

Alresford Articles No.3

The Weir House Edition



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 Hall, 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:

Top photo © Nick Denbow

Bottom photo © Bob Fowler

Perin Coat of Arms as

Alresford Articles No.3

The Weir House Edition

Welcome to this slightly different edition of Alresford Articles, with a series of linked articles by a single author. Brian Rothwell has done an enormous amount of characteristically meticulous research inspired by Henry Perin and the story of The Weir House, and so much good material has emerged that we have decided to gather his first five articles together. We trust that you will enjoy the theme.

We are very grateful to the current owners of the Weir House, Mr. and Mrs. George Hollingbery, who have been most generous with their time and financial support.



Contents - All articles by Brian Rothwell

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Editor: Glenn Gilbertson

Editorial Team: Nick Denbow, Bob Fowler, Brian Rothwell and Brian Tippett

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The theme that links the five articles in this issue of *Alresford Articles* is that they all feature former owners of The Weir House, on the Abbotstone Road in Old Alresford. I decided to research the history of this house for two reasons. First and foremost, that most eminent of local historians, Isabel Sanderson, had not already done so as part of her series of ten booklets on *Dwellings in Alresford*, that were written between 1974-84. Second, I had noticed that two of Alresford's benefactors both lived at this address. Dr Henry Perin left the money to found the free school in 1697 and Sir Francis Lindley donated the land that now forms the War Memorial Garden in 1950. I thought it would be interesting to establish who else had lived at The Weir House in between these dates.

What I did not realise at the start of the project was that in previous centuries the owner of The Weir House was an important individual in what was a not a particularly large community. The joint population of New and Old Alresford hovered at around the 2,000 mark throughout the censuses of the nineteenth century and in earlier times it was probably fewer. He, and it was always a 'he' before the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, was a large and influential fish in a comparatively small pond – one of the local squires and therefore part of the establishment. As such, this individual was likely to have been involved in every important issue or event that occurred in the town.

On the back of researching the history of The Weir House, I could have written separate articles about the 'Great Fire of 1689', the 'French War Graves', the 'Tichborne Claimant' or the 'History of Perin's School'. I did not do so because these subjects had all been covered to a greater or lesser extent in the *Alresford Displayed* series of twenty-two annual issues, 1976-97. These can be accessed on-line at www.alresfordhistandlit.co.uk or obtained through the local public library.

Where I have mentioned these topics in the text that follows, I have endeavoured either to say something new or to repeat just enough to enable the understanding of a reader who has read nothing about these subjects. What has finally emerged from the research are five items of local history that are in time sequence order. They are linked not only by their association with former owners of The Weir House but also by the fact that none of them have been the subject of historical research, or publication, before.

For three reasons, I need to express my profuse gratitude to George and Janette Hollingbery, the current owners of The Weir House. First, they gave me permission to research the history of their house. Second, even as busy people they gave me their time, inviting me into their home and allowing me to take photographs that help illustrate the text that follows. Third, and perhaps most importantly, they have sponsored the cost of printing this special issue of *Alresford Articles*.

The other person I need to thank is David Coles, who has worked at The Weir House since 1991. He displayed great patience in showing me around the estate and he has shared his knowledge in answering my face-to-face and email questions. To all three of them, a big thank-you from the Alresford History and Literary Society – this edition could not have been produced without their various generousities.

Brian Rothwell
Alresford History and Literary Society
September 2013.

1. 'THE PERINS' OF THE WEIR HOUSE

Introduction

The *Hampshire Treasures Survey*, published in 1979, describes The Weir House, situated off the Abbotstone Road in Old Alresford, as follows:

Built in 1583. Tiled roof with attractive chimneys. Brick structure with curved tiles covering part of the walls at the rear of the house. The morning room of the west wing was originally a chapel, used by Lady Lindley who was of Roman Catholic faith. Picturesque setting with gardens and lawns sweeping down to the River Alre.¹

On 10 November 1950, after the death of its owner, Sir Francis Lindley, The Weir House was put up for auction at the Royal Hotel in Winchester. It was advertised as having ten bedrooms, six with dressing rooms, and three bathrooms. On the ground floor there was a drawing room, a dining room, a sitting room and a flower room, equipped for fishing tackle, that opened onto the gardens. The thirty-six acres of grounds contained cottages, a flour mill, a fulling mill and many other outbuildings. The estate also included the fishing rights on part of the River Alre.² Today, in 2013, although the grounds are smaller and the mills have been sold off, The Weir House is certainly an attractive building in a beautiful location and fishing rights still attach to the property.



Illustration 1: The Weir House, Abbotstone Road, Old Alresford. This photograph was taken by the author in 2013 from the ford across the main drive.

The 'Perin' family and their descendants lived at The Weir House for eleven generations. Their stay spanned more than three centuries, from 1622 to 1923. The first

¹ *Hampshire Treasures Survey*, Volume 1, Winchester City and District (Winchester, 1979), 221.

² Hampshire Record Office (HRO), 3M/69/2, The Weir House, Public Auction Catalogue, 10 November 1950.

Perin moved in during the reign of James I and the last one moved out when George V was on the throne. During that time, the role of the nation's head had evolved from being an absolute monarch to a constitutional king. On 8 February 1622, King James summarily dismissed the English Parliament and by way of contrast on 23 May 1923, King George could only endorse the decision to appoint Stanley Baldwin as his Prime Minister.

During these three centuries, an English civil war had come and gone. The country had fought major wars against the Dutch, the French, the Russians, the Boers and the Germans. Britain had taken part in many more minor skirmishes on land and sea in order to expand and defend a burgeoning Empire. Significantly though, a North American colony had been lost. From the days of wooden sailing boats to iron steam ships, from horse drawn carts to the first aeroplanes, from patriarchy to women receiving the vote, from an agricultural to an industrialised economy, there were 'Perins' at The Weir House.

Generation one

Amongst the sixteenth century alumni of Oxford University was one Christopher Perin of Worcestershire. He attended Brasenose College, starting in 1566 at the probable age of seventeen. If this is correct, it means that he was born in 1549. He graduated BA in 1574 and MA on 25 June 1577. He went on to become a canon, sometimes termed a prebendary, at Winchester Cathedral starting in 1583.³

This Christopher Perin, who died in 1612, is buried inside the cathedral under the North Aisle of the Retro-Choir. The inscription on his grave stone is now illegible to the naked eye, a portion of the stone surface having flaked off. It was, however, transcribed by previous generations of cathedral scholars. 'His Latin epitaph pronounced him "happy", in as much as amongst his other blessings his wife, Elizabeth, bore him twelve children'.⁴

The earliest surviving cathedral baptism and burial records date from 1600. The sad record of the births of five of these children and the deaths of six of them can be found in these registers:

Name	Date of birth	Date of death
William Perin	???	10 March 1614
Christopher Perin	2 April 1600	8 April 1600
George Perin	3 July 1602	3 July 1602
Christopher Perin	29 May 1604	8 June 1604 John
John Perin	20 June 1607	19 August 1607
Christopher Perin	19 December 1609	13 October 1612

Of the remaining six children, there is no surviving record. However, we do know that the first of the Perin family to set foot inside The Weir House (then spelled Wear or Ware House) was one Henry Perin, who was born in 1597.⁵ As this was not a common surname in sixteenth century Hampshire because of its French origin, it is probable that this Henry Perin was the son of the cathedral canon.

There is an entry in the Court Roll of the Bishop of Winchester in 1612 to the effect that the same Henry Perin paid a fee for a licence to demolish an old Fulling Mill called

³ Oxford University Alumni, 1500-1714.

⁴ John Vaughan, *Winchester Cathedral, Its Monuments and Memories* (London, c.1918), 270.

⁵ George Laurence Gomme, (ed.), *The Gentleman's Magazine Library*, being a Classified Collection of the Chief Content of the Magazine from 1731-1868, English Topography, Part V (Hampshire – Huntingdonshire), edited by F.A. Milne (London, 1894), 33.

Jenning's Mill or Black Mill (situated near the Drove Lane crossing of the River Alre⁶) and to take the timbers for his own use.⁷ The earliest surviving document that specifically refers to The Weir House is the will of John Willis (or Wyllis), who died in 1626. He was a miller and from the will inventory it can be deduced that his mill (Weir Mill now Arle Mill) was leased from a Leonard Page of The Weir House.⁸ Page's daughter, Elizabeth, married Henry Perin on 25 July 1622 and the ownership of the Page estate (including The Weir House and the Weir Mill) passed into the Perin family when Leonard died in 1630.⁹

The Perins were relatively wealthy; they were not members of the landed gentry with a title, but they were of the next level – rich enough to be able to pay a stone mason to chisel their coat of arms onto their gravestones. They were gentlemen (and gentlewomen) who did not need to work to make a living. They owned land that they either paid someone else to farm whilst they took the profits or they rented it out for grazing; they leased out their mills and they jealously guarded the fishing rights on their trout streams. In 1665, Henry Perin was assessed for hearth tax and was charged for being in possession of eight. There were only seventy-six in the whole of Old Alresford!¹⁰

The best description of this seventeenth-century 'Perin' would probably be that he was a country squire, a gentleman with a small estate. The pew reserved for him and his family at St Mary's in Old Alresford would signify the indissoluble union between his involvement with the administration of his parish and the support for his church. He also would have sat on the bench at the county quarter sessions, sitting in judgement as a magistrate over those who had poached game or fish on his estate or on the land of others like him.¹¹

This Henry Perin, who died in 1672, was buried in the first of a line of five above-ground tomb chests in the Old Alresford churchyard. He was the founder of The 'Perins of The Weir House' dynasty. The body of Elizabeth Perin (née Page) also lies in a tomb chest in the same churchyard. Fittingly, it is next to that of her husband. Henry and Elizabeth may have produced other offspring but we only know of two sons, Henry, who was born in 1626 and Christopher who followed him into the world five years later.

The inscriptions on all of the 'Perin' tomb chests are illegible today but that of Henry (senior) was transcribed by William Hamper in 1807. Underneath the Perin coat of arms which consisted of three crescents and a family crest that also contained a crescent were the following words (in Latin):

Here lieth the body of Henry Perin, esq., who lived in the fear of God, and soe dyed the .. Day of March, Anno Dom. 1672, in the 75 yeare of his age.

Of the inscription written on the tomb of Elizabeth, Hamper annotated:

Elizabeth Perin (all but the name is obliterated).¹²

In the sections of the Perin family tree that follow in this article the individuals who owned and/or occupied The Weir House are blocked out in grey, as shown below:

⁶ Raymond Elliott, 'The Water Mills of Alresford', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 15 (New Alresford, 1990).

⁷ William Page, (ed.), *Victoria County History of Hampshire*, Volume 3 (London, 1908), 305.

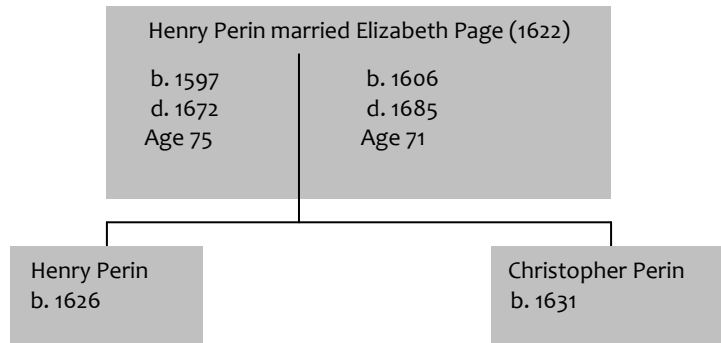
⁸ HRO, 1626P/18, The Will of John Willis.

⁹ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 2 (New Alresford, 1975), 32.

¹⁰ *Hampshire Treasures*, op cit.

¹¹ A.N. Wilson, *The Victorians* (London, 2002), 586.

¹² *The Gentleman's Magazine Library*, op cit, 33.



Family tree 1

Founder of the Free School

The Henry Perin who was born in 1626 became a medical doctor. He matriculated from Trinity College, Oxford on 9 November 1650. He graduated BA on 26 February 1652 and MA on 21 June 1654.¹³ As the elder surviving son, he inherited The Weir House when his father died in 1672. It is thought that he never married because no such record can be found and he certainly produced no heir because The Weir House Estate became the property of his brother, Christopher, when he died in 1697 after a tenure lasting twenty-five years.

In his will, this Henry left a capital sum of £500 to establish a Free School and fifty-one acres of rentable arable land to enable it to be run and maintained.¹⁴ It was specified that the institution would provide an education for six poor men's sons from New Alresford, five from Old Alresford and four each from Bishop's Sutton and Cheriton. Christopher was the executor of his brother's will and the school was founded and built the following year. The School and the Master's House were erected on the site of what now contains three buildings, 56, 58 & 60, West Street, in New Alresford. The new buildings in 1698 replaced a property that had been known as The Corner Place before it was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1689.¹⁵ The inscription in the stone work above the door of the entrance to the free school used to read:

SCHOLA Ex Fundatione HENRICI Perin, Armig,
Num'is ab eo legatis Extracta.
A.D. 1698.¹⁶

Today in the twenty-first century, secondary education for eleven to sixteen year olds from New Alresford and its surrounding villages is still provided at a school that bears his name. Dr Henry Perin's generosity was also shown by his substantial contribution to the relief fund after New Alresford's Great Fire of 1689. He also acted as a trustee to the committee set up to provide relief.¹⁷ His body is buried under a slab (not in a tomb chest) in the parish churchyard at Old Alresford. The inscription is now illegible. A translation of the Latin capital letters transcribed by Hamper in 1807 reads as follows:

Here lies buried Henry Perin Esquire, eldest son of Henry, likewise, Esquire,
successful and noted among his peers in the art of healing, undoubtedly

¹³ Oxford University Alumni, 1500-1714.

¹⁴ £500 in 1697 would be worth around £100,000 today, www.bankofengland/inflationcalculator

¹⁵ The Editorial Working Party, 'Two Centuries of going to School in the District', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 3, (New Alresford, 1978/9).

¹⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine Library*, *op cit*, 32.

