the hill, between where Chestnut Walk and Nursery Road is now, there was a half round-roofed Nissen hut, which acted as the local Army Cadet hut, run by Alf and Vic Merritt.

Going down past Edward Terrace, the last house had a garage round the corner in Haig Road, and here Mr Molyneux, an AA patrolman, stored his motorbike and sidecar. Haig Road was not made up at this time: down there on the right was the British Legion Hall, and a printing works.

On the corner of Sun Lane was the Sun Inn, owned and run by Cameron Black: of interest to Pat because they had Rock & Roll discos in there (in the evenings). But the main contact with the pub was his weekly visit after collecting the paper money, mainly in pennies. These he swapped in the pub for larger denomination coins, as Cameron Black needed the change. Audrey Chalk at that time worked in the World Stores, run by Mr Blake: it was almost across the road from The Sun, at 17 East Street. Audrey well remembers phone-calls requesting them to take over further cheese supplies to The Sun, when extra lunchtime guests had arrived. Cameron Black would only have cheese cut from the centre of a whole cheese, so he was a difficult customer!

Bicycles were important

For Pat and his friends, such as Gerald Cornforth and Peter Chalk (later to be Audrey's husband) bicycles were very important. Mr Andrews at 36 East Street, working from a shed accessed up Brandy Mount, mended bikes – cheaper than the main cycle shop, Turner's. He did all the jobs needed despite only having one good arm. The cycle shop was in West Street, on the corner of Station Road, and was run by Mr Turner. He also lived on West Street – in number 38, Berukin, where the Dentist is now. Mr Turner employed young staff in his shop, so when he was not there, on a Saturday, the boys of the town used to get their bikes serviced free of charge.

They then went regularly on trips, pedalling to Oxford or Bournemouth, Southampton or Portsmouth, in groups of 10 or 12 on their bikes. These were 1950s bikes, not modern lightweight ones. Audrey Chalk remembers Peter was keen on cycling trips to Portsmouth, where he would visit the theatre for a matinee performance, then cycle home. His preferred show was by the actress who was the model for Jane Gay in the famous 'Just Jane' strip cartoons in the Daily Mirror – quoted by Winston Churchill as Britain's secret weapon in WWII. She was actually called Chrystabel Leighton-Porter: born in Eastleigh, her routine was much appreciated by sailors. It sounds like Audrey soon put a stop to that. Pat says he never went to those sort of shows.

Pam Bailey also remembers bicycles as very important. When she was very young her mother worked in the Volunteer Arms on West Street, and took Pam into work with her. This pub was always full of cyclists from out of town: the main hobby for ordinary people in those days seemed to be touring on a bicycle, so the cycle shops, pubs and tea rooms did a lot of passing trade. Pam also remembers cycling to Petersfield, and walking to Winchester on a Saturday to support the Alresford Town football team when they were playing at Couch Green. Probably in later years

than Pat Bentley, Pam also did the same paper round as Pat, on behalf of her brother, when he was unable to do it!



Further up Station Road was the Civic Cinema, which was basically an un-insulated tin shack that was an oven in summer and a fridge in winter: it had two stoves, which roasted those close to the stove – everyone else was chilly. Audrey Chalk was the usherette in the cinema, when the normal usherette – who happened to be Pete's Aunt, Kathleen Smith – was on holiday, or absent. Pat Bentley also helped as a projectionist at the cinema, and because of his liking for 'Rock & Roll' discovered that the large speakers behind the screen were very effective for playing his

78rpm records. The regular projectionist was Georgie Troke, sometimes helped by Pam Bailey's brother. Pam recalls the audience stamping their feet when the film projection broke down. Entrance charges were three pence for seats at the front, and six pence at the back: there were three films per week, one of which was a matinee. The cinema was where Alders Court now stands, opposite the (then) Police Station. Between the Police Station and the Swan Hotel was a wooden building known as "The Monkey Hut", (pictured here) which was almost three-cornered, and acted as a Church Hall, being used for Brownie and Girl Guide meetings, but also another place that Pat remembers as holding 'Rock & Roll' sessions for the younger townspeople! The origin of the name is unknown. In the area by the side of the cinema, down to the house known as Mulberries, was the HCC lorry park and yard, and behind the public conveniences there were allotments reaching down to the houses in Station Approach: this area is now occupied by Bailey House and Crockford House.



