

# PORTCHESTER MATTERS



Issue 13

The Newsletter of the Portchester Civic Society (Founded 2000)

Winter 2015

## Threat to Portchester Fire & Rescue Service



Portchester Fire Station Personnel 2015 with Co Responding Car, Fire Appliance and Command Support Vehicle

by Paul Woodman

The threat of downgrading at Portchester Fire Station has been revealed under plans by Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to cut its budget.

Currently the station has a fully kitted out fire and rescue appliance with a retained crew of 12 firefighters, but the proposal is to replace the engine with a First Response vehicle and cut the retained number down to 8. Of course retained firefighters are not full time but are available to answer callouts on an on call basis from their homes or work, so by cutting their numbers this increases the likelihood of only a small

crew being able to attend an incident or the vehicle not being crewed at all.

A First Response vehicle is typically based on a van body, and with a crew of between 2 and 4, short ladders, a water pump with minimal water capacity and a limited amount of rescue equipment, is an initial response before additional resources arrive, especially for a major incident. The cost benefit to the Brigade is that one of these vehicles can cost around £50,000 against a "normal" fire engine costing around £300,000. There is also the saving on staff costs with a reduced number of firefighters required and the reduction in annual maintenance costs and depreciation. A big incentive for the Brigade to downsize, but at what cost to the public?



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Hampshire Fire and rescue Service currently has 75 front line fire engines but the proposal is over time to reduce this to 25 and presumably replace the missing 50 with first response vehicles. Do you want an immediate safe rescue from a house fire or vehicle crash with a fully kitted out fire engine or 2 firefighters and

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a hose in a van with no ability to rescue you? Did you know that unless there are at least four firefighters present they are not allowed to enter a building to rescue you?

**What can we do?**

Hampshire Fire and Rescue have a consultation on their proposals which can be viewed on their website:

[www.hantsfire.gov.uk/about-us/a-safer-hampshire/how-is-your-area-affected](http://www.hantsfire.gov.uk/about-us/a-safer-hampshire/how-is-your-area-affected)

(I found it very biased towards cuts. A typical politic survey! Ed.)

There is a survey to express your views at: [www.ors.org.uk/web/index.php/survey/index/sid/638645/lang/en](http://www.ors.org.uk/web/index.php/survey/index/sid/638645/lang/en)

Possibly a more effective way is to lobby your local councillors, (Councillor Roger Price is a member of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority).



Proposed First Response Vehicle crewed with 2-4 Firefighters

## A Portchester Hero Remembered

by Paul Woodman

A thanksgiving ceremony was held at the war memorial in Portchester Precinct on the 17th October when a commemorative plaque was unveiled to Thomas Adair Butler VC by Charlie Butler, a descendent of Thomas.

Born at Soberton in 1836 Thomas was the son of the Rev. Stephen Butler, of Bury Lodge, Hambledon, and his first wife Mary Ann Thistlethwayte, daughter



Thomas Adair Butler VC Unveiling of the Plaque

of Thomas Thistlethwayte of Southwick Park; Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire, hereditary Constable of Portchester Castle and warden of the Forest of Bere. Privately educated he attended a military school in Gosport before joining the Army in 1854 and by 1857 was in India, taking part in many of the actions during the Indian Mutiny.

Lieutenant Butler was serving in the 1st Bengal European Fusiliers, when during the Siege of Lucknow in 1858 his gallantry under fire was rewarded with the Victoria Cross. The citation for his reward states "Of which success the skirmishers on the other side of the river were subsequently apprised by Lieutenant Butler, of the Bengal Fusiliers, who swam across the Goomtee, and, climbing the parapet, remained in that position for a considerable time, under a heavy fire of musketry, until the work was occupied."

In 1863 Thomas was promoted to Captain and served in the North-West Frontier Campaign and eventually retired with the rank of Honorary Major, in 1874.

His Victoria Cross is now displayed at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst.

Derek Pearce, a resident of Castle Street, was looking through the 1881 Portchester Census records when he discovered Thomas Butler, aged 45, Major (Vict. Cross) Retd, living in Castle Street, possibly at what is known now as Duckett House, opposite the Cormorant Public House.

Queen Victoria only introduced the Victoria Cross in 1856 so Thomas was an early recipient of the award.



Thomas Adair Butler VC Memorial Plaque

# Ghosts and Ghouls

by Bernie Lendon

It was Saturday afternoon on the 26th September when 15 members met at Wymering Manor for an afternoon of ghouls, ghosts and questionable Nuns and Monks. Wymering Manor dates back to at least 1086 when it was mentioned in the Domesday Book and has had numerous owners over its long existence, including being run as a youth hostel.