¹⁷ HRO, 38M70/2, The History of Alresford.

memorable among future generations for his generosity, certainly as founder of the school at Alresford. He died on 10 May 1697 at the age of 71 years.¹⁸

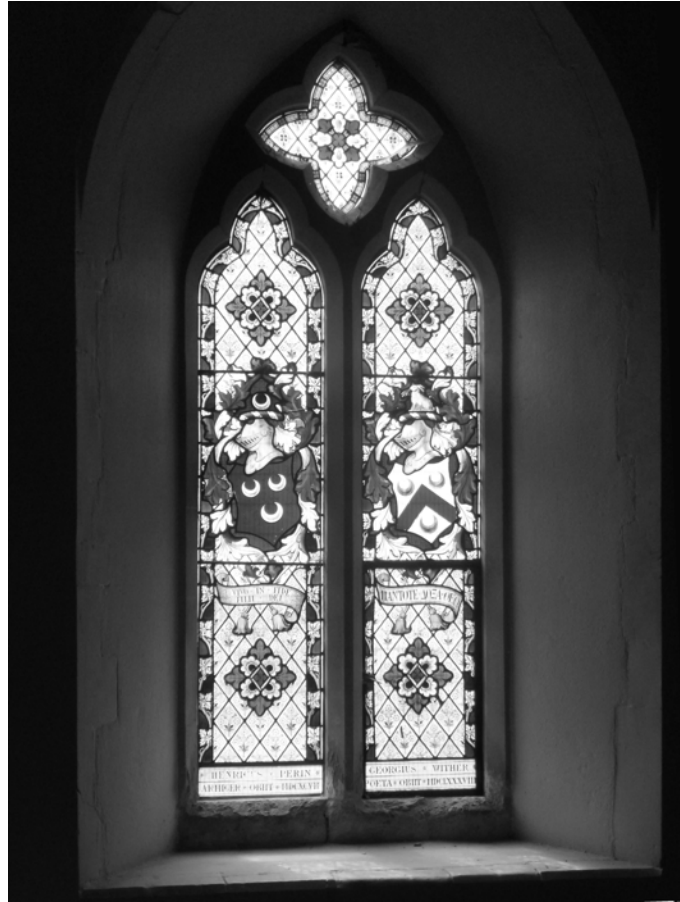


Illustration 2: The stained glass window on the left is dedicated to the memory of Dr Henry Perin and dated 1697. It is situated in the south transept of the Old Alresford Church and shows the family coat of arms with the three crescents and the crest that also contains a crescent. According to the church brochure, the window on the right is in memory of George Wither, a poet, whose family was related to the ‘Perins’ by marriage; hence the similar coat of arms. It is dated 1688. Photograph by Glenn Gilbertson in 2013.

Generation two

Although Dr Henry Perin was one of the family’s second generation owners of The Weir House, he had no heirs and it was left to his brother, Christopher, to provide for the succession. Christopher Perin was in ownership of the property for only eight years, from 1697 when he inherited, until 1705, when he died. However, the family estate was obviously important to him. The inscription on his above-ground tomb chest, placed next to that of his mother, starts:

Here lieth Christopher Perin, late of Ware House, second son and heir of Henry Perin, sen., sometime of the same place in this parish, esq.¹⁹

By his second wife, Sarah, Christopher had sired eight children.²⁰ However, only three daughters survived when he died in 1705. The remainder of the inscription on his (the third in the line of the ‘Perin’ tomb chests), reads:

¹⁸ *Gentleman’s Magazine Library*, op cit, 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Christopher Perin first married Elizabeth Knight in 1759 at Old Alresford Church. There were no children.

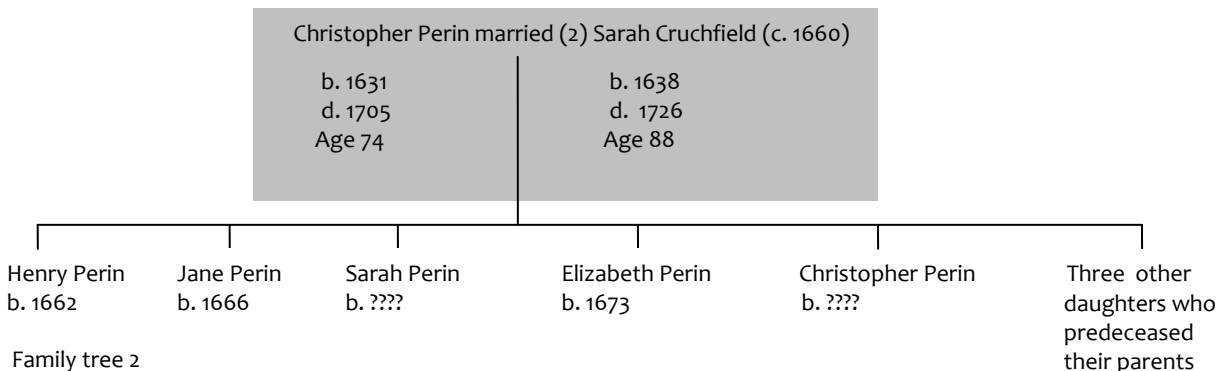
And of his second wife, Sarah, daughter of Matthew Cruchfield, late citizen of London. By her he had two sons, Henry and Christopher, and six daughters, three of which survive him. He lived beloved by his friends, and honored by his wife and children. An indulgent husband, a tender father and a pious Christian. He died 27 Nov 1705, aged 74.²¹

On the eastern wall of the south transept inside the church today there still stands a clearly legible memorial to Christopher and his wife. This tribute states:

In memory of Christopher Perin, gent, who departed this life on 27 Nov 1705, aged 74. And also of Sarah, the wife of Christopher Perin, who departed this life, 30 May 1726, in the 88th year of her age. Interred in a vault near this place.

The bodies of husband and second wife, therefore, even though they died twenty-one years apart, lie together in the same tomb chest. This, and the memorial inside the church, was probably organised by the eldest of their three surviving daughters who was born in 1666.

Jane Perin, who married Reginald Edwards, a gentleman from London, and died in 1728, occupies the fourth in the line of the tomb chests together with her husband and her son Christopher Perin Edwards, who died aged twenty-two in 1720.²²



From generation two to four, skipping three

The two biggest tragedies of Christopher Perin’s life (1631-1705) were probably the death of his son Henry in 1694, at the age of thirty-two, and that of his infant grandson of the same name shortly afterwards. The Henry Perin who was born in 1662 followed the examples of his great-grandfather and his uncle. He went up to Oxford University and he qualified as a physician. He matriculated from Trinity College on 19 July 1679 aged seventeen. He graduated BA in 1683 and MA on 13 February 1686 and then went on to be awarded a Baccalaureate in Medicine (MB) from Hart Hall in 1689.²³

This Henry married Dorothy Welstead, the daughter and sole heiress of Robert Welstead from London, and they produced at least two children before Henry died, still a young man. This Dr Perin must also have been closely associated with Winchester Cathedral. Like his great-grandfather, his remains lie underneath the North Aisle of the Retro-Choir. Unlike his great-grandfather’s gravestone, however, the lettering, the three- crescent coat of arms and family crest are still clearly visible today.

²¹ *Gentleman’s Magazine Library, op cit*, 33.

²² A memorial inside the south transept of Old Alresford Church indicates that all three are buried in the fourth tomb-chest.

²³ Oxford University Alumni, 1500-1714.

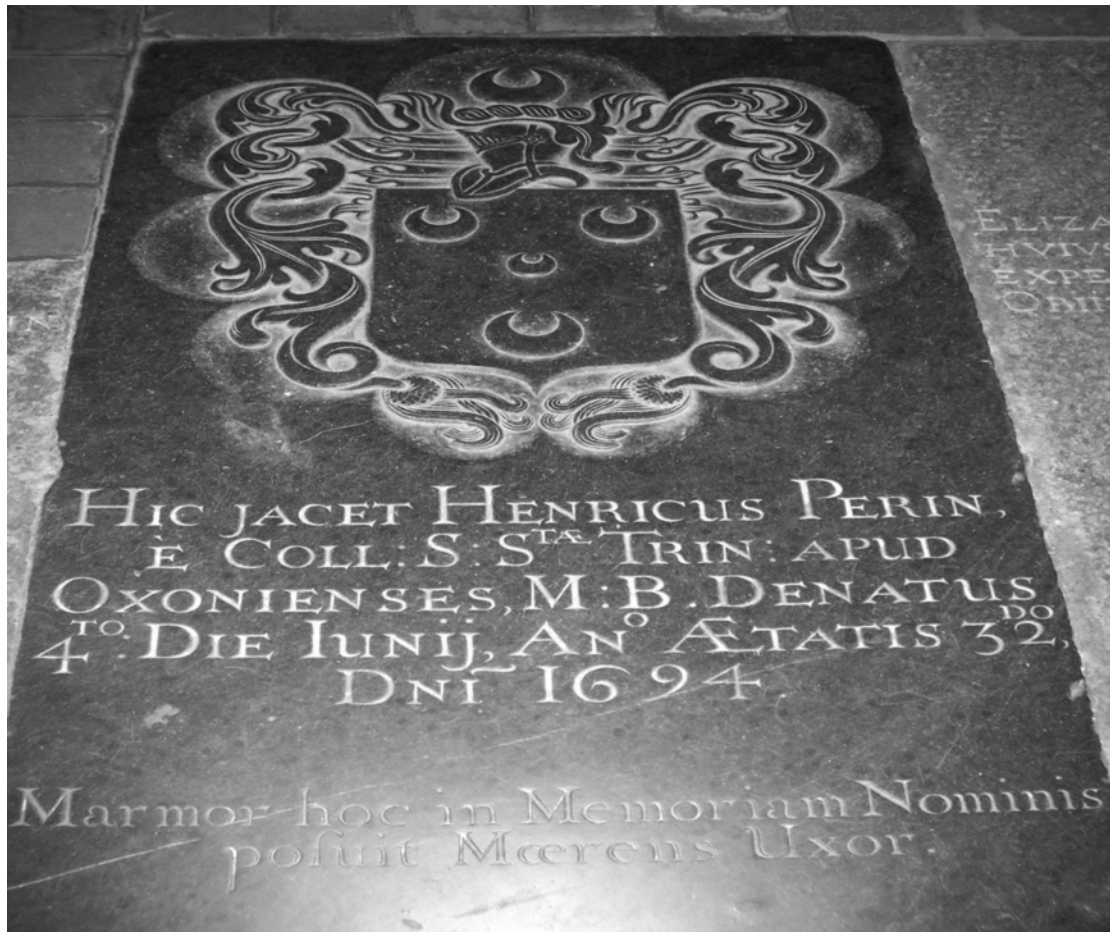


Illustration 3: The gravestone of Dr Henry Perin who died in 1694 at the age of thirty-two. The last sentence indicates that his wife, Dorothy, provided the marble gravestone.²⁴ Photograph by the author in 2013.

Next to this stone to the south is a much smaller one, dedicated to his infant son inscribed as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">Henricus Perin Filius Annum et vii hedomades Natus 19 January 1694/5²⁵</p>
--

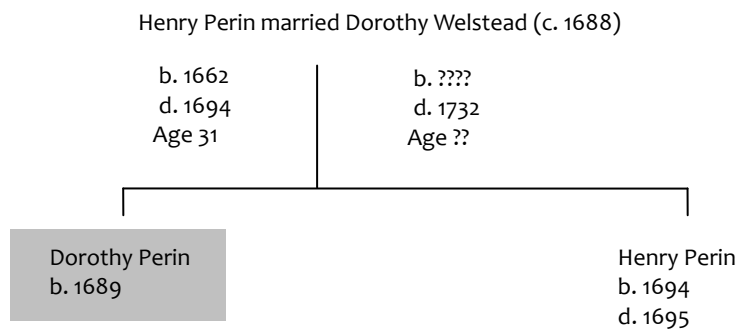
Christopher Perin's grandson, who must have been the source of hope of a male heir to his grandfather, having been born only months before his father died on 4 June 1694, survived a mere one year and seven weeks before also departing this life on 19 January 1695 (according to a translation of the Latin words above).

When Christopher Perin died in 1705, he was survived by three daughters, Jane, Sarah and Elizabeth, and one granddaughter, Dorothy, who was sixteen years old, having been born to Henry and Dorothy (née Welstead) in 1689. Christopher chose to leave The Weir House Estate in his will to his wife Sarah for the duration of her lifetime and after she

²⁴ Dorothy Welstead married four times: (1) Henry Perin, who died in 1694; (2) Richard Wilson, died 1697; (3) Edward Alpe, died 1700. All three were physicians. In 1701, she married (4) Hunt Wither, who went on to become a Brigadier-General. She had one surviving child each through husbands (1) and (4).