The Scout Hut

Pat lived at 25 Mill Hill, opposite the Town Mill originally: his Godmother Miss Chapman lived at the Old Post House in Broad Street. Miss Chapman became frail and needed more care, so they all moved to live together at Secundus on the Bishop's Sutton road. The bungalow there was constructed from what might have been two Army huts side by side, so by boarding up doorways, Miss Chapman had her own privacy in one half of the building: Pat and his family named their other half of the bungalow "Dancaster", and had a separate entrance on the side. There were several acres of land with Secundus, and Miss Chapman donated an acre of land, up to the railway bridge, to the Scouts for a headquarters hut, which was then brick built by Paines the builders, with help from Pat (who can still build a good wall if you need one). The building was situated on the right just before the railway bridge: it was later used as a rabbit farm, and then gradually developed into a bungalow home – called Railway View. Around five years ago this was replaced with a much larger house, called Acre Wood, so presumably any recognisable features of the Scout HQ building have disappeared!

The picture shows the District Commissioner Rev. E.W. Selwyn inspecting the Scouts at the opening event, with some Guides also lined up behind. Miss Chapman is with the 1st Alresford troop Scoutmaster, Harold Shaw.



On the right the Scouts there are from the 2nd Alresford (Handicapped) troop that was for boys and some older residents from the Tichborne Down House Hospital (Ref 3), which was a large community at that time.

¹ "The Bombing of Alresford", Glenn Gilbertson, Alresford Articles 2, page 15.

² "The Stratton-Bates Legacy", Brian Rothwell, Alresford Articles 4, page 7.

³ "100 Years of Scouting, in Alton, Alresford and surrounding villages" Nicola Guy & Sheila Woodman, 2001.

The 1950s black+white photos are reproduced with permission from www.alresfordheritage.co.uk.

TENANTS OF BOROUGH FARM, OVINGTON, 1615 – 1940

By

Isabel Sanderson

Introduction by Brian Rothwell

This previously unpublished article by Alresford's most famous local historian, Isabel Sanderson, was found in a folder lent to me by Lady Ribeiro, one of the current owners of Borough Farm. The folder had previously belonged to her father, Jack Orr, who had purchased the property in 1956 from Sir Anthony Tichborne. Jack was a great friend of Isabel Sanderson and she must have researched the history of the farm at his request.¹ This article is now produced with the permission of both Lady Ribeiro and Isabel's surviving relatives, Bobby Sanderson, her sister-in-law and Ann Leonard, her niece. The introductory words in the paragraph below were adapted from notes made by Jack Orr in 1967. These were found in the same folder.

The entrance to Borough Farm is situated on the B3047, the minor road from New Alresford to Itchen Stoke, not far from the Ladycroft crossroads and Seward's Bridge. Immediately behind the farmstead and the out buildings lies the disused railway embankment along which trains used to run from Alresford to Winchester. The farmhouse is situated on one bank of the River Itchen below its confluence with the Tichborne Stream. This small farm, often referred to in old documents as BURROW, BORROWE, BORROUGH or BURROUGH, as well as BOROUGH, was probably so named after the burrows of the rabbits or conies which abounded in the locality. The farm was owned for many centuries by the Tichborne family and leased out to tenants.