Wymering Manor is one of the most haunted houses in Britain. With records of up to 18 ghosts, ranging from Nuns, a lady in a violet dress, child's whispers, phantom horses, all which have been reported over hundreds of years. It felt noticeably cold as we were shown around, so very atmospheric for our visit.

We were met by Ben who gave us a general outline of the Manor's history and then we were taken round by Jonathan, who is one of the people



Society Members at Wymering Manor

constantly involved in the restoration of the Manor. We were given a guided tour of this huge building, which must have been quite majestic in its heyday, but now unfortunately is in need of massive work to restore it to anywhere near its former glory. We were taken through various rooms, one of which was at one time a chapel but has been drastically altered over the years. However the spirit of one of the monks who must have been resident at one time does not like being in the dark, and lights would appear when no one was inside the building, with no explanation for these occurrences. The tale of the monk who didn't like being



Wymering Manor

in the dark was discovered and subsequently a plug in night-light was put into place and the lights were seen no more. Likewise in the upper floors was a cupboard which when opened revealed another cupboard within. When a group had been visiting and were leaving this room, the cupboard door slammed shut all on its own. It was in this room that strange stories were told about the Nuns who resided there, and their involvement in terminating babies, so you never know what you might encounter.

The Manor is unfortunately in need of so much work, and the reality of this happening is not that realistic, so we felt we had at least seen something which might not be around forever. Jonathan was a thoroughly entertaining guide and made our afternoon very enjoyable. So with a sense of the constant coldness felt within the Manor being left behind, we departed from this rather different afternoon visit. A donation was made by the Society to help with the restoration programme. Anyone up for up for a sleep over?



Wymering Manor 2015

# Chairman's Newsletter

Dear Members,

Reflecting on Planning Applications for 2014/2015 it still seems incredible that the new Lidl store is still top of the agenda. It looks like we won't be shopping there until well into 2016. The hold up is because they have bought the next unit to the two previously bought and want to build a larger store with more parking spaces. Their amended proposal is to have the car park next to the A27, with the store towards the back of the plot, but I understand that Fareham Borough Council would like the scheme revised to give a better street scene from the main road. So the problem is ongoing!

We welcome new landlords to the Cormorant and their enthusiasm to upgrade the standards and their commitment to engage with the local community.

I do hope you have enjoyed our speakers over the last year. Bernie, our Programme Secretary, has done well, however to obtain good speakers we have seen a rise in their fees. We used to budget £25 to £30 per speaker but that is not the case anymore as on average the cost is £40 a month and sometimes higher if they have to travel a distance. Looking at the 2016 programme it is good to see Kay Ainsworth booked, as she was always a supporter of the Society right from our beginning. I must admit I am looking forward to the entertainment at our Christmas meeting on the 15th December when we have the Pompey Pluckers to sing and play their ukuleles for us.

A good website is an essential tool of any club or society nowadays and ours was built by 2Fish Productions who were local to Portchester. Earlier this year we were informed by them that they were having to upgrade their server to keep up with modern technology and we had to find a one off payment of £400 to ensure our website was fit to be read on tablets and phones. We looked at other providers but discovered that this was reasonable for the work entailed and decided to stay with 2Fish to maintain the quality and flexibility we have to update our website.

David Bodger, our Treasurer, keeps a tight rein on our spending and we run an annual budget, which we have (only just) kept within this year. So, with rising costs in mind we are looking at ways to increase our incomings. In 2007 we published our oral history book 'Portchester in Living Memory' with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Grant and the book has given us a healthy contribution to our funds since, but sales are now slow. With book sales and other fundraising we were able to contribute £1,000 towards lighting for Portchester AFC at the Wicor, restore Thomas Goble's grave in St Mary's churchyard and give smaller amounts to Portchester Community School for their band and Castle Primary for their courtyard garden. We are now looking for other projects to benefit our community so you can see we are very committed to working on your behalf.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, the members, for the support you give the Society. I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Regards,  
Hazel

## MEET OUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Hazel Woodman



My parents moved to Portchester when their house was destroyed in Byron Road in Portsmouth during the Second World War. I was born in Portchester and having lived here all my life seen many changes.