²⁵ Prior to 1752, each year officially began on 25 March, although 1 January was commonly regarded as the first day of the year. 1694/5 indicates an awareness of both conventions.

had died, he decreed that it was to pass to his granddaughter.²⁶



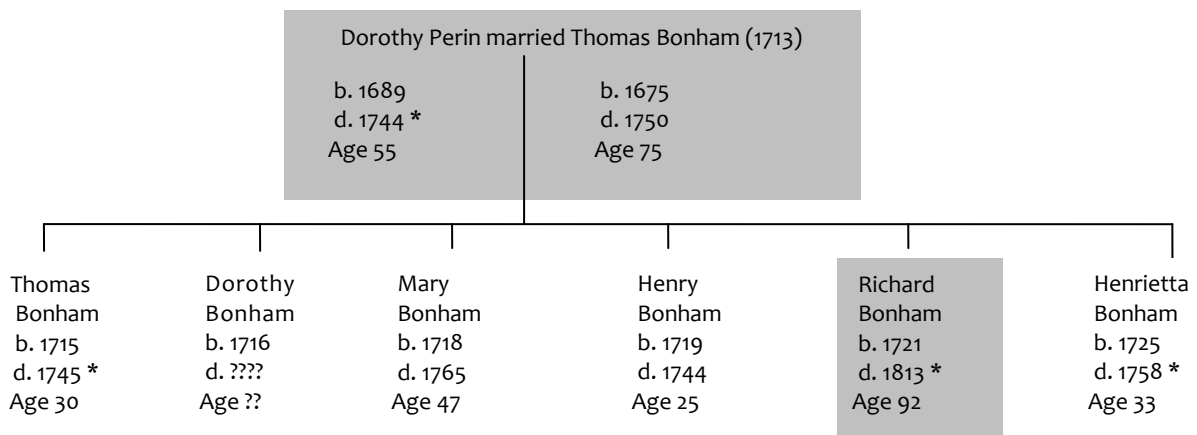
Family tree 3

Generations four and five

In 1713 and at the age of twenty-four, Dorothy Perin married Thomas Bonham who originated from Warnford in the Meon Valley. After the death of her grandmother, she and her husband came to live at The Weir House in 1726.²⁷ It was Thomas Bonham, however, who became the legal owner. Before the 1882 Married Women’s Property Act, everything inherited by a married woman became the property of her husband. It was, therefore, Thomas, and not his wife, who was accused at Court in 1731 for failing to repair one of the public footpaths and two of the bridges over the river that were situated on his estate.²⁸

The couple had six children, three sons and three daughters. It was their third son, Richard Bonham, born in 1721, who was destined to inherit The Weir House Estate and to live there for sixty-three years from 1750-1813. He died at the grand old age of ninety-two. The bodies of Dorothy Bonham (née Perin) and her eldest son Thomas were buried in the fifth of the line of the Perin family tomb chests in parish churchyard at Old Alresford. The inscription transcribed by William Hamper in 1807 recorded:

In memory of Dorothy, late wife of Thomas Bonham, gent, and daughter of Henry Perin M.D., who died on 9 June 1744, aged 55. And also of Thomas Bonham, son of the said Thomas and Dorothy, who died on 20 July 1745.



Family tree 4

²⁶ HRO, 23M73/Z2, photocopy of the will of Christopher Perin of Old Alresford, gent, 30 Jul 1705, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 31 Dec 1705.

²⁷ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 2 (New Alresford, 1975), 33.

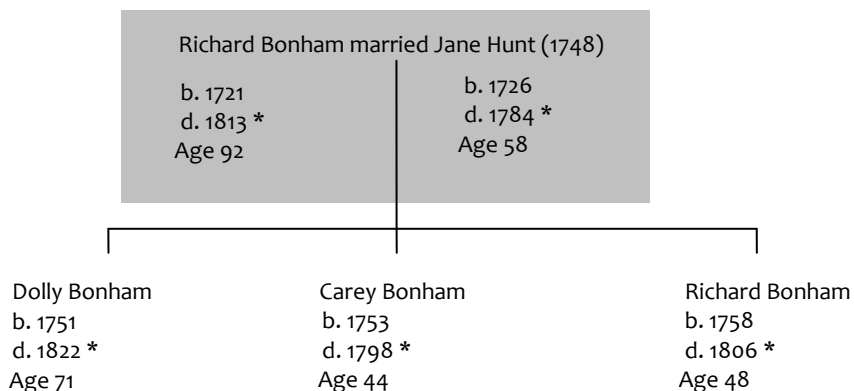
²⁸ *Ibid.*, Booklet 10, 29.



Illustration 4: The five Perin family tomb chests all in a line in the Old Alresford churchyard. Tomb 1, which contains the remains of Henry Perin, the first of the family to live in The Weir House, is nearest to the camera and the outline of the family crest can just be seen in this photograph. The body of his wife Elizabeth (née Page) lies in the tomb next to him. Christopher Perin and his second wife, Sarah (née Cruchfield), are in the vault in the middle. Jane Edwards (née Perin) together with her husband, Reginald, and son, Christopher Perin Edwards, occupy number 4. The bodies of Dorothy Bonham (née Perin) and her eldest son, Thomas Bonham, were interred in tomb 5, the furthest from the camera. Photograph by the author in 2013.

From the generation five to seven, skipping six

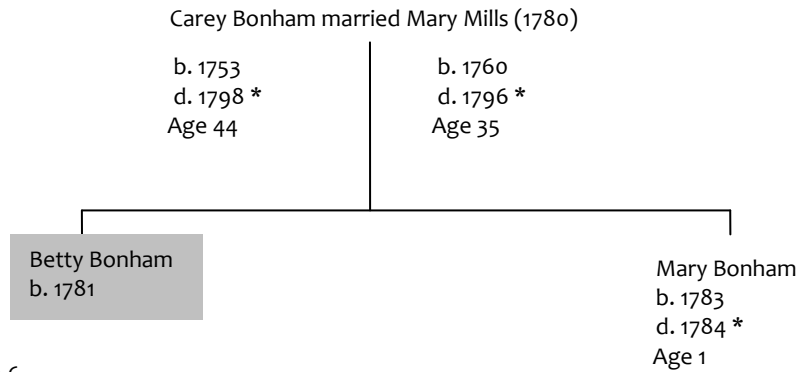
Richard Bonham, a gentleman, married a twenty-two year old named Jane Hunt from Salisbury in 1748. They produced three children, first a girl whom they called Dolly and afterwards two boys, Carey and Richard (junior). The most interesting of these siblings would appear to be Dolly Bonham. She married beneath her class to a local flour miller, Thomas Hall, a tenant of her father, and produced five children, two boys and three girls. In later life as a widow, she became a woman of property, owning at least two of the largest houses on Broad Street.²⁹ The line of inheritance, however, from the fifth to the sixth generations of ‘Perins’ ran through the elder son, Carey.



Family tree 5

²⁹ Sanderson, *op cit.*, Booklet 3, 23.

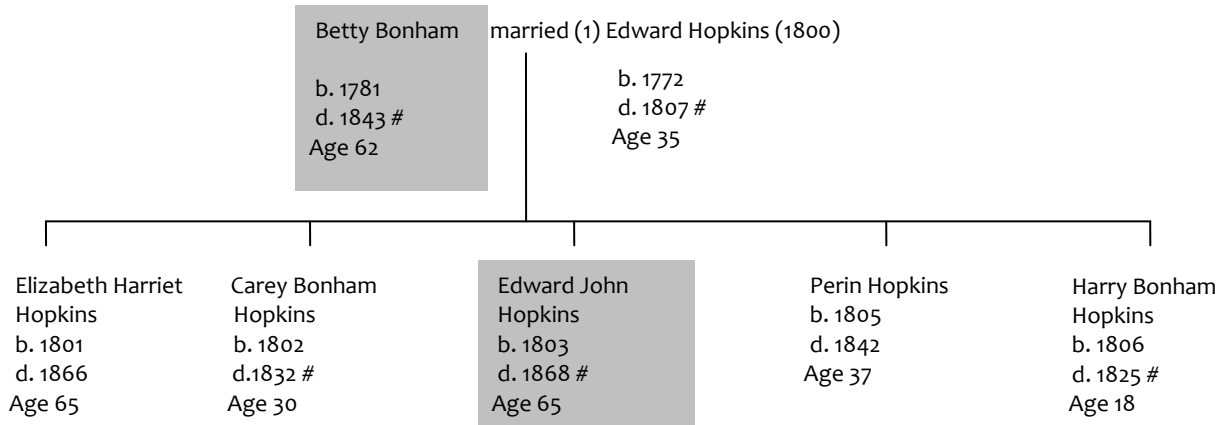
Carey Bonham died in 1798 at the age of forty-four, well before his father and so it is thought unlikely that he ever lived at The Weir House except as a child. He married Mary, the daughter of Joseph Mills from Bramdean in 1780 and they had two daughters, Betty, the elder born in 1781, and Mary who died three years later, soon after being born. With Carey's younger brother Richard also predeceasing his father of the same name in 1806, on the death of Richard Bonham (senior) in 1813, it was his granddaughter, Betty Bonham, who inherited The Weir House Estate.



Family tree 6

Generations seven and eight

Betty Bonham married Edward Hopkins at around the beginning of the new century. After a chorister's education at Winchester College, 1780-86,³⁰ Edward became a New Alresford solicitor, or attorney, who practiced from his home at 5, East Street. He died, aged only thirty-five in 1807, leaving behind a widow and five young children.³¹



Family tree 7

Of the four Hopkins brothers only Edward John lived into old age. He erected a memorial in Old Alresford Church for his brother Perin, a soldier in the service of the East India Company, who was killed in the First Afghan War of 1841-42. Perin Hopkins was one of the 16,000 invading British troops who had been ordered to retreat to Jallalabad in the winter of 1842 and were then forced to make their last stand against a horde of Afghan guerrillas in the Khyber Pass. There was only one survivor, released by the Afghans to carry news of the massacre back to the British in India.³² In 1820 Edward's sister, Elizabeth Harriet, married a clergyman, the Reverend Charles Henry Grove, who had a living in Dorset. She had six daughters but they were not in the line of succession as long as any of the brothers were alive.

³⁰ Suzanne Foster, Winchester College, Archivist, 15 April 2013.

³¹ Sanderson, *op cit.*, Booklet 9 (New Alresford, 1983), 17.

³² Wilson, *op cit.*, 124.

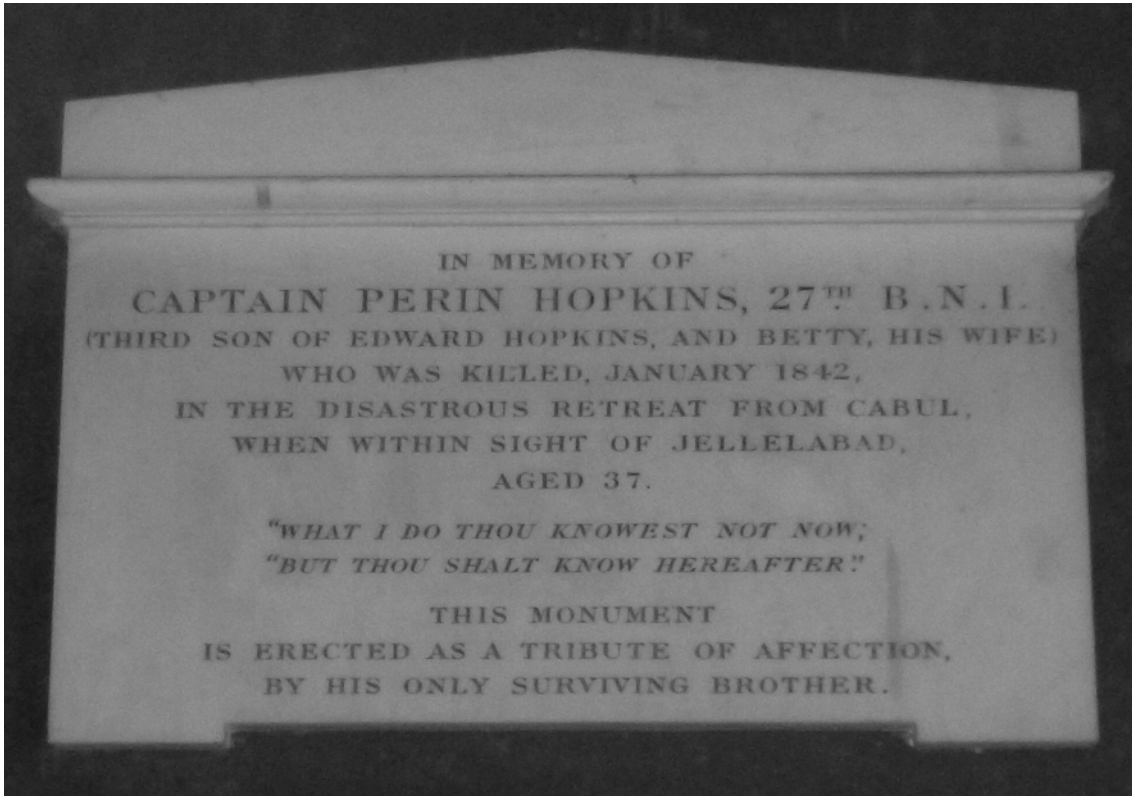


Illustration 5: The memorial in Old Alresford Church erected by Edward John Hopkins in memory of his brother, Captain Perin Hopkins, who was killed, aged 37, not far from Jallalabad (note spelling on the monument) in 1842. Photograph by Glenn Gilbertson in 2013.

The line of succession, however, changed on 17 May 1813 when the Widow Hopkins (née Betty Bonham) got married for a second time. She wed another solicitor who had probably also been educated at Winchester College.³³ His name was John Dunn and he had been a friend and the business partner of her first husband. Before Hopkins' death, their legal firm had been called Hopkins & Dunn.³⁴ 1813 was also a memorable year for Dunn in ways other than marriage.

During the Napoleonic Wars, New Alresford was a parole town – responsible for the billeting of captured French officers. As a gentleman officer's word was regarded as his bond in those days, these prisoners were free to roam for up to a mile from the town centre if they were prepared to sign one promise not to try to escape and another to obey the evening curfew bell at nine o'clock. The five French graves opposite the west door entrance to St John's Church bear testimony to their presence at this time. For the previous three years (1810-12) Dunn, as an attorney, had been the local man responsible for them.

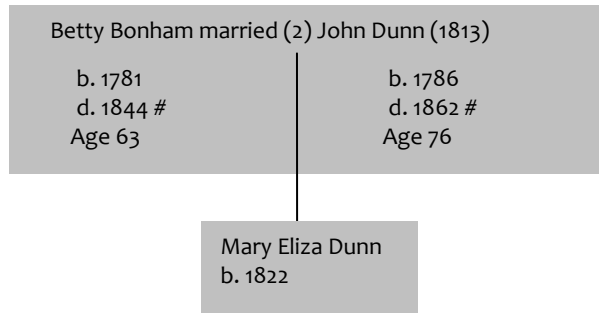
Off the back of the successful fulfilment of his prisoner of war duties, in 1813 John Dunn was appointed a member of the Borough Corporation the Bailiff and Burgesses of New Alresford. He served the corporation until his death in 1862 and was responsible, along with Edward Hunt (who owned the local brewery), for landscaping and planting the trees along (what is now called) The Avenue during the period 1837-44. He was internally elected by his burgess colleagues to act as the town bailiff on several occasions.