Isabel Sanderson

The earliest tenant of the farm that I have been able to trace is John Rabnett. In the Cheriton parish registers, there are entries for the baptism of a John Rabnett, son of Henry, on 16 September 1584, and for the marriage of John Rabnett and Avis (or Amie) Newland on 3 July 1615. The Newland family lived at Longwood in the parish of Cheriton. Avis, the daughter of Peter Newland, was baptised at Cheriton on 15 June 1588. The first child of John and Avis Rabnett, a daughter named Lucy, was baptised at Ovington in 1618, so it would seem that the Rabnetts came to Borough Farm when they were married in 1615. A son, another John, was born in 1620 and a daughter, Elizabeth, was born in 1624.

John Rabnett, the elder, died in 1638 and was buried in the Ovington churchyard at the top of the hill. Details of his will can be found in the Hampshire Record Office. He leaves to his son, another John, a house, a barn and five acres of ground in Cheriton, which is rented to John Touch. John Rabnett is to give his sisters Lucy and Elizabeth £(amount unreadable) within a year of the decease of his wife Avis. John Rabnett the elder, leaves to his wife the lease of his house at BORROUGH and after her decease, to his son John. The John Touch mentioned in the will is no doubt, the John who married Jane Rabnett in 1607, probably John Rabnett's sister. The value of John Rabnett's goods and chattels was £112-12s-0d, of which £45 was in bonds and money and £15 for the lease of one tenement and land at BORROWE.

¹ Conversation between Lady Ribeiro and Brian Rothwell, 19 August 2013.

John Rabnett's son, John, was only eighteen years old when his father died in 1638 and he continued to live at Borough Farm. He appears to have married soon afterwards, since there is an entry in the Ovington parish registers in 1639 of the baptism of John, son of John, and Agnes Rabnett. A daughter Anne was baptised in 1641 and another daughter Phillis, in 1644. In that same year, Agnes, wife of John Rabnett, was buried in the Ovington churchyard. John Rabnett seems to have married again, since in 1647, there is the entry of the baptism of Henry, son of John Rabnett and Anne, his wife. Other children of this second marriage are named in John Rabnett's will of 1663 namely a daughter Joan, and two sons, Thomas the elder and Thomas the younger. He left instructions that he was to be buried in the churchyard at Ovington, near the place where his two daughters were buried, most probably Anne and Phillis.

To his eldest son, John, he leaves his free land in Cheriton known by the name of Touches together with a house and a barn thereunto belonging, upon the condition that £30 is paid to his daughter, Joan. This must be the land that John Rabnett inherited from his father in 1638, then in the occupation of John Touch. The rest of his free land in Cheriton John Rabnett leaves to his son Henry, then sixteen years old.

In 1659, John Rabnett, son of John, son of another John who is also the son of John, acquired a property in New Alresford, known as Corner Place (on the corner of West Street and The Dean). He bequeathed to his son, Thomas the elder, the front part of the house, now in the tenure of Thomas Todd with the chamber over the shop and gatehouse, together with half of the garden and half of the barn. Thomas the younger is to have the back part of the house, now in the tenure of Jacob Aslett, half the garden and half the barn. The residue of his estate, he leaves to his 'Loving wife Anne' and to his youngest son jointly.

Probably John Rabnett, the eldest son, his wife and mother continued to live at Borough Farm, since the Ovington parish registers record the baptism of John Rabnett, son of John who is the son of John, in 1677 and the death of Widow Rabnett in December of that year. She was the last of this family to appear in the Ovington registers which suggest that the Rabnett family lived at Borough Farm for more than sixty years, from 1615 through to 1677.

There are, however, a few entries about this family in the New Alresford parish registers, the first being the burial of Henry, son of Thomas Rabnett, in 1680. Unfortunately, the register of marriages and baptisms for this period are missing. It is more than likely that the two Thomas Rabnetts lived in New Alresford and not at Borough Farm and this is confirmed from other sources of information.