My career path took me into floristry, which I have enjoyed since I was 15. I have been very lucky having not only run our own floristry business with my husband Paul for 12 years, but also managed to work with a design team creating displays in many different countries. This resulted in the pleasure of winning many medals at Chelsea Flower Show.

I enjoy chairing the Society and look forward to seeing you all at our monthly meetings.

### Alan Maddison

I am a retired Headteacher that has lived in Portchester for thirty six years. I came to Hampshire from a city with a fascinating

history, so I was keen to visit Portchester and its castle. On my first visit I thought it would be a great place to live, so when I bought my first house it was on the hill slopes of Portchester and I have never moved away from the area.



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## MEET OUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Bernie Lendon



I've lived in Portchester for nearly 9 years and been a member of the PCS for most of that time. I organise the speaker programme for the year, which leads to some interesting and diverse subjects. I'm always open to ideas for speakers. Locally I work for Taylor and Wallis undertakers and also the National Museum of the Royal Navy, in Portsmouth Dockyard.

### David Bodger

I was born in East Ham, London and moved to Poole in 1948, Mum and Dad, my sister and Grandparents, all in the back of a removal van – unlikely to happen in today's world.



In 1959 I commenced work in the accounts department of the local Co-operative Society and then on to the Woolwich Building Society. Attending night school I gained a professional qualification and later became an Associate of the Association of Company Accountants. We moved to Portchester 25 years ago and I have been your Treasurer for the last 3 years.

### Geraldine Smith

I was an inaugural member of the Portchester Civic Society and have

served on the committee from its inception. Initially, I held the post of Programme Secretary and currently am the Minutes Secretary. I am fully committed to the Society's values and beliefs and do all I can to support its aims.



### John Morgan

Membership Secretary and Website/Social Media Editor, I have lived in Portchester all my life, having attended Manor House Infants School, Castle Street Junior School and Portchester School. I



was one of the founding members of the society and have spent most of my time on committee in various roles. My current roles make the best of my administration skills and enable me to learn more about the web. I enjoy the society, as I am passionate about Portchester and the area as a whole.

You may see me around the area taking pictures of various scenes; this is to see how much Portchester has changed over the past years and for future generations to see how it looks now. This has to be one of my regrets when I was younger, not taking pictures of Portchester then, (better late than never I suppose though!).

### Paul Woodman

Born in Gosport, I joined the Royal Navy on leaving school and, after a varied career, ended up spending the last 5 years of work back in uniform as a tour guide on HMS Victory before retiring.

I love being part of the Portchester community and am a Governor at Castle Primary School. I have a great interest in history and maintain the Society's photo collection.



### Malcolm Cooper

I moved to Portchester with my parents in 1945 and went to the old Wicor Primary and Portchester Secondary schools. All my working life was spent in Portsmouth Naval Base.

In 1962, when we married, I bought a house in Portchester. We have three children and one grand daughter and I have been involved with the Portchester Civic Society for the last 15 years.



# My Memories of Portchester

by Ruby Plowman

As a family of four, we moved to Portchester from Portsmouth in 1936, my sister Pearl needing "country air". The £29 deposit for our house in the Crossway was borrowed, half from mum's employer and half from dad's brother. Mum was a mattress and wire mesh bedspring maker and dad a cabinetmaker.

When we moved into the Crossway it only consisted of two blocks of six houses. Not sure how true the story is but we understood that when Fred Trowern built the houses in the Fairway there was a problem with space for the last two blocks, so he built them at 90 degrees and started the Crossway. Our house number on the deeds was 22.

When the Fruit Farm between our block and the railway station was sold and bungalows were built I believe by "Birch" and the wheat fields between us and Upper Cornaway Lane were also built on, we were re-numbered to 109. Birch, whom I believe was a councillor, used to bring his ladder and prune the trees that had been planted in the verges in his own time. The road was still gravelled and unadopted until the 1960's. The only thing I remember about moving day was watching dining room chairs that dad had made being carried up the garden path while the workmen were still painting the house next door.

At this time the double deck bus service was frequent, eight buses an hour between



Woodcraft Chivalry 1950 May Queen, Miss Ruby Saunders, passing over the drawbridge and into the inner bay of Portchester Castle. Most of the attending Maids of Honour would themselves become future May Queens

Portsmouth and Fareham. Four went via the Main Road and four via Castle Street. The bus fare was 1½ d for adults and 1d children. We couldn't afford this and so we often walked to Fareham or Cosham. The bus destination board never said West Street, always Main Road, probably to avoid confusion with West Street, Fareham.