³³ Suzanne Foster, Winchester College, Archivist, 15 April 2013. A boy named Dunn (but with an unknown Christian name) attended Winchester College as a commoner (a fee payer), 1798-1801.

³⁴ The 1894 pedigree tree of the Bonham family.

³⁵ HRO, 7M50/A1, New Alresford Borough: Court Book of the Bailiff and Burgesses of the Borough of New Alresford, 1615-1890.

Also in 1813, fifth generation ‘Perin’ Richard Bonham died and his estate passed to seventh generation Betty Bonham. Through his new wife, therefore, John Dunn automatically inherited The Weir House Estate. John Dunn and Betty, she at the relatively advanced child-bearing age of forty-one, produced one baby daughter, Mary Eliza Dunn, in 1822.



Family tree 8

In 1833, Dunn was involved in another piece of local history when four small boys found more than 6,000 coins on farm land that he owned at Beauworth. The coins were silver pennies dating back to the reigns of William I & II. They were declared as treasure trove and today they are on display in the British Museum, referred to as the Beauworth Hoard.³⁶

Although he paid the rates on The Weir House and on the rest of the buildings on the estate, starting in 1814 and not finishing until 1862, Dunn does not appear to have lived there.³⁷ He formed a very close business and personal relationship with his stepson, Edward John Hopkins, who apparently occupied the property with the permission of his stepfather. Dunn seems to have preferred the other residence he inherited on marriage, that of 5 East Street; it was next to his legal offices at number seven.³⁸

It is probable that Edward John started his own legal career as a clerk in his stepfather’s office and eventually the two of them went into partnership as the legal firm of Dunn & Hopkins (a reversal of the two surnames from the time when Hopkins’ father had been a partner). They were very successful handling, inter alia, the local legal affairs of Lord Tichborne and his family in the 1840s and 50s.

No doubt introduced by his stepfather, Edward John Hopkins also became a member of the Corporation of the Bailiff and Burgesses of the Borough of New Alresford. He was the town Bailiff in 1835, the year that the sheep fairs were moved out of the town centre and on to the first of the Fair Fields, off Sun Lane.³⁹ Like Dunn, Hopkins also served the town in this burgess capacity until he died.

In the early 1830s, Hopkins married Eliza Susanna, the daughter of Admiral John Giffard, who had been a defender of the island at the time of the raising of the siege of Gibraltar in 1782. However, there were no children from this union.⁴⁰ His mother, Betty Bonham, died aged sixty-three, in 1844, predeceasing her second husband. John Dunn,

³⁶ Robert Mudie, *Mudie’s Hampshire*, Volume 1 (Winchester, 1838), 118. The lead bucket in which the coins were found is on display in the Winchester City Museum.

³⁷ HRO, 43M74/PO2, Old Alresford Parish, Rate Book, 1800-17.

³⁸ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 1 (New Alresford, 1974), 63-4.

³⁹ HRO, 7M50/A1, New Alresford Borough: Court Book of the Bailiff and Burgesses of the Borough of New Alresford, 1615-1890.

⁴⁰ The 1894 pedigree tree of the Bonham family.

when he died in 1862, seems to have left his fairly considerable estate to his stepson, recognising that Hopkins had no heirs, and with the proviso that Edward John passed it on to Dunn's daughter (Mary Eliza) when he in turn died.⁴¹

Edward John Hopkins was definitely the recognised occupant of The Weir House well before Dunn died, even though he did not own it and even though he paid rates on another residence in New Alresford at 29-31, Broad Street (The Lawns). In 1859, Hopkins came to a private agreement with the owner of The Arlebury Park Estate, Francis Marx, about the boundary of the fishing rights between their two estates. A dressed stone was cast with their initials FM & EH, the year of their agreement was added underneath and then it was placed on the riverbank of the Alre.⁴²



Illustration 6: The Boundary Stone that showed where the fishing rights down stream of The Weir House Estate ended and where those of The Arlebury Park Estate began. It is now situated behind the first set of seats that can be found as one proceeds along the river footpath from The Dean towards The Fulling Mill; look through the fence and it can clearly be seen. The fishing rights boundary between the two estates in the nineteenth century was at The Dean.⁴³ The stone was originally placed on the site of what is now a house named 'Waters' Edge'.⁴⁴ Photograph by the author in 2013.

After he had retired in 1866, Hopkins became involved with the notorious Tichborne Claimant, who was the defendant in the longest criminal trial of the nineteenth century. Roger Tichborne, the heir to the landed family estate, was born in Paris in 1829 and after a short and unhappy life was presumed lost at sea off the coast of South America in 1854. His mother, however, never gave up hope of seeing him again and for many years she inserted advertisements in newspapers all over the world offering a reward for information leading to the discovery of her son.

⁴¹ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 10 (New Alresford, 1984), 15.

⁴² Jack Orr, 'Fishing on the Arle', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 3, (New Alresford, 1978).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ HRO, 3M/69/2, The Weir House, Public Auction Catalogue, 10 November 1950. The placement of the stone is shown on the map of the estate.

Eventually in 1866, news came through from Australia that her son had been found. When he arrived in England at Christmas 1867, that individual turned out to be not at all like the slim and slender youth that had disappeared but a fat man in middle age. In early 1868 and despite his appearance, the mother 'recognised her son' who became known as the Tichborne Claimant because he not only claimed to be Sir Roger Tichborne but also his inheritance of the vast family fortune.

Like many in Alresford, Hopkins, who had been the Tichborne family's solicitor and had known Roger as a youth, was supportive of the man who had appeared from Australia. It was the Tichborne family (with the exception of the mother) who, having settled on a new heir, denounced him as an imposter. In February 1868, Hopkins not only entertained the Claimant to dinner at his home, he also invited him 'to fish the trout streams in the weir gardens of his house, a privilege that he had previously denied his closest friends'.⁴⁵



Edward John Hopkins

Picture from Hampshire Museums Service *Tichborne Claimant Collection*

Perhaps in return for being allowed to occupy the estate that she had inherited from her grandfather, Edward John Hopkins honoured his mother after she died in 1844. He commissioned a stained glass window that was installed in Old Alresford Church. The inscription that he placed alongside the window has today disappeared. However, when the inscriptions inside the church were all recorded in the 1980s, it read, 'In memory of Betty Bonham, wife and widow of Edward Hopkins and afterwards wife of John Dunn'.

⁴⁵ Douglas Woodruff, *The Tichborne Claimant, A Victorian Mystery* (New York, 1957), 68.

A civil law suit, in which The Claimant tried to gain a right to the Tichborne fortunes, lasted 103 days. He lost and there then followed the longest nineteenth-century criminal action in which he was tried for perjury. It took ten months. In 1874, The Claimant was found guilty and sentenced to fourteen years penal servitude.



Illustration 7: Stained glass window erected in Old Alresford Church by Edward John Hopkins in honour of his mother, Betty Bonham. Photograph by the author.

Despite the memorials to his family that he commissioned in the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Old Alresford, the body of Edward John Hopkins was interred with that of his wife in the New Alresford churchyard. The same was true of the rest of the Hopkins' and the Dunns' who died locally, including Betty Bonham/Hopkins/Dunn who linked them all together. They are shown in the family trees in this article with the symbol (#).

Of the other 'Perins' with the surname Bonham that feature, ten of them (shown with a symbol (*)) are buried in the Old Alresford churchyard.⁴⁶ The four odd ones out include the Thomas Bonham who married Dorothy Perin in 1713. His resting place is a tomb chest close by the entrance door to the Church of Our Lady at Warnford.⁴⁷ It is not known where his other three children, Dorothy, Mary and Henry are buried.

Generation nine

Edward John Hopkins died suddenly in October 1868 and this was a disaster for the Tichborne Claimant as he was deprived of the one individual amongst his supporters who, as a lawyer, would have had real credibility in court.⁴⁸ Hopkins death may also have meant that The Weir House stood vacant for a good number of years, or that it may have been rented out to a non-family tenant. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, it could have been treated as a second or a 'holiday' home.

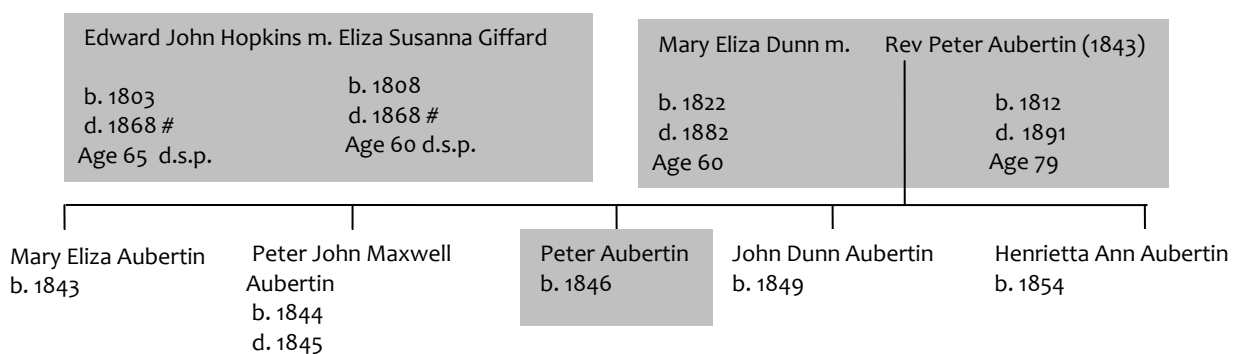
⁴⁶ Because of stone clearances to the edge in the churchyards of both Old and New Alresford, it is not possible to locate any of the graves of the Bonhams, the Hopkins', or the Dunns today.

⁴⁷ The 1894 pedigree tree of the Bonham family.

⁴⁸ Woodruff, *op cit.*, 127.

Mary Eliza Dunn married the Reverend Peter Aubertin in 1842. They had met during the time that Peter was serving as the curate to St John's in New Alresford during the early 1840s.⁴⁹ He went on to become a fully fledged parson at Froyle in Hampshire and then at Chipstead in Surrey before he died in 1891. Co-incidentally, the surname Aubertin, like that of Perin, also has French origins. The Aubertins were of Huguenot descent. When Mary Eliza inherited from her father, via Edward Hopkins in 1868, the estate automatically reverted to her husband.

Mary Eliza Aubertin gave birth to five children, two girls and three boys. The censuses of these years tell us that the couple and their family lived in the vicarages associated with the two parishes that the Reverend served. Perhaps they took regular sojourns to Old Alresford from 1868 onwards until 1882 when Mary Eliza died. It was to be her elder surviving son, Peter, who inherited The Weir House Estate in 1891 upon the death of his parson father at the age of seventy-nine.



Family tree 9

Generation ten

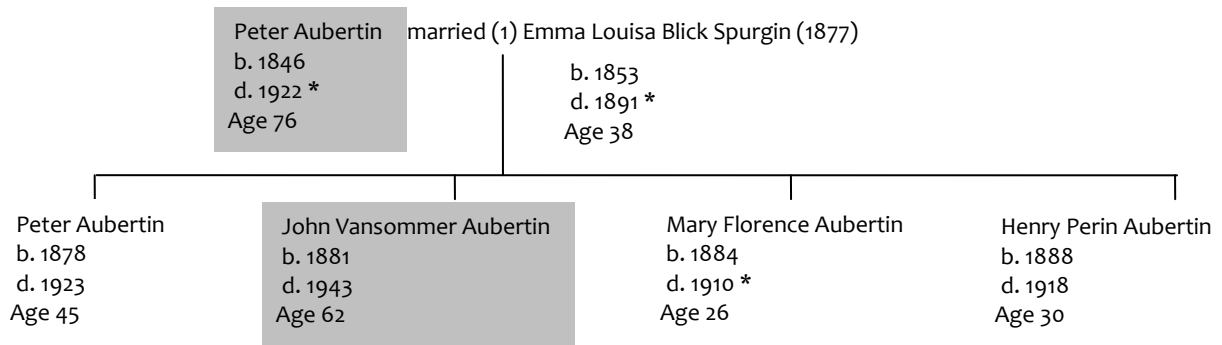
The Peter Aubertin, who was born in 1846, joined The Army and became a career officer. By contrast, his younger brother, John Dunn Aubertin, joined the Royal Navy, advancing to the rank of lieutenant before he retired. Peter served with the 2nd Dragoon Guards, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the mid 1880s. He was also a horseman of some repute in his younger days, riding in many races as 'a gentleman rider' (an amateur jockey).

In 1880, inevitably increasing weight told its tale, and Colonel Aubertin - no doubt making up his mind reluctantly to give up race riding - brought a successful career to its close at the Baldoyle meeting with a gallant victory on Irish Paddy. On relinquishing race riding, Colonel Aubertin settled at The Weir House, Alresford, Hampshire, in close proximity to his old friend and rival rider, Arthur Yates, who trained high class horses at Bishops Sutton.⁵⁰

In 1877, Peter Aubertin married his first wife, Emma Louisa. She was the daughter of General Sir John Blick Spurgin, who had been part of the British presence in India during both the Mutiny and the Siege of Lucknow in 1857. The Aubertins had four children before Emma Louisa died in January 1891, aged only thirty-eight. At the time of her death and at the 1891 census the family was living at South Hall in Preston Candover.

⁴⁹ HRO, 21M65/E6/13/312, Appointment of Reverend Peter Aubertin to be a curate.

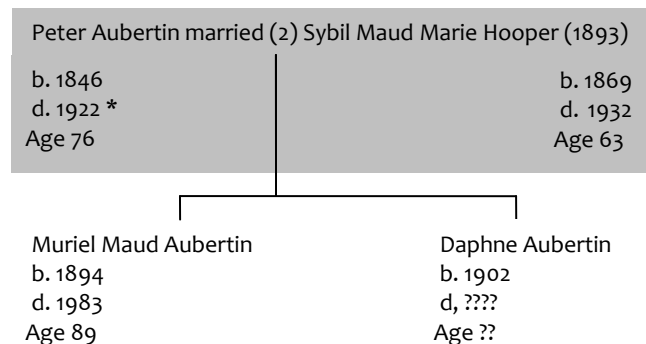
⁵⁰ John Maunsell Richardson, *Gentlemen Riders* (London, 1909), 393. Baldoyle is on the coast north of Dublin.