The Rabnett family are mentioned in an old book to be found amongst the New Alresford parish records, entitled *A Survey of the Liberty of Alresford*, being a copy of some old documents by Robert Boyes, a headmaster at Perin's School. In 1593, a property in West Street, known as Corner Place, was sold to Richard Bulbeck of New Alresford. The premises were mortgaged in 1638 by Thomas Bulbeck to the Reverend Arthur Taylor of Chilton Candover for £50. In 1659, Arthur Taylor MD, son and heir of Arthur Taylor, late of Chilton Candover, assigned the house and gardens called Corner Place and one acre of land in the common fields to John Rabnett of BURROW in Ovington and his heirs for ever.

In 1689, Thomas Rabnett (whether older or younger is not expressed) mortgaged the premises to Gabriel Poulter of Northington for £100 on a term of 500 years but later in 1697,

Poulter assigned the mortgage to the Perin's School Trustees who were: Sir Hugh Stewkeley of Hinton Ampner, Anthony Henly, Esq. of Northington Grange, Christopher Perin, gent, John White, gent, William Wilmott Tallow, chandler and Richard Seward, yeoman, for the rest of the term. Christopher Perin was the executor for his brother Henry Perin of the Weir House in Old Alresford, who died in 1697. Henry left money to pay a schoolmaster to instruct nineteen poor boys in Latin, writing accounts etc. This was the origin of Perin's School which is still in existence today.

In March 1697/8,² James Rabnett, carpenter, Edward Watt and his wife Martha conveyed Corner Place to the School Trustees, viz:

All that new erected messuages or houses and outhouses, close of ground cartilage garden and backsides thereunto belonging which said houses are built on a toft whereon several buildings heretofore stood now lately burnt down by the name of CORNER PLACE and are situate on West Street of New Alresford aforesaid.

The fire referred to in the quotation above occurred on 1 May 1689, when a conflagration, fanned by a strong wind, destroyed the houses of 117 families in the space of three hours and there was much destitution in the town.³

These premises at Corner Place, where the school first started, are still standing at the corner of West Street and The Dean. Here, for over 200 years, boys received their education. It was only in 1910 that the school was moved across the road to Pound Hill. This Corner Place is, without doubt, the site of the house, barn and garden in New Alresford that was bequeathed by John Rabnett of BURROUGH in his will of 1663 to his two sons, Thomas the Elder and Thomas the Younger.

Since part of the farm's land is in the parish of Tichborne, the farmstead and more land in Ovington, rates were paid to the churchwardens of both parishes and their accounts books give the names of some of the tenants of Borough Farm. The Ovington churchwardens' accounts start in 1678; whilst those for Cheriton (which includes Tichborne) begin later in 1699. Thomas Dredge paid rates for land in Ovington from 1681 to 1698, and from 1699 his name appears in both parish accounts for some years. He died in 1716 and was buried in the Ovington churchyard. It seems very likely that Thomas Dredge followed the Rabnetts as the tenant of Borough Farm.

For most of the eighteenth century, the Seward family leased land in Ovington and elsewhere. Like the Rabnetts, this family lived in the adjoining parish of Cheriton and it is likely that the two families were related by marriage. As early as 1557, there is an entry in the Cheriton parish register of the baptism of Anne, daughter of John Seward. Another entry in 1617 is the baptism of Richard, son of John Seward, who went to live at Westercourt in Bishop's Sutton and who died there in 1679. His will provides some interesting details. He had two sons, Richard and John and four daughters. He makes reference to his 'Liveing at Ovington' and to another at 'Beworth'. The later will of his son Richard in 1719 makes it clear that the 'Liveing at Ovington' was Borough Farm.

² Prior to 1752 in Britain, each year officially began on 25 March, although 1 January was commonly regarded as the first day of the year. 1697/8 reflects an awareness of both conventions. In 2014 language, the date would be March 1698.