The gas oven was only used on Sunday and every other week on Wednesday or Thursday. Mum and our next-door neighbour took it in turns midweek to fill their oven to capacity. We always looked forward to this as it meant we would have jacket potatoes for dinner.

By 1938 dad had found employment at Airspeed where they were building Airspeed Oxford training planes and Mosquitoes. Dad mostly was constructing cabin doors and was expected to build at least three a day. Later he was involved with building the Airspeed designed Horsa Gliders for D. Day. Dad did not join the armed forces as his work was considered more important. He was

a member of Airspeed Fire Brigade [often called on to assist Portsmouth], he also joined the Portchester Civil Defence and organised our local Fire Watchers. After the war when de Havilland took over Airspeed, dad was involved in building parts of the "Comet" airliner - the plane was assembled in Hatfield.

My education commenced in the old school opposite the Methodist Church in 1938. The school summer holiday in 1939 had to be extended because the workmen had not finished building surface shelters on the gravel part of the playground where Postern Close is today.

With the escalation of building in Portchester between 1936 and 1939, plus in 1940 people moving out from Portsmouth due to the bombing there, our school was bursting at the seams. Classes of 48-50 children quite normal. One class was held in Turret House (with pit props holding up the ceiling in the entrance) the site of the present Doctors Surgery and Library, this later moved to the old Parish Hall at the junction of Castle Street and White Hart Lane. The last move was to the Methodist Church which accommodated two classes. The year I was taught in the Methodist Church was fortunately in the room with the stage and my teacher, a Miss Askew, was very musical. We had never had the opportunity to stage plays before as the old school had no hall and every available space was used for a class. Miss Askew produced several plays with us and we learned many songs, like Land of Hope and Glory and the national Anthems of Canada, America, and Australia. A big favourite of mine being "Lords of the Air" a beautiful song about the airforce. I can only remember the first verse and the chorus. She also taught us Handel's Largo and pieces from his Water Music. We had no idea we were being taught classics! Lessons were frequently interrupted by air raids and in the shelter we either would practice times tables or more



Mrs Elsie Pellow with her class in the garden of the Turret House 1949

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to our liking belt out many of the patriotic songs we had learned, probably out of tune, but enjoyed none the less. My love of music started then and has stayed with me all my life. We were in serious trouble if we went to school without our gasmask and identity card. We also spent many nights at home in our Anderson shelter. My father's brother and his wife came out from Portsmouth to stay with us for several weeks while their first baby was born, a boy who alas later was found to be deaf and dumb.

Wartime problems on the Home Front were sorted expediently. If you were male and not fit to join the Armed Forces but capable of Essential War Work, you would be given a limited number of options. Dad opted to continue essential war work at Airspeed as explained earlier.



West Street, Portchester c1955

Single women would join the Women's Land Army for instance. Married women were exempt, but it was appreciated if they volunteered to do an essential job. Mum continued the skilled job of weaving wire springs for bed bases and at the request of her Portsmouth employer, a Clary Day, also learned to stitch mattress cases and fill and 'tuft' completed mattresses. These were then supplied to expanding service establishments. This meant no one was at home to provide a cooked lunch, so the "authorities" made arrangements that my sister Pearl and I should go around to the senior school for school dinner, as there were no facilities at the junior school. Two of our schoolgirl pals came with us, their mum, a Mrs Young, was training to be a fitter for the local Gas company. We would run like mad through Alcott's and around the edge of the Secondary School field, which had been planted with potatoes. The dining hall was on the 3rd floor and if we were last in the queue the potatoes sometimes ran out and we finished up with bread.

Next, my grandparents who also lived in Portsmouth were bombed out and stayed with us for quite a while; we girls slept on a mattress in the corner of the living room so that they could have our bedroom and what was salvaged of their possessions stored in the box room. While in the shelter my grandad would play his squeezebox type accordion, a Melodian I believe, teaching us First World War songs like "Pack up your Troubles" and "Tipperary". We sometimes played cards, but grandma was such a dreadful cheat even we girls used to let her win to keep the peace or she would get in an awful mood. Gran's hearing was very acute, one-day mum had just poured some toffee she had made into a tin to set and although there had been no siren, gran suddenly said there's a "whistler" coming. We new she meant a bomb and we all dived under

the kitchen table. Two bombs dropped on Red Barn Farm, just over the railway at the end of our garden. The toffee had jumped clean out of the tin, still in a round shape but crazed into many pieces.