Family tree 10

It was not until towards the end of 1892 that the family moved to Old Alresford. They were waiting for The Weir House to be refurbished. A piece of timber uncovered during a renovation more than a century later indicated that significant work was being done on the main house in 1891/2. It had been signed and dated by a group of builders working on the site.⁵¹ Peter Aubertin might have ordered the demolition of much of The Weir House main residence and the rebuilding of something brand new. A forthcoming marriage might have given him a good reason for doing so.

On 25 May 1893, the retired Lieutenant Colonel married for the second time, to the reportedly beautiful Sybil Maud Marie Hooper, who was nearly a quarter of a century younger than her husband. Part of the attraction may have been that they were both extremely interested in horses.⁵² She was the daughter of Edmund Huntley Hooper and Lady Maud Stewart, daughter of the fourth Earl of Castle Stuart. The Hoopers lived at The Langton Estate on the eastern edge of New Alresford where the wedding reception was held in the extensive gardens.⁵³ Aubertin took his young second wife back to The Weir House and by 1902 they had produced two daughters.



Family tree 11

⁵⁰ John Maunsell Richardson, *Gentlemen Riders* (London, 1909), 393. Baldoyle is on the coast north of Dublin.

⁵¹ Interview with current owner of The Weir House, Janette Hollingbery, 4 March 2013.

⁵² HRO, 17M48/467, *The Wood Family Album, 1898-1900*, features several photographs of Sybil Aubertin carriage driving at local events.

⁵³ Isabel Sanderson, *Dwellings in Alresford*, Booklet 10 (New Alresford, 1984), 32.

Generation eleven

By the time that Lieutenant Colonel Peter Aubertin's will had been proven in 1923, after he had died the previous year at the age of seventy-six, only one of the four offspring from his first marriage was still alive. The eldest, also named Peter Aubertin, died shortly after his father in 1923. Mary Florence passed away in 1910 at the age of twenty-six and Henry Perin Aubertin (whose name provided the author of this article with the clue that 'The Perins of The Weir House' dynasty went back many generations) perished in a mental institution in British Columbia, Canada in 1918. Of the Aubertins, only the Lieutenant Colonel, his first wife Emma Louisa and his eldest daughter Mary Florence are buried in the Old Alresford churchyard and none of others are in New Alresford.

The reportedly glamorous Sybil Aubertin died in Wiltshire in 1932 at the age of sixty-three. Muriel Aubertin married into the Palmer family and lived until she was eighty-nine. She died in 1983, also in Wiltshire. At the age of forty-four in 1946, her sister Daphne, a spinster, boarded a boat bound for a new life in post-war Singapore. On the ship's manifest, her occupation was listed as that of a family nurse.

As a second son and following the military tradition of his family, John Vansommer Aubertin joined the navy, a section of the Royal Marines. He cannot have expected to, or have planned to, inherit and he was of the first 'Perin' generation to be liable for death duties. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he put The Weir House Estate up for sale in 1923.

This then consisted of not only the main house and cottage, but also The Shrubbery (now Arle House) with adjoining water cress beds, the Weir Mill (now Arle Mill) with an accompanying cottage called Marchmont, the Fulling Mill straddling the river near where the Old Alresford stream joins the River Alre, Yew Tree Farm in Beauworth and extensive paddocks in Old Alresford together with full fishing rights on all of the branches of the Alre between The Soke and The Dean.

The Weir House had been in 'Perin' hands for so long that no title deeds existed. A fresh arrangement had to be struck with the Ecclesiastical Commission (the house having originally been built on land owned by the Bishop of Winchester). The Commissioners claimed and were granted the ownership of all minerals and mineral substrata lying more than 200 feet below the surface of the site together with the right to mine the same by any means appropriate at the age of discovery.⁵⁴ The estate was sold in two lots at a public auction held on 16 May 1923 at the Swan Hotel.

George Dorey, the sitting tenant, purchased The Shrubbery (now Arle House) with its accompanying watercress beds and land stretching all of the way to The Dean. The rest of the estate was bought by Reginald Basil Astley (1862-1942) who sold it on in 1934 to Sir Francis Oswald Lindley (1872-1950). The last 'Perin', John Aubertin, married Eleanora Kirkwood in 1915 in Chelsea and he died there during 1943, aged sixty-two.

⁵⁴HRO, 3M/69/2, The Weir House, Public Auction Catalogue, 10 November 1950.

Conclusions

In and around twenty-first century Alresford, irrespective of the size of the house and no matter how attractive the location, it is rare to hear of a family owning the same property for more than two generations. Current social and job mobility almost always determine that children and grandchildren do not want to, or just cannot, return to live in the place that they grew up and as a result inherited houses are usually put up for sale.⁵⁵ However, by contrast, in previous centuries it was very common for multiple generations of a family to stay put in the same house, farming the same land and endeavouring to ensure that they passed on an improved estate to their heirs.

‘The Perins of The Weir House’ were, therefore, not unusual. They were typical of the many country squire families who owned small estates from the seventeenth through to the early twentieth centuries. However, as the ‘Perins’ themselves demonstrated, times were changing for the squirarchy from the 1890s onwards. Lowered agricultural rents, lost local political power and status caused by the creation of county councils in 1888 and parish councils in 1895 and the imposition of death duties on inherited wealth in 1894 all contributed to a gradual breakup of this type of family estate.⁵⁶

When not content to be just ‘gentlemen’, the recurring occupational themes that run throughout this narrative are the church, the medical profession, the law and the armed services. The only ‘trade’ that appeared was when Dolly Bonham married her flour miller in 1772. It was towards these professions that the rich pointed their sons during the three centuries that the ‘Perins’ occupied The Weir House. The only common upper class profession missing from their list is that of architect.⁵⁷

The ‘Perins’ were fortunate in that they were comparatively wealthy; many other families lived in abject poverty during these times when organised social welfare was almost negligible. However, even their wealth could not prevent them suffering from the remaining recurring themes of this story – those of high infant mortality and frequent early adult death from incurable diseases such as cholera, diphtheria and tuberculosis.

The improvement in medical science is perhaps one of the greatest unambiguous benefits brought about by man for his kind, but this did not impact on death rates until well after the last ‘Perin’ had left The Weir House. However, not everyone died young in these three centuries. Some, with strong constitutions, broke the trend and lived into an old age that is common today. Most notably amongst the males was Richard Bonham who died in 1813 at the age of ninety-two, and amongst the females, Sarah Perin who passed away in 1726 aged eighty-eight.

The consequence of the high level of mortality was that on three separate occasions in eleven generations, a sole female representative was left to inherit the family estate (Dorothy Perin in 1726, Betty Bonham in 1813 and Mary Eliza Dunn in 1868). This, together with the prior or subsequent marriages of these three women, ensured that the surnames of the owners/occupants of The Weir House changed over three hundred years from Perin to Bonham, to Dunn, to Hopkins and finally to Aubertin. ‘Perin’, however, continued to be used as a Christian name by the family, (Christopher Perin Edwards in generation 4, Perin Hopkins in generation 8 and Henry Perin Aubertin in generation 11).

⁵⁵ Statement by Tony Marshall, New Alresford Estate Agent, in interview with the author, 14 February, 2013.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *op cit.*, 586.

⁵⁷ Lawrence James, *The Middle Class – A History* (London, 2006), 69.

Marriage during these times was essentially about begetting heirs, particularly male heirs. Money and ensuring one's family succession were inseparable during these centuries. For those with property and capital, arranging a marriage was a complicated commercial transaction that involved the gathering of intelligence about likely opportunities and, once a union had been tentatively proposed, hard bargaining for a dowry.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, couples married earlier than they do today, particularly the women.

It was rare for a 'Perin' man to marry an older woman. In all of the examples but one, the 'Perin' women were younger than their husbands at the time of their marriage and by an average of almost eight years. The women got married at an average age of 20.9 years and the men at 28.7. The age range for women on first marriage was sixteen to twenty-four years and for men, twenty-four to thirty-eight. The youngest bride was Elizabeth Page who was just sixteen when she became betrothed to Henry Perin in 1622 and the oldest groom was Thomas Bonham when he married Dorothy Perin at the age of thirty-eight in 1713. The only man to marry an older woman was John Dunn who was twenty-seven when he married thirty-two year old Betty Bonham in 1813. This was, however, Betty's second marriage and she had already given birth to five children.

A summary of the tenures of The Weir House Estate, 1622-1923

Generation of 'Perin'	Name	Start date	Finish date	Tenure (years)	Cumulative (years)
1	Henry Perin (m. Elizabeth Page)	1622	1672	50	50
2	Dr Henry Perin	1672	1697	25	75
2	Christopher Perin	1697	1705	8	83
2	Sarah Perin	1705	1726	21	104
4	Thomas Bonham (m. Dorothy Perin)	1726	1750	24	128
5	Richard Bonham	1750	1813	63	191
7/8	John Dunn (m. Betty Bonham)/E.J. Hopkins	1813	1868	55	246
9	Rev. Peter Aubertin (m. Mary Eliza Dunn)	1868	1891	23	269
10	Lt Col. Peter Aubertin	1891	1922	31	300
11	John Aubertin	1922	1923	1	301

For the sake of completeness, a list of the owner occupiers of The Weir House Estate after the 'Perins' had left is included in the table below:

Number	Name	Start Date	Finish date	Tenure (years)	Cumulative (years)
1	Reginald Basil Astley	1923	1934	11	11
2	Sir Francis & Lady Ethelreda Lindley	1934	1950	16	27
3	Ronald & Dorothy Bailey	1950	1978	28	55
4	Joseph & Wendy Addison	1978	1994	16	71
5	George & Janette Hollingbery	1994	To date	19	90

Only owners 3 and 4 in the above list were related, Joseph Addison inheriting the estate from his uncle and aunt, Ronald & Dorothy Bailey in 1978.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ James, *op cit.*, 122.

⁵⁹ Statement by Tony Marshall, New Alresford Estate Agent, in interview with the author, 14 February, 2013.

2. THE BEAUWORTH HOARD

Introduction

Beauworth (pronounced Bewerth) had a population of 150 in the 1830s.¹ There was no church; it was not then an ecclesiastical parish in its own right. The hamlet and its surrounds formed the south-west corner of the neighbouring parish of Cheriton.² On Sundays, the residents who did wish to worship had to walk or ride the two miles to the Church of St Michael and All Angels. Beauworth did have a village pond close by the road and a Manor House. On land attached to this building, the ruins of an ancient church and the boundaries of its churchyard were visible. It was here that The Beauworth Hoard of eleventh-century coins was found in 1833.

One hundred and eighty years later, Beauworth remains a hamlet with a population much the same size as it was in 1833. Situated six miles east of Winchester, it sits on the Milbarrows Ridge, now in the South Downs National Park.³ Surrounded by farmland, Beauworth has a postage stamp village green and a cluster of picturesque thatched cottages. There is now a parish church dedicated to St James the Great, built in 1838 but not consecrated until 1841.⁴ In 2013, there is no sign of the village pond but the Manor House still exists. However, the ruins of an ancient church and its churchyard, where the hoard was discovered, are not immediately obvious.



Illustration 1: The Manor House and its gardens, near which The Beauworth Hoard was found in 1833. Photograph by the author in 2013.

¹ Robert Mudie, *Mudie's Hampshire*, Volume 1 (Winchester, 1838), 119.

² William Page, (ed.), *Victoria County History of Hampshire*, Vol. 3 (London, 1908), 311-12.

³ Hampshire Country Federation of Women's Institutes, *Hampshire Villages* (Newbury, 2002), 12.

⁴ The Upper Itchen Benefice, www.upperitchen.org.uk

The facts behind the ‘find’

On a Sunday, in the afternoon of 30 June 1833, a group of four boys, all under the age of ten, were playing marbles on a piece of pasture land named Old Lytton, (sometimes known as Church Lytton) attached to the Manor House at Beauworth. One of them noticed a piece of metal sticking out above the surface of the earth in an indented track left by the wheel of a cart.

Stooping to examine it, in the way that small boys do when they think that they are looking at something interesting, he discovered a hole in an enclosed lead bucket into which he thrust his hand and brought out a number of silver objects. His three companions saw what he had done and immediately followed his example, stuffing their pockets with their ‘finds’. They did not think they were of value, believing the objects to be only old buttons. They hid the bucket with most of its contents in an adjoining potato field and took the rest into the centre of their village. They threw some of them into the pond and flung others about the road.

Half a dozen adult villagers who were, as usual on a Sunday afternoon, congregated and chatting in the main street were attracted by the antics of the four boys. The adults present soon realised what the boys had found and hastened to the potato field. As the word spread quickly throughout the village, a mass scramble resulted with most of the residents taking part, all of them seeking a share of this unexpected booty.⁵

In this mass scramble, some of the villagers ended up with more coins than others. In particular, the parents of the boys who had discovered the hoard felt hard done by with the share that they had obtained. On Monday 1 July, they appealed to the owner of the land on which the treasure had been found, a Mr John Dunn of New Alresford.⁶

Dunn, a former public school boy who had been educated at Winchester College,⁷ was a local solicitor. He was a partner in the legal firm of Dunn & Hopkins who handled, inter alia, the affairs of the biggest local land owners, Lord Tichborne and his family. Dunn was the owner of The Weir House Estate in Old Alresford and a member of the Borough Corporation of the Bailiff and Burgesses of New Alresford.⁸ In short, he was part of the local establishment, a country squire, a corporation member and a successful lawyer. Born in 1786, he was forty-seven years of age in 1833.

Dunn duly sent a representative, probably his chief legal clerk, over to Beauworth by horse and trap with instructions to collect all of the coins together and deliver them to his office at what is now number 7, East Street in New Alresford. The majority of the villagers complied with this request, although not quite all. Around 100 of the coins were known to have been sold in Southampton shortly after the ‘find’ but since then no more have ever come onto the numismatist market.⁹ It would appear, therefore, that on that Monday evening, Dunn was in receipt of almost the whole quantity of the coins uncovered.