³ A.J. Robertson, *History of Alresford* (New Alresford, 1937), 26

The valuation of the goods and chattels of Richard Seward of Westercourt in 1679 was £1, 514-7s-0d – a large sum of money in those days. The inventory included a parcel of wool worth £100, 690 sheep and lambs valued at £207, three wagons with wheels, three dung pots with wheels, ploughs, harrows and rollers, eleven horses and their harnesses, thirteen cows, two bulls, five bullocks and fourteen hogs. In spite of the fact that Richard Seward could not sign his name, being unable to write, this will inventory suggests that he was a capable yeoman with much business ability,

Richard Seward's son, another Richard, probably did live in the Ovington parish, but possibly not at Borough Farm since his widow did not pay rates for the BURROUGH until 1719, after the death of Thomas Dredge in 1716 and that of her husband in 1719. Richard Seward's name occurs in the accounts as early as 1703 and since he was the highest ratepayer, he must have been farming a lot of land in the parish. In all probability, he leased BURROUGH to Thomas Dredge. Richard Seward mentions the following lands in his will of 1719:

1. A leasehold estate in Ovington known by the name of Lambornes.
2. Two fields of free land in Itchen Stoke known by the name of Broome Meadows.
3. Copyhold lands in the Manors of Bishop's Sutton and Cheriton.
4. His leasehold estate which he holds for Sir Henry Tichborne lying in Ovington, commonly known as the BURROW.

All of this land was bequeathed first to his wife Sarah and after her death, to his son, Benjamin Seward. Benjamin Seward continued to live at Borough Farm and after his mother died, he paid rates for the lands in Ovington, Tichborne and Itchen Stoke that are mentioned above.

Benjamin had two daughters but no sons; Sarah was baptised at Ovington in 1725 and Ursula in 1728. Sarah continued to live in the parish after her marriage to Robert Budd in 1742. The Ovington parish registers record the baptisms of several of their children. Benjamin Seward died in 1747 and it would appear from the churchwardens' accounts that Robert Budd took over his father-in-law's leases. His name occurs in all three sets of accounts from 1749 to 1761. From 1765 onwards the Ovington accounts are missing; likewise the documents relating to the Tichborne Estate.

Thomas Hall's name follows that of Robert Budd in the rate account for BORROW land in the parish of Tichborne and he may well have been the tenant at Borough Farm. The baptism of Thomas' son, William in 1763 and a daughter Ann in 1764 in the Ovington registers seem to indicate that he was living in this parish. His signature is to be found in the Ovington parish records as late as 1779, though it is missing in 1780. From 1788 to 1816 there is no record of any rates being paid in Ovington.

However, as we move into the nineteenth century, other sources of information occur, such as the census returns. At a vestry meeting held in Ovington parish on 16 September 1828, Joseph Smith was appointed the tenant of a parcel of land called the Parish Acre that belonged to the church. This piece of land adjoins some of that belonging to Borough Farm and was usually rented by the farmer living there. In 1830, Eleanor, daughter of Eleanor and Joseph Smith was baptised at Ovington church when the occupation of the father was given as farmer. In the 1851 census, the occupier of Borough Farm was Eleanor Smith, widow, aged 56. She was farming sixteen acres and employing two men. In 1880, a Jane Bowdidge of Borough Farm was buried at in Ovington churchyard. According to the 1861 census return, she was employed as a

servant by Widow Smith. It would appear that Eleanor Smith lived at Borough Farm for more than fifty years.

In 1883, there was an alteration in the apportionment of the rent charge in lieu of tithes for Borough Farm because some of the land had been sold in the 1860s to the London & South-Western Railway Company for the construction of the railway from Alresford to Winchester. In this document the name of the tenant was George Walden. George died in 1887, aged fifty-two. A Francis Ellen Walden was buried in 1902, aged sixty-three, and she may well have been George Walden's widow. The last entry in the Ovington parish registers for this family was the burial of George Raymond Walden, son of George and Francis Ellen and known as Raymond, in July 1940.