Rationing was part of everyday life so we kept chickens (which meant we were not allowed egg ration) and rabbits, also grew fruit and vegetables in the garden and the allotment. We even had beans and lettuce in the rockery by the fishpond in the front garden - the pond was enlarged as a supply of water for incendiary bomb fires.

Portchester was affected by the war in many ways, for example we had two barrage balloons, one in the Castle grounds between the Land gate and the Churchyard and one on the Service Road between the Kingsway and what was the Fairway Garage, now the BP/M&S service station. There was also a small munitions factory in part of Hayter's Garage in West Street and the buildings behind, which backed on to the Methodist Church where two classes of children were

being taught! The Fort gun which we called "Big Bertha" and the mobile gun which sometimes travelled along the railway at the end of our garden cracked many of our windows when in action.

The A27, which was the main South Coast road, ran right through the middle of the village and I can remember coming out of school and seeing convoys of lorries full of exhausted, devastated soldiers, some with blood stained bandages, while women were standing watching with tears rolling down their cheeks and the news later told of Dunkirk. Also because of the railway at the end of the garden we watched many, many Red Cross Trains go by, probably on there way to Haslar or Netley Hospitals.

In February 1942 my sister Pearl contracted meningitis; it was diagnosed by Dr Hughes early morning. Because ambulances were needed for bomb casualties and service personnel it was late afternoon before an ambulance arrived from Brighton to take her to Portsmouth Infectious Diseases Hospital. She died shortly after admission, a month before her 11th birthday.

In 1943 I joined a local dancing troupe run by a Miss Olive Hamilton, an ex Tiller Girl. We gave concerts in various Drill Halls, where the opening number was usually 'You are My Sunshine' and I also remember dancing to the 'Skaters Waltz'. The pantomime 'Babes in the Wood' had its first showing at Fleetlands in the works canteen.

As we got nearer to D Day, "Smokey Joes" were parked along the Service Road (by the Kingsway) ready to be towed where required. On the night of April 26th/27th 1944 a lone bomber spotting a train in Portchester Station dropped a string of bombs, trying to hit the railway line - he missed - but quite a lot of damage was done to the Crossway. The two bungalows at one end of our block of six houses, No's 99 and 101 were flattened, my father helped dig seven people out of the rubble, but one, a baby, was dead. One of the rescued was Miss Olive Hamilton. With her parents she moved to Guildford and was later called the 'Golden Voice' of Guildford Train Station. The bungalows at the other end of the block of houses, No's 115 and 117, were thought to have an unexploded bomb as the damage did not seem enough. 102 The Crossway on the corner of The Kingsway also had a direct hit. A big problem was also caused by yet another bomb rupturing a gas main. Several cottages in the Main Road where a Dentist is today were also bombed at the same time, where several people lost their lives including children. My mother and I had

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only managed to get as far as the cupboard under the stairs when the bombs dropped and a large ball of clay came through our roof and toppled down the stairs, making us think the house was falling down. We spent the rest of that night and all the next day sat around in the Methodist Church, which must have been very difficult for my mother as she was five months pregnant. When we did get back home, dad had put tarpaulins over the worst of the damaged roof and had moved their double bed downstairs to the living room. For several weeks we slept downstairs, me on the settee. Dad managed to buy some second hand tiles and battens and the roof was repaired within a few weeks. However, it was almost a year before the inside ceiling was repaired and I can remember going to bed and looking straight up to the rafters.

My brother was born during the era of the V1 & V2 rockets and was carried up and down to the shelter in a large wicker clothes-basket. Healthwise this was rather detrimental as he also had a feeding problem. Bronchitis and

two weeks in early September so that we Secondary children could help the farmers by going potato picking. We earned 10/- (50p) a week working from 9a.m. to 12noon and 1.30p.m. to 4.30p.m. The railway level crossing in The Crossway opposite The Queensway was still in place at this time and shortened the walk considerably to Red Barn Farm. If we were at the Farm by 8.30a.m. for the morning session and 1.15p.m. for the afternoon, Drummer the tractor driver would let us climb on the flat bed trailer and tow us up to the fields, (Health and Safety rules didn't exist). Each child was stationed at approx 30-40yard intervals along the length of the field and issued with a stack of sacks. As the tractor turned the furrow you picked up all the potatoes in your section putting them in the sacks. The more furrows that were turned meant if you were not careful your sacks were further and further away.