⁵ Edward Hawkins, *Description of a large collection of coins from the time of William I and II discovered at Beauworth, in Hampshire, together with an attempt at a chronological arrangement of the coins*, *Archaeologia*, Vol. 26, 1835. Hawkins worked for the British Museum.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Suzanne Foster, Winchester College, Archivist, 15 April 2013. A boy named Dunn (but with an unknown Christian name) attended Winchester College as a commoner (a fee payer), 1798-1801.

⁸ Hampshire Record Office (HRO), 7M50/A1, New Alresford Borough: Court Book of the Bailiff and Burgesses of the Borough of New Alresford, 1615-1890.

⁹ Hawkins, *op cit.*

When counted, the ‘find’ turned out to be 6,282 silver coins together with the remains of the lead bucket in which they had been discovered.¹⁰

The bucket measured thirteen inches (32 centimetres) high by nine inches (22 cms) in diameter across the top. It had been so mutilated by the villagers in their eagerness to get at the coins that only parts of the sides and the bottom remained undamaged. It had a small plain semi-circular iron handle but this had no trace of ornament or inscription. According to the account of the villagers, the coins were packed in regular layers but the bucket was not full. Had it been so, it would have contained twice as many items as it did, even if they had been thrown in loosely.¹¹



Illustration 2: The lead container in which The Beauworth Hoard was discovered in 1833. It is on display in the medieval section of the Winchester City Museum. It was originally an enclosed ‘bucket’ that had been sealed. Photograph by the author in 2013.

Most of the coins turned out to be silver pennies and half-pennies (there were no copper coins in the medieval period) minted during the reigns of William the Conqueror (1066-1087) and his son, William II (1087-1100), although there were a small number from the reigns of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) and Harold (January to October 1066).

¹⁰ The British Museum, www.britishmuseum.org

¹¹ Hawkins, *op cit.*

Each of the pennies contained approximately twenty grains of silver and all were in perfect condition, meaning that they had never been in general circulation. The coins must have been transported from the mints that made them directly to the person or persons by whom they were concealed.

They were the products of sixty-two different Norman mints. All of them were based in the most important English towns of the period and identifiable because each of them stamped their coinage each in a different and discernable way. In alphabetical order, these mints started with Bath and finished with York; amongst the others on the list were Chester Colchester, Ilchester and Winchester.



Illustration 3: One of the coins from The Beauworth Hoard. A silver penny minted in Lincoln at some time between 1066 and 1100 in the reigns of William I and William II.

The discovery site

The boys found the box containing the coins on a cart track in the Old Lytton meadow near to a gate leading to two other fields. The remains of the box show that it was the pressure of a cart wheel that forced it open. It is conjecture that it was originally buried eighteen inches (45 centimetres) below the surface. However, it is not conjecture that it was buried in line with a bank forming the boundary of the field and that the occupiers of the land had, from time to time, removed earth from this spot in order to level the approach to the field to make it easier for carts to progress.¹³

It is believed that the coins were found within the boundaries of an old village church graveyard. Tradition has it that this church, or chapel, was demolished in the

¹² Hawkins, *op cit.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

sixteenth century; that religious services were transferred from Beauworth to Cheriton in 1517 and that certain carved stones were removed from the demolished church and inserted in the walls of the Church of St Michael and All Angels.¹⁴ Certainly, there are two stone heads, one either side of the church porch at Cheriton that are out of keeping with the rest of that structure.¹⁵



Illustration 4: The right hand of the two stone heads that are placed either side of the church porch at Cheriton. This head depicts a woman with a veil or a hood descending on each side of her face. Both heads were originally built into the western wall of the Cheriton churchyard and were reputedly transferred from the ancient church at Beauworth in 1517.¹⁶ Photograph by the author in 2013.

Treasure Trove in 1833¹⁷

The concept of treasure trove under common law dates back to the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). In 1833, the term was defined as gold and silver in any form (coin, plate, vessel, utensil or bullion). The item or items had to have been hidden with an intention of it/them being recovered at a later date and to qualify as treasure trove the item/s discovered had to consist of at least 50 per cent gold or silver.

It was the duty of a 'finder' to report a 'find' of possible treasure trove to the local coroner. A 'finder' could be the person or persons making the 'find' or the landowner upon whose land the 'find' was made. Concealing a 'find' was a misdemeanour punishable by a fine or imprisonment. It was the duty of a coroner to convene a jury to determine if a 'find' was treasure trove.

¹⁴ William Page, (ed.), *Victoria County History of Hampshire*, Vol. 3 (London, 1908), 311-12.

¹⁵ Richard Mack, Beauworth 1833 (A note on the great find of pennies at Beauworth, near Cheriton, in 1833), *British Numismatic Journal*, No. 36, 1967.

¹⁶ Brochure, Church of St Michael and All Angels, Cheriton.

¹⁷ Treasure Trove was redefined by the 1996 Treasure Act and the rules that existed in 1833 no longer apply to any 'find' discovered since this statute became law.

If it was so determined by the jury, the items recovered became the property of the Crown. By 1833, it had become customary for the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, acting on behalf of the Crown, to pay the 'finders', who had fully and promptly reported discoveries of treasure trove, the full antiquarian value of the objects uncovered. The items were then kept for the benefit of the nation in a suitable institution, usually a museum. The Beauworth Hoard of coins is lodged with the British Museum in London.

John Dunn was an experienced lawyer who would have known about treasure trove. He did his duty and reported the 'find' to the Hampshire Coroner who, after summoning a jury and listening to their verdict, declared the coins to be the property of the Crown. Dunn received his reward for fully and promptly reporting the discovery.

Dunn distributed the sum of money he received in its entirety, in part to the families of the four boys who made the 'find' and in part to local charities. He also ordered the excavation of the ground for several yards around the discovery site of the lead bucket containing the coins.¹⁸ However, no further 'finds' were uncovered in the ancient churchyard of Beauworth during 1833.

Conclusion

In 1835, Edward Hawkins speculated that perhaps the coins were intended as a royal offering collected for the benefit of an ecclesiastical establishment. Alternatively, he thought that they might have been a portion of some tax or tribute intended for the Royal Treasury.¹⁹ However, in reality we will never know if the coins were being taken to or brought from Winchester or why these Norman coins came to be buried at Beauworth.

¹⁸ Hawkins, *op cit.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Mack, *op cit.*

3. NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN IN OLD ALRESFORD?

Introduction

History, of course, serves as a prelude to myth. When what actually happened, in all its un-simplified and usually un-sensational truth, is forgotten we tend to create myths for ourselves. Sometimes this is because the facts are not exciting enough, or they are not properly understood, or they are uncomfortable to live with. Few Britons, for instance, think of the retreat from Dunkirk in 1940 as the military defeat that it actually was.¹

There is another example on the Old Alresford Parish Council web site. This states simply:

Rumour has it that Sir Francis Lindley the owner of The Weir House on the Abbotstone Road was fishing on The Alre with Neville Chamberlain on the afternoon that the Prime Minister returned from Munich to obtain Hitler's signature.²

This is a myth that has probably been created because, apart from eighteenth-century Admiral Lord Rodney and the nineteenth-century founding of the Mothers Union, there is little of national importance that has happened in Old Alresford. Those responsible for its local history might have felt the need for something to bring its twentieth century history to life. However, whatever the reason for its existence, this myth is definitely not a true reflection of what actually happened on 30 September 1938 when Chamberlain flew home from Munich after his meeting with Adolf Hitler.

In order for a myth to be at all believable, it must contain some elements of the truth and this is no exception. It was true that the two men were of a similar age in 1938; Lindley was sixty-six and Chamberlain sixty-nine. They were both ex-public schoolboys, Chamberlain attended Rugby and Lindley went to Winchester. They were also both Conservatives; Lindley stood unsuccessfully as the Tory candidate at the 1937 bi-election for the Combined English Universities seat. They may, therefore, have had similar values.

It was also true that Chamberlain enjoyed fishing and that he did use a rod and line during his Premiership (1937-1940).³ In Keith Feiling's 1946 biography of him, there are no less than twenty references to the sport.⁴ He took it up in middle age and became something of an expert.⁵ Lindley was a keen angler too; that was one of the reasons that he had purchased The Weir House Estate in 1934 together with its trout streams and fishing rights.⁶

It was similarly true that both men had represented their country at national level. As a diplomat, Lindley had served as the UK Ambassador to Austria, Greece, Portugal and Japan during the 1920s and 30s. Chamberlain, as a politician, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer twice before he became the Prime Minister in 1937. It is probably true that the two men had met each other and definitely true that each of them knew of the existence

¹ James Owen, *Nuremberg, Evil on Trial* (London, 2006), 1.

² Old Alresford Parish Council, 16 March 2013, www.aldalresfordparishcouncil.org.uk/community/thingstodo

³ David Faber, *Munich, The 1938 Appeasement Crisis* (London, 2008), 426.

⁴ Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1946).

⁵ Ian MacCleod, *Neville Chamberlain* (London, 1961), 201.

⁶ Sir Francis Lindley, *A Diplomat Off Duty* (London, 1947).

of other. From the British Embassy in Tokyo in 1932, Lindley had written passionately worded dispatches and telegrams pleading with the British Government, of which Chamberlain was a part, to make friendly rather than threatening overtures to Japan.⁷ That, however, is where the truth ends and the myth begins.

Other facts do not fit the myth. Lindley had retired from the Foreign Office in 1934, at the age of sixty-two. By 1938, therefore, he had been out of the national political and diplomatic scene for more than four years and his experience would have been considerably out of date in the rapidly moving world scene of the late 1930s. He was a county JP at the time of the Munich Agreement but that was about the limit of his public service. It is unlikely that his advice and guidance would have been sought by a busy Premier. And, of course, 30 September 1938 is one of the most heavily documented and analysed days of the twentieth century.

Neville Chamberlain's day, 30 September 1938

Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain were the parties to The Munich Agreement that had been signed late the previous evening, Thursday, at the Führerbau, the local Nazi headquarters. Under its terms, Hitler's armies would begin to occupy 'the predominantly German part' of Czechoslovakia on 1 October. The Czechs, who were not consulted, were required to evacuate the territory specified 'without destroying any existing installations'. It could be argued that they had been 'sold down the river' by the participating nations in the interests of appeasing the Nazis.

Before leaving the Führerbau, Chamberlain had asked Hitler if they might meet the following morning, Friday, for a private talk. Hitler apparently had 'jumped at the idea'. Therefore, on the morning of 30 September, Chamberlain awoke early after just a few hours sleep, and summoned one of his exhausted officials, William Strang, to his room. The Premier asked Strang to draft a short statement on the future of Anglo-German relations while he was dressing and having breakfast.

Three paragraphs were drafted for Chamberlain to approve. The resulting document was to become one of the most infamous pieces of paper produced in the twentieth century. Two copies were typed.

We, the German Führer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

⁷ R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement* (London, 1993), 39.

After breakfast, Chamberlain was taken by car to Hitler's private apartment at Prinzregentenplatz and most of the morning was spent there before he and Hitler agreed to sign the two copies of the document that Strang had typed. Each man kept one of them.



Illustration 1: Chamberlain and Hitler meet in the Führer's Munich apartment on the morning of 30 September 1938. The man on the right is Paul Schmidt, Hitler's interpreter. On the table in the foreground is Richard Wagner's death mask.

On the way back to his hotel Chamberlain was taken on a sight-seeing tour of Munich and it was mid-afternoon before the Premier reached the airport to fly back to Britain.⁸ His plane landed at Heston (near what is now Heathrow) at 1740 hours. There were huge crowds to meet him drawn by the newspaper and radio coverage of the international peace talks. Chamberlain made a short address for both the radio microphones and the television and newsreel cameras, reading the words on the paper that he and Hitler had both signed. He received a roar of approval. He was also handed a hand-written letter from the King inviting the Prime Minister to visit him at Buckingham Palace immediately.

At 1845 hours, Chamberlain's car reached the Palace, where there was another large crowd. He and his wife appeared on the balcony with the King and Queen to wave triumphantly to the people below. Afterwards, the Prime Minister headed for 10 Downing Street. There were cries of 'Speech', Speech', from another large gathering as the Premier waved from a first floor window. At around 1930 hours, Chamberlain said to them:

My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Now I recommend you go home and sleep quietly in your beds.⁹

⁸ Faber, *op cit.*, 414-416.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-7.

The Prime Minister then went into a lengthy cabinet meeting to report back from the Munich Peace Conference. With a day as packed as this, it is fair to conclude that Neville Chamberlain could not possibly have managed to fit in a couple of hours fishing on The Alre with Sir Francis Lindley on 30 September 1938.

Did Chamberlain fish The Alre soon after he arrived back from Munich?

The Premier spent Saturday and Sunday, 1-2 October, at Chequers, preparing for the four day parliamentary debate that was scheduled to start on Monday afternoon; the subject of which was, of course, the Munich Agreement. On the morning of Monday 3 October there was another full cabinet meeting. The debate concluded at 1600 hours on Thursday afternoon, 6 October. As Britain's principal negotiator, Chamberlain was required to be present throughout all four days. The government won the division comfortably by 366 votes to 144, thus ratifying the Agreement and confirming that a large number of Czechs would soon become displaced persons.

Immediately after the vote the Prime Minister left the Commons for Kings Cross, where he boarded the sleeper for Scotland. Utterly exhausted by the events of the past fortnight, he had been advised by his doctor to take a complete rest. Chamberlain was taking advantage of an invitation from the Earl of Home, to find a refuge for a couple of weeks at Hirsell, near Berwick. There, he was assured, he would find 'good sport on one of the most famous beats on the Tweed', and excellent partridge shooting.¹⁰

It is again fair to conclude that Neville Chamberlain did not come anywhere near a trout stream at Old Alresford in the immediate aftermath of the Munich Agreement being signed in 1938.

Did Chamberlain fish The Alre before Munich?

Chamberlain took three flights to Germany in September 1938. He may have been an appeaser of Hitler but Chamberlain was brave; these were the first times he had ever flown in an aeroplane. They were also the first occasions where air travel had played a part in international diplomacy. Is it possible that his fishing trip to The Alre was associated with one of his earlier flights?