The death of this bachelor farmer, at the age of sixty-five, was due to gun shot wounds inflicted by the police and caused much local ill-feeling. During the Second World War, farming was governed by the War Agricultural Committee (WAC). Raymond Walden had received orders from WAC to plough three acres of his farm. This he consistently refused to do because he would have had no pasture for his animals and they would either have had to be sold or to be killed.

When the police arrived with an eviction order, Raymond Walden fired a shot gun at them and barricaded himself into the farmhouse. The resultant siege went on for eighteen hours. Extra police were called in, tear gas was used and shots fired by both parties. Finally, the police forced an entry and found the farmer lying on the floor unconscious. He later died in hospital.



Illustration 1. Borough Farm, Ovington at the time of the siege in 1940.

Raymond Walden had the reputation of being an individualist, but the decision to evict him was commonly considered to be ill-advised and high-handed. The coroner's verdict on 3 August 1940 was 'justifiable homicide on behalf of the police'. The acres under dispute were never ploughed during the war and Borough Farm was without a tenant for many years.

References quoted by Isabel Sanderson

1. Parish registers of Cheriton (they include Tichborne) and Ovington.
2. Churchwardens' Accounts of the same parishes, Cheriton and Ovington.
3. The wills of individuals stored in the Hampshire Record Office (HRO).
4. Census Returns for 1851 and 1861, held on microfilm in HRO.
5. A.J. Robertson, *History of Alresford* (New Alresford, 1937), 26

Postscript by Brian Rothwell

The last two words of Isabel Sanderson's article 'many years' were in fact sixteen. As stated in the introduction to this piece, Sir Anthony Tichborne, after modernising the farmstead post war, sold Borough Farm to Jack Orr in 1956.⁴

A summary of the Borough Farm tenant families, 1615-1940.

Family name	From	To	Total years
Rabnett	1615	1677	62
Dredge	1677	1719	42
Seward	1719	1747	28
Budd	1747	1761	14
Hall	1761	1779	18
?	1779	1828	48
Smith	1828	1883	55
Walden	1883	1940	57

The question mark gap from 1779 to 1828 shown in the table above may indicate why Isabel Sanderson, noted for her perfectionism, was disinclined to publish this piece of research.



Illustration 2: The Siege of Borough Farm from *The Daily Mirror* July 24 1940

⁴ Conversation between Lady Ribiero and Brian Rothwell, 19 August 2013.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES FROM THE PAST – No. 1

DR HAROLD HODGSON (1867-1953)

By

Brian Rothwell

Dr Harold Hodgson was an integral part of life in Alresford for more than half a century. He was the son John Evan Hodgson RA (1831-95) and he took up art early in life. However, he was persuaded to study medicine and came to work in Alresford in 1902. He took over the medical practice based at 'The Lindens' (6, East Street) from Dr Charles Covey.

He quickly became an established and successful GP with a quiet and unassuming manner.¹ In those days, a doctor worked from home and part of his house was turned into a surgery. The surgery bell can still be seen on the exterior wall that fronts on to the street.

Harold and his wife suffered the tragic loss of both of their sons during the First World War. There are brasses erected to the memory of the boys on an internal wall of St John's where the Hodgsons were regular worshippers:

Edward Thomas Hodgson, RN, Midshipman, HMS Invincible, 31 March 1916, Battle of Jutland Bank, aged seventeen.

John Soloman Riddell Hodgson, Lieutenant, Second Dorset Regiment, 25 March 1917, Jebel Hamin, Mesopotamia, aged twenty.

During his lifetime, Harold exhibited at the Royal Academy, the Royal Institution of Great Britain, the Institute of Paints and Watercolours, the Royal Society of British Artists, the Alpine Gallery and the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. He illustrated *The History of Alresford*, written by Canon A.J. Robertson in 1936, with pen and ink drawings.