The Premier returned from his first German visit, to meet Hitler at the Berchtesgaden, on Friday, 16 September. His plane landed at Heston around 1700 hours and he made a broadcast from the steps of the plane at 1715. He returned by car to Downing Street for 1830 and commenced a long meeting with the members of the inner circle of his cabinet. The King had also requested a meeting with Chamberlain that evening; he attended the Palace at 2130 hours.¹¹

The inner cabinet met in emergency session on morning of Saturday 17 September, with a wider cabinet session after lunch. On Sunday 18, a French delegation arrived in London for talks about the growing international crisis. These Anglo-French talks took all day.¹² There would, therefore, seem to be no gaps in the Prime Minister's busy schedule to permit a two-hour fishing trip to Alresford.

Chamberlain's second meeting with Hitler took place at The Dreesen Hotel at Godesberg. He flew back on Saturday 24, September, landing at Heston at 1315 hours.

¹⁰ Faber, *op cit.*, 426.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 296-298.

¹² *Ibid.*, 306.

An inner cabinet meeting was summoned at Downing Street for 1530 and a full cabinet for 1730. The wider cabinet meeting extended into most of the following Sunday, as the Czech crisis deepened. It would again appear that it would have been impossible for the Prime Minister to find the time to make a trip to Hampshire.

Conclusion

It must be concluded that Neville Chamberlain was nowhere near the trout streams of Old Alresford either before or after The Munich Agreement was signed. The researchers who wrote the brochure for the Church of St Mary the Virgin at Old Alresford have built on the myth from the Parish Council web site. The brochure states, when describing the Lindley plaque in the chancel:

This memorial to Sir Francis Lindley, long serving member of the Church Council, gives a brief outline of a life spent in the diplomatic service. He lived and fished locally and was joined by Chamberlain when pressures of state permitted.

In only one of the six biographies that have been written about the life of Neville Chamberlain does Sir Francis Lindley get a mention. This was referred to earlier in this article, when describing the telegrams Lindley sent to London from Tokyo in 1932.¹³ In view of this, it seems unlikely that the two men were friends and probable that they never fished together. Any information, either in confirmation or in denial of this local myth, will be gratefully received by the author of this article.

¹³ Parker, *op cit.*, 39.

4. WAR MEMORIAL GARDEN

Introduction

New Alresford Parish Council started planning for the post war improvement of their town towards the end of 1944. By then, the 6 June D-Day invasion had been judged a success and it was obvious to most in England that Germany was going to be defeated; the only question was when it would happen. The local councillors decided that their top priorities after the war should include an additional recreational ground, a community centre, a motorised ambulance to convey people to hospital and a public bathing pool.¹

It is the town's public bathing pool that forms the history of the War Memorial Garden. Writing in 1995, Alex Hankin who was first elected a parish councillor straight after the war declared:

If I remember correctly, the swimming pool was originally intended to be in a side stream to the north-west of the main channel of the Alre River off Drove Lane which had a deep sump. (This plan was not accepted by the land owners).²

However, what quickly became available soon afterwards, through a generous offer from Sir Francis Lindley, was the use of a parcel of land (approximately 200 metres by 50 metres) belonging to his Weir House Estate.



Illustration 1: Sir Francis Lindley photographed in July 1943.

¹ Hampshire Record Office, (HRO), 108M82/PX4, New Alresford Parish Council, Minute Book, 1937-48.

² Alex Hankin, 'New Alresford Parish Council – Part II', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 20 (New Alresford, 1995).

Born in 1872, Francis Oswald Lindley was the fourth son of Baron Nathaniel Lindley, a high court judge. After an education at Winchester College and Oxford University, he became a career diplomat. He was appointed an attaché in 1896 and started his duties as a clerk at the Foreign Office in 1897. Sent abroad in 1899, he served in the embassies of Vienna, Tehran, Cairo and Tokyo before he became the UK Ambassador, in turn, to Austria, Greece, Portugal and Japan.

Lindley married Ethelreda Mary Fraser in 1903. She was the third daughter of Simon Fraser, the thirteenth Lord Lovat, and they had four daughters. He and his wife retired to live in The Weir House at Old Alresford in 1934. He became a county Justice of the Peace almost immediately and a Verderer to the New Forest in 1943. A member of Brooks' and The Turf Club, throughout his life Sir Francis was a keen outdoor sportsman, being particularly interested in angling.³

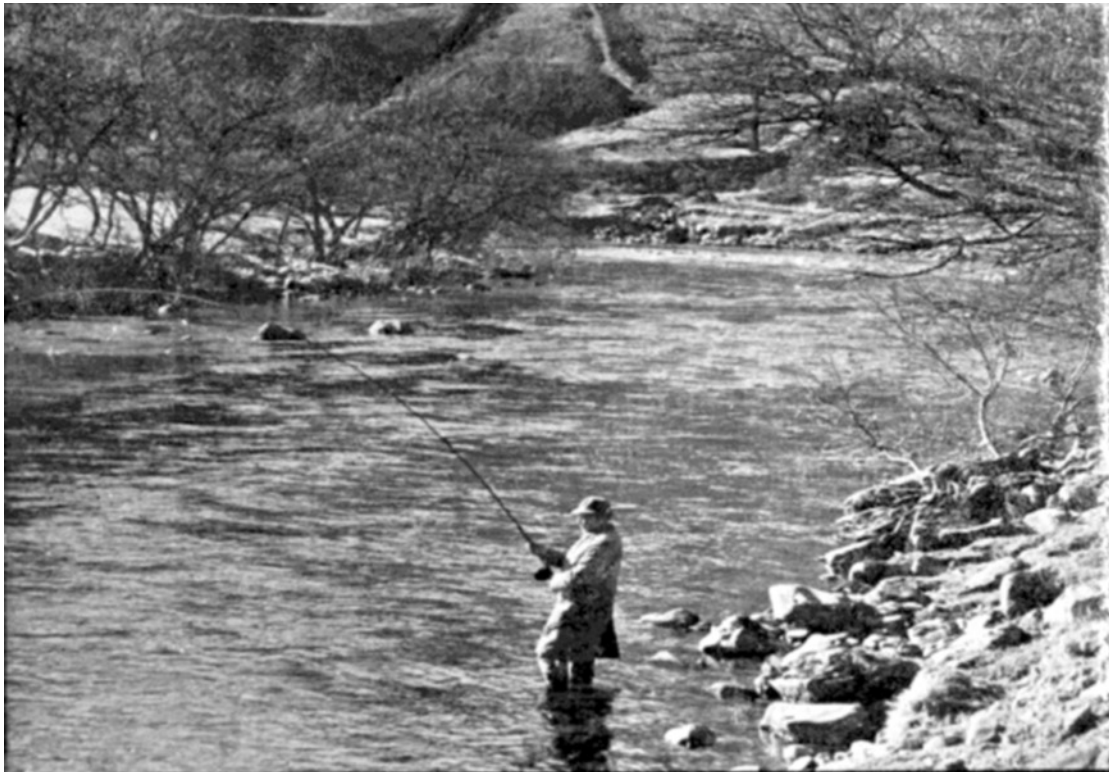


Illustration 2: Sir Francis Lindley pursuing his favourite hobby.⁴

Although Lindley's main residence was in the parish of Old Alresford, the land he had offered to the town in 1945 was on the New Alresford side of the river. It lay to the south, or to the left, of the footpath leading from Spring Lane (now Ladywell Lane) to The Old Fulling Mill.

At a parish meeting, open to all residents, on 6 November Lindley's offer was accepted and a resolution passed to raise money for a War Memorial Public Bathing Pool. On 29 November at another Parish Meeting, with forty-three electors present, a fund raising committee was formed with F. Clinton Sherriff, from the Chamber of Trade, becoming the chairman.⁵ In 1945 he lived in one of the apartments that had been created out of the George Hotel, on Broad Street, after it had been closed as an inn in 1927.

³ Sir Francis Lindley, *A Diplomat Off Duty* (London, 1947).

⁴ Photograph from the front cover of Sir Francis Lindley, *A Diplomat Off Duty* (London, 1947).

⁵ HRO, 108M82/PX1, New Alresford Parish Meeting Book, 1894-1953.

The Chairman of this parish meeting, Mr A.H. Hasted, a local butcher and a parish councillor both during and after the war, explained that he believed that the parish council should take over the building of the pool because the council could levy a rate to support the project. The resolution passed, however, was that the War Memorial Committee should be allowed to continue with their efforts and when the pool was complete, it should be handed over to the council to be managed as a public facility.⁶

Sherriff proved to be remarkably successful at fund raising. Amongst his papers is a handwritten map and directory of the town created in 1946, showing the name and address of every householder living in New Alresford.⁷ He must have written or talked to all of them asking for donations. In austerity strapped post-war Alresford, Clinton Sherriff, somewhat amazingly, managed to raise enough in public subscriptions for the construction of an outdoor bathing pool.

The reaction of the Parish Council and the Town Trust

After the hostilities had ended a new parish council was elected in April 1946. Perhaps unsurprisingly, after serving unchanged throughout seven long years since 1939, only two of the old council members decided to stand for re-election. There were, therefore nine new councillors, out of a total of eleven, when the new council met for the first time 25 April 1946.⁸

At a parish council meeting of 15 June 1948, it was reported that:

A letter was read from Mr Sherriff, the Chairman of the War Memorial Committee, stating that his committee was now prepared to hand over control of the Public Bathing Pool to the Parish Council. Mr Black said that he really thought that this was a Town Trust matter and that he did not agree that the War Memorial Committee had been appointed by the Parish Council.⁹

Cameron Black, the publican from The Sun Inn at 52, East Street, must have been persuasive on this occasion because the council refused to take over the running of the pool in 1948. It must be concluded that the new parish councillors reneged on a resolution that had been made by their predecessors in 1944 and on another decision that had been taken at an open parish meeting in November 1945.

Sherriff, with nowhere else to go, contacted the Town Trust who agreed to approach the Charity Commission for permission to take over the pool in July 1948. However, the immediate post-war period for the town trustees was one of financial hardship. Their revenues were derived solely from the town's sheep fairs and numbers of animals appearing at these events had been diminishing for decades. In 1947 the annual income of the trust was only £55-19s-2d and the Charity Commissioners refused permission for the trustees to take on an additional asset that would undoubtedly have been beyond their financial means.¹⁰

⁶ HRO, 108M82/PX1, New Alresford Parish Meeting Book, 1894-1953.

⁷ This file of papers was given to the author by Glenn Gilbertson, via Tony Marshall, on 13 January 2013. It has now been deposited at the Hampshire Record Office.

⁸ HRO, 108M82/PX4, New Alresford Parish Council, Minute Book, 1937-48.

⁹ *Ibid.*

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

The town trustees, however, neglected to inform the landowner, Sir Francis Lindley, of this decision. When Lindley's will was read, after he had died on 17 August 1950, it stated that, 'the right is also reserved for the benefit of New Alresford Town Trust to take a supply of water from the River Arle for the purpose of a public swimming pool as at present enjoyed'.¹¹

Clinton Sherriff would have expected at least one of the two statutorily appointed public bodies in New Alresford to take ownership of the pool once it had been built. That was the promise he received in 1945. In the event, neither of these bodies came to his aid and he was forced to plough his own furrow. With construction nearing completion in 1948, Sheriff was forced to form his own charity to manage the pool.

He named it the Alresford War Memorial Trust. In 1950, both the parish council and the town trust did eventually agree to provide two trustees apiece to serve on the board of Sherriff's new charity. The two trustees nominated by the council were P.T. Thorn, a timber merchant, who lived on the corner of New Farm Road and The Avenue and Alex Hankin who owned the garage at 47, West Street. The two from the town trust were Geoffrey Searles, a veterinary surgeon practicing from Thodys, on New Farm Road and Trevor Childs who was the last miller to operate the Town Mill on Mill Hill.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is surprising that Clinton Sherriff did not throw up his hands in exasperation and give up. His problem in 1948 became the raising of the funds that were needed to run the facility. He and his colleagues from the Chamber of Trade ran a successful week-long gala in August 1948, managing to raise more than £500 which was put into the coffers of the new charity.¹² The swimming pool, measuring approximately twenty-five metres by eight metres, finally opened for business at Whitsuntide in 1949.



Illustration 3: The opening of the Bathing Pool, Whitsuntide 1949. The man on the rostrum making a speech is Sir William Makins of Langton House. The third man to his right wearing spectacles is Dr Charles Meryon.¹³

¹¹ HRO, 3M69/2, Weir House Estate Public Auction, 10 November 1950.

¹² F. Clinton Sherriff papers. £500 in 1948 was worth more than £15,000 at 2012 values.

¹³ Photograph and information credit, Godfrey Andrews, www.alresfordheritage.co.uk

Lindley had left instructions in his will for the land that housed the swimming pool to be transferred to New Alresford Town Trust - the organisation that he believed was managing the facility on behalf of the town's residents. As this was incorrect, another (and separate) legal conveyance had to be arranged to transfer the land from The Weir House Estate to the Alresford War Memorial Trust (and this had to be agreed by the Charity Commissioners). This legal document was eventually finalised and signed on 18 June 1951.¹⁴ This formality is referred to in the photograph below.



Illustration 4: The inscription inside the entrance structure to the War Memorial Garden. Photograph by Glenn Gilbertson in 2013.

The War Memorial Swimming Pool, 1949-1959

Godfrey Andrews, who was born in 1947 and has lived all of his life in and around Alresford, remembers the outdoor swimming pool of his childhood:

Thank you so much for sending me the photographs of the old swimming pool. I was instantly transported back to my youth and the happy days spent with my childhood friends. We had picnics there; cheese and cucumber sandwiches and cake eaten at the side of the pool. The water was disgusting, green, slimy and freezing cold. We all stubbed our toes on the stones at the bottom of the pool; you could slide on the mud from the shallow end to the deep end. It cost a penny to swim, payable to Mr & Mrs Tee, the attendants, who sat in their tiny thatched hut drinking tea brewed on a primus stove that they had to pump. He was a delivery van driver for the World Stores on East Street.

We all learned to swim in the pool and we received certificates to prove that we had achieved a length of front crawl and so on. We did life saving badges and artificial respiration. As school children, we were marched there in a crocodile from The Dean School by Mr Ginsberg, whatever the weather. He was a very 'no nonsense' Welshman who had the responsibility for our physical fitness. On more than one occasion he had to break the ice before we could get into the water. Ah, happy days!¹⁵

¹⁴ F. Clinton Sherriff paper

¹⁵ Godfrey Andrews, in interview with the author, 21 January 2013.



Illustration 5: The War Memorial Swimming Pool in 1953.¹⁶ The boy in short trousers in the foreground of the above photograph is Godfrey Andrews, aged 6. His sister is immediately to his left. The photograph was commissioned to be included in the 1953 New Alresford Town Guide, issued by the parish council. Alex Hankin, a parish councillor at the time and the adult wearing dark clothes in the background, had rounded up a group of children to bring the pool to life for the official photographer. The other adult in the white overalls is Godfrey's father who worked for Hankin in his motor garage.

Godfrey continued:

The pool had a self-feeding mechanism; it was constantly being emptied from a manhole at the bottom of the main pool and topped up from the river. The paddling pool, about six inches deep, was separated from the main pool by a concrete wall some twelve inches high and a wire fence. The bottom of the main pool sloped from approximately twelve inches deep at the shallow end, nearest the river, to between four and five feet deep at the deep end. Occasionally the Fire Brigade would pump out the water to enable the bottom of the pool to be cleaned. This must have been a revolting job.

The changing rooms were basic with bench seats and clothes hooks screwed to the walls. They were padlocked when not in use. The facility opened for use every year from Whitsuntide to September embracing the whole of the school summer holidays. It was used by organisations as well as individuals - cubs, scouts, brownies, girl guides and schools. The three structures around the pool were all thatched. I remember it as bracing certainly, but the surrounds to the pool were kept clean and tidy and the site was never allowed to sink into disrepair.¹⁷

¹⁶ Photograph credit, Godfrey Andrews, www.alresfordheritage.co.uk

¹⁷ Godfrey Andrews, in interview with the author, 21 January 2013.

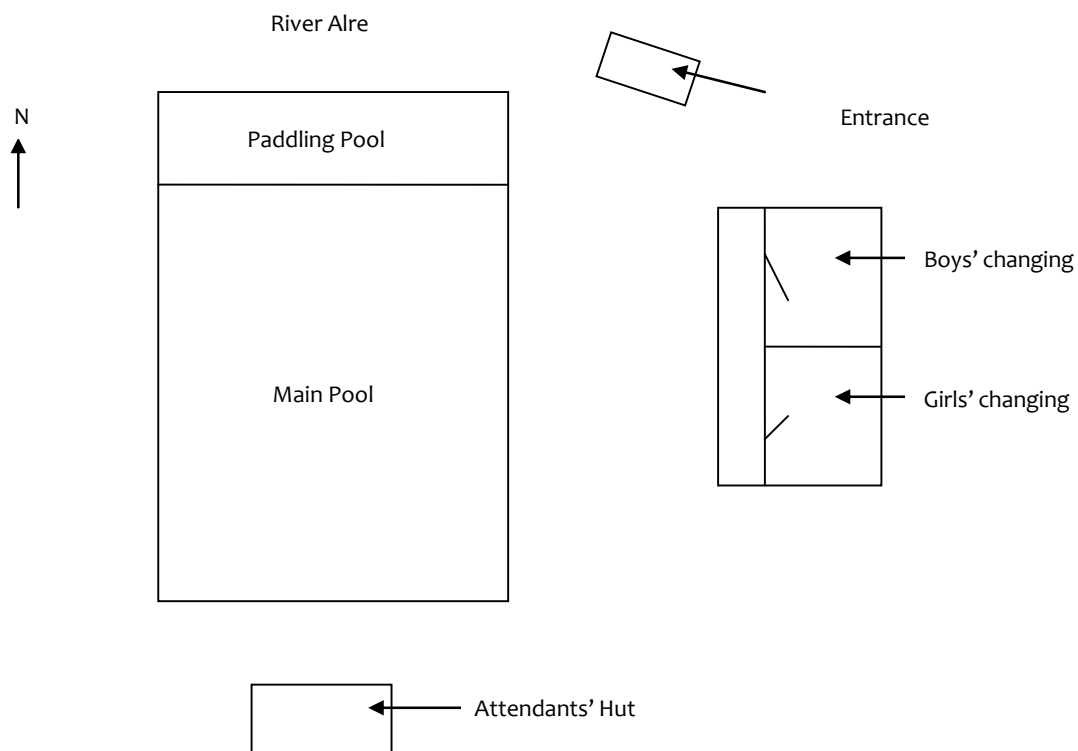


Illustration 6: Plan of the War Memorial Bathing Pool Site, 1949-1969.¹⁸

The Parish Council takes over, 1959-1969

In 1959, Sherriff's charity, the Alresford War Memorial Trust, had finally run out of money and was facing bankruptcy. Sherriff approached the parish councillors with a view to them taking over the responsibility for managing the pool on behalf of the town. This time the councillors were in a more accommodating mood than they had been in 1948. On 3 February, Mr Duffy announced that, 'he had examined the deeds of the War Memorial Pool and had concluded that there was no difficulty in transferring the asset to the parish council'. On 7 July that year the council formally took over ownership.¹⁹

In 1995, Alex Hankin wrote:

Taking over responsibility for the bathing pool created an enormous amount of detailed work for the council, from employing an attendant to fixing payment rates for schools. Everlasting cleaning was necessary as no control methodology for the algae could be found and stones were forever getting into the water. A fair amount of the maintenance costs were paid for by the profits of the annual carnival, whose committee was both hardworking and kind to the town.

1966 was a memorable year for the bathing pool but for all the wrong reasons. The thatched roof of the changing rooms was set alight and burned off completely and after a fatality at a similar pool in Petersfield, the county council banned all schools from using the facility. The roof was replaced but without the income from the schools, the future of the pool was doomed in the long term.²⁰

¹⁸ Godfrey Andrews, in interview with the author, 21 January 2013.

¹⁹ HRO, 108M82/PX6, New Alresford Parish Council, Minute Book, 1957-61.

²⁰ Alex Hankin, 'New Alresford Parish Council – Part II', *Alresford Displayed*, Issue 20 (New Alresford, 1995)

By 1968, the price of a swim had reached sixpence and Miss Denning, of Arle House on Ladywell Lane, had become the pool attendant. That year she took £48 during the open season. In 1969, she increased that amount to £83 and in one afternoon 130 children attended, yielding £12-10s-0d. Miss Denning formally received the congratulations of the council and a small bonus after the pool was closed for the winter in September.

This, however, turned out to be a permanent closure; the swimming pool was never reopened. It was not a lack of income that caused the demise as predicted by Alex Hankin; it was the fact that the water could not be brought up to the standards required by the medical profession. The doctors in the town were becoming increasingly concerned about the health risk that the pool posed to the town's children throughout the late 1960s.

On 17 March 1970, parish councillor Dr Christopher Brill formally proposed that the pool be considered a health hazard and that it should be closed forthwith. The proposal was seconded by John Curtis and carried unanimously. On 21 April, the councillors heard that their parish clerk, Alf White, had received only two complaints regarding the closure and they resolved that the land should become an open space. At their meeting on 21 September 1971, the council heard that the pool had been filled in and the ground levelled. On 19 October that year, the open space was referred to in council as the War Memorial Garden for the first time.²¹

The War Memorial Garden

Today, in 2013, the place that used to be filled with the noise of squealing children having fun is now a space for quiet contemplation by adults. The area has been grassed over but the outline of the swimming pool can still be seen. The thatched roofs have gone but open canopies have been constructed to cover the exact footprints of the pool entrance structure and the changing room building and these have been fitted with seats. Only the attendants' hut has vanished completely.



Illustration 7: The War Memorial Garden. Photograph by the author in January 2013.

The War Memorial Garden was rededicated on 12 April 2003 and an engraved stone has been placed on the site to mark this occasion. There is also another plaque, to the memory of Digby Grist, the founder of *Alresford Displayed*, an eclectic local history magazine which was published for twenty-two years from 1976 through to 1997. This plaque was erected in 1990 by The Alresford Society and can be found at the southern end of plot, on the site that used to house the attendants' hut.

²¹ HRO, 108M82/PX8 and PX9, New Alresford Parish Council, Minute Books, 1965-69 and 1968-73.

5. THE LOST BRIDGE

Until 1923, the Weir House Estate included both the Fulling Mill and Arle House (formerly called The Shrubbery) which had, and still has, extensive grounds on the south side of the river stretching from Ladywell Lane to The Dean. The footbridge shown below was one of several routes over the Itchen that would have been used by the estate staff to access estate land and buildings in the parish of New Alresford. It is not thought that this was a public right of way; the high fence and the gate were intended to deter trespassers, particularly fish poachers.



Illustration 1: A three-arch footbridge over the Itchen, fifty metres upstream of The Fulling Mill and with The Weir House in the background. The photograph was taken from the riverside footpath at some time during the second decade of the twentieth century.¹ Grid reference: SU 585 331.

The footbridge is still there and so are the fence and the gate. However, they now cannot be seen having been completely engulfed in trees and vegetation, particularly brambles. There is now no access at all across this bridge and this view of the Weir House from the riverside footpath no longer exists.² A question this begs is, ‘when did this bridge cease being a bridge?’



Illustration 2: The blocked bridge today. Photo by Glenn Gilbertson 2013

¹Godfrey Andrews, Alresford Heritage, www.alresfordheritage.co.uk ;

² Email from David Coles, the Weir House Estate, 2 September 2013.

The photograph above suggests that it was still being used in the 1910s. There is also a sketch showing that the bridge was still accessible and this can reliably be dated to 1941.³ David Coles went to Old Alresford Primary School in the early 1960s and can remember being marched in a crocodile for swimming lessons in the old outdoor pool which was nearby, ‘the bridge was still clear then, I think.’ He also recalls that when he started to work on the Weir House Estate in 1991, ‘it was very blocked and left that way to keep the kids and poachers out’.⁴ Janette Hollingbery commented ‘It was blocked when we moved here in 1994. We have no reason to open it as we have a back door that opens on to the Little Weir. That’s the way we go if we want to walk into town’. It would appear that ‘this bridge ceased being a bridge’ at some time between the 1960s and 1991. A twenty-five year period – certainly long enough for vegetation to engulf it!

About the author



Brian Rothwell was born in Luton in 1949. He graduated from the London School of Economics & Political Science in 1970 and spent two and a half decades employed by top ranking plc's in the insurance industry, fifteen years with Royal Insurance and ten years with Sedgwick. More recently, as a portfolio careerist, he has held both executive and non-executive company directorships. In retirement, he is a freelance business consultant, lecturer and writer and a PhD student at the University of Winchester. He is married with two adult children and has lived in New Alresford since 2004.

Brian has had three books published. The first written with Liz Cook ‘The X & Y of Leadership’ explores the leadership implications of gender. His second ‘Leadership 101’, written in conjunction with Margaret Lloyd, contains tips for leaders at all levels. The third, ‘Serving to Lead’, endeavours through a fictional story, to formulate the leadership lessons that can be learned from the Second World War. He has also written three plays, all on leadership themes.

³ Sir Francis Lindley, ‘The Itchen Valley’, *Transactions of the Norfolk Naturalists’ Society* (Norwich, 1941).

⁴ Email from David Coles, the Weir House Estate, 4 September 2013.

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- The 1894 pedigree tree of the Bonham family, lent to the author by Richard Bonham Carter in April 2013.
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Richard Bonham Carter, descendant of the Bonhams of Warnford, 4 April 2013.
David Coles, The Weir House, 12 July 2013
Suzanne Foster, Archivist, Winchester College, 15 April 2013.
Janette Hollingbery, current owner of The Weir House Estate, 4 March 2013.
Richard Loving, tenant of Ladywell Lakes House, where the fishing Boundary Stone now stands, 15 April 2013.
Tony Marshall, New Alresford Estate Agent, 14 February, 2013.
David Woods, responsible for the churchyard at the Old Alresford Church of St Mary the Virgin, 7 & 27 March 2013.

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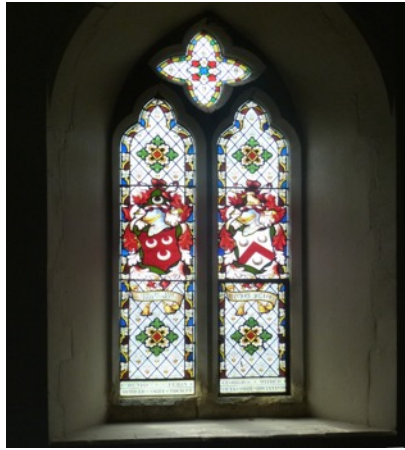
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1. Dr Henry Perin



2. Perin Memorial Window



3. George Hollingbery



4. The Weir House



5. Beauworth Manor



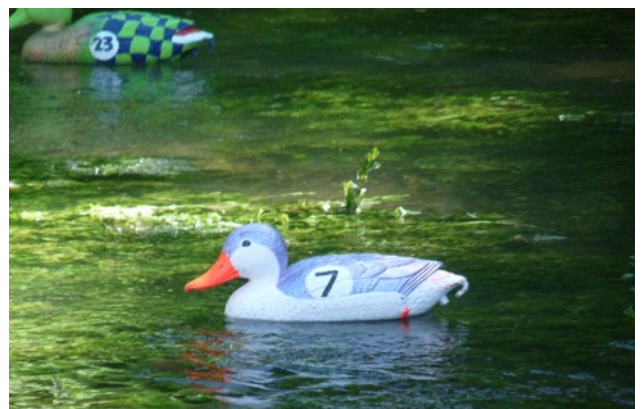
6. Perin Family Tomb Chests



7. War Memorial Garden



8. Alresford Pigs Association Tug of War
The Weir House 1980



9. Alresford Pigs Association Duck Race
The Weir House 2013