He served as a town trustee from 1906-49 and a small development of pensioners' bungalows at the rear of Makins Court was named after him – 'Hodgsons'. He was buried in the churchyard of St John's when he died aged eighty-six.²



Centre of Alresford. Site of Old Market House
H. Hodgson

Harold Hodgson's Drawing from *History of Alresford*, Robertson, A.J., Alresford, Laurence Oxley 1969.

¹ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwelling in Alresford*, Booklet 2 (New Alresford), 75.

² With thanks to the staff at Lawrence Oxley's Bookshop on Broad Street. Most of the information above was taken from a note displayed underneath one of Hodgson's paintings.

Poetry Corner

The "Ode of Remembrance", an ode taken from Laurence Binyon's "For the Fallen", first published in The Times of London in September 1914:

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young.
Straight of limb, true of eyes, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.*

“1914” by Wilfred Owen:

*War broke: and now the Winter of the world
With perishing great darkness closes in.
The foul tornado, centred at Berlin,
Is over all the width of Europe whirled,
Rending the sails of progress. Rent or furled
Are all Art's ensigns. Verse wails. Now begin
Famines of thought and feeling. Love's wine's thin.
The grain of human Autumn rots, down-hurled.
For after Spring had bloomed in early Greece,
And Summer blazed her glory out with Rome,
An Autumn softly fell, a harvest home,
A slow grand age, and rich with all increase.
But now, for us, wild Winter, and the need
Of sowings for new Spring, and blood for seed.*

Sung , to the tune of *Underneath the Spreading Chestnut Tree*, as the schoolgirls of Hinton Ampner House went down to the cellars during air raids:

*Underneath the roof of Hinton House
There we lie as quiet as a mouse,
When the Air-raid gong goes off at night
We all wake up in a terrible fright.
Eiderdowns trailing far behind
In the cellars we are lined
When Miss Watt doth call the roll
If anyone's missing she's 'up the pole'*

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St John's by Harold Hodgson courtesy Lorraine Lillywhite; Borough Farm © Brian Rothwell.

Index to Previous *Alresford* Articles

Issue No.1

2 . Two Diamond Jubilees	Glenn Gilbertson	p.5
3. Shock Result at the First Parish Council Election	Brian Rothwell	p.13
4. A Bad Day in Abbotstone	Glenn Gilbertson	p.23
5. Alresford Rugby Football Club	Hugh Ogus	p.26
6. The Origin of the Name of Alresford	Peter Abraham	p.32

Issue No.2

1. The Old Pinglestone Road	Brian Rothwell	p.3
2. The Bombing of Alresfor	Glenn Gilbertson	p.15
3. A Current Assessment of NATT	Robin Atkins	p.18
4. Tichborne & Titchy - Their Original Meaning	Peter Abraham	p.24
(addendum) More about the Tichborne Claimant	Glenn Gilbertson	p.26
5. Thomas Carlyle at The Grange	Brian Tippett	p.27
6. The Date of the Broad Street Fair	Brian Rothwell	p.36
7. The Bells of St John's	Nick Denbow & Elizabeth Johnson	p.38
8. 1953 Coronation Celebrations in Alresford	Glenn Gilbertson	p.42
9. Poetry Corner - Chidiok Tichborne		p.44

Issue No.3

1. The Perins of the Weir House, 1549-1923	Brian Rothwell	p.2
2. The Beauworth Hoard, 1833	Brian Rothwell	p.22
3. Neville Chamberlain in Old Alresford? 1938	Brian Rothwell	p.28
4. War Memorial Garden, 1944 to date	Brian Rothwell	p.33
5. The Lost Bridge, 1960's to date	Brian Rothwell	p.41
6. Bibliography & Sources.	Brian Rothwell	p.43



Stratton bates Recreation ground (Item 2)



Alrebury Park House (Item 1)



Hinton Ampner Reunion (Item 3)



The Shrove (Item 4)



George Wither (Item 5)



St John's by Harold Hodgson (Item 8)



Borough Farm (Item 7)