Early in 1945 most of the people living in the Fairway and the adjacent part of the Crossway who had been in the Civil Defence, Homeguard or Firewatchers decided to form a Social Club. They met once a week in what had been a billiard room at the bottom

home from a famous Australian husband and wife radio act called "The Piddingtons" who were performing at the Kings Theatre. Dad also constructed and performed his own Punch and Judy show, carving the model heads from wood and mum made all the costumes for the puppets.

In 1950, I had the honour to be the first May Queen to be crowned in the Castle Keep after the war. With two young attendants (my brother Roland officiating as Page) we were driven to the Castle by horse and open carriage. The afternoon was a huge success, with Maypole dancing, Archery display etc. The afternoon ended with a procession of all participants from the Castle Keep to the Service Road by The Kingsway via Castle Street and the Main Road. The May Day celebrations were eventually succeeded by the Portchester Gala.

My husband Ian and I were married in August 1953 and moved to Myrtle Avenue in January 1956; at that time the road was unadopted, still gravelled with pot holes and puddles everywhere. It did have a verge and huge Horse Chestnut trees. Our son was born November 1957 and our daughter March 1961. The Gala always had a Fancy Dress section and our children always entered, winning several prizes. The year that the proceeds were to go to the church they went dressed as collection tins with slogans printed on the sides and several people put money in the slots, which they gave to the vicar.

1969/70 when our daughter was in Mrs Bradley's class at Castle Street Junior School it was decided to try to research the history of the school. The project was called 'Almost 100 years', as there seemed no record of the exact date of the school opening. Mrs Bradley was a very interesting person who wrote short stories mostly about country life that were printed weekly in the local 'Hampshire Telegraph' paper. She used the pseudonym of Mrs Widgey as she lived in Widgey Cottage. Mrs Bradley took the children to see Mr Page, the local blacksmith whose premises were just around the corner from Castle Street in East Street, she also invited several people into school to talk about school in the early 1900's. One of the last questions in the written work is "we wonder where the old school bell is now".

Early in the 1970's when both our children were at Secondary School I started working part-time in the office of Castle Junior School (opposite the Methodist Church). When answering the school 'phone one day a man's voice asked me if it was Portchester Council School, I explained that had been a school title in the past, he then asked if we would like our school bell returned. The



The Ascension Church, White Hart Lane, c1960

pneumonia followed. It was 5/- for the doctor to call and 7/6 for the nurse with a penicillin injection. Looking back, my early years were divided into three parts, up until my sister died I was the youngest child, then for 2 ½ years the only one and then later the eldest. Standing in our back garden one evening, I can remember watching planes towing the Horsa gliders south, how many I don't know but it seemed hundreds, right across the sky as far as you could see, D Day had arrived. We had watched all the convoys of troops gathering and the beaches had been no go areas for ages. Trains carrying tanks, guns, jeeps, fuel and troops were almost continuous at the bottom of the garden. Next day, (I was now a pupil at the Secondary School), classes took it in turn to go up to the Dining Hall where there was a Radiogram and we listened to the War Correspondents sending news back from France.

School summer holidays were now divided into four weeks in July/August and then

of the garden of No.19 The Fairway with alternating weeks of whist drive and dance/games. When the membership became too big they moved to the White House Café - now Atkinson Glass.

V.E. Party - this was held in the right of way between numbers 23 and 25 The Fairway. We all took our own cup, plate and chair. After tea we were treated to donkey rides.

V.J. Party was held on waste ground (now built on) at the corner of The Leaway. A small platform had been built and after tea everyone was encouraged to take part in an impromptu concert.

After the war years dad, who had always been interested in conjuring, joined the Magic Circle and as an Associate Member I often assisted him when he performed at functions or parties. Sometimes I even did a few tricks myself. Dad and I worked up a thought reading act that we would perform at shows. I remember that we had a visit at

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Bomb Damage - The Crossway, World War II

Headteacher said "Yes please" and it was duly delivered. Over the years I've tried to piece together its history. Around the rim of the bell is moulded "Portchester Council School 1874". The ground the school is built on belongs to Southwick Estate and should the building no longer be used for Educational Purposes it then reverts to the Estate. This appears to have been donated in 1873. According to the school Log Books, the first pupil was admitted on August 30th 1875. The bell was hung on a niche that can still be seen on the fascia of the southern apex of the building facing Castle Street. It was rung before the start of school warning pupils not to be late. As only the wealthy people could afford clocks, this was an essential start to a school day.

When Mr Bennets, the first Headmaster, eventually retired after nearly 40 years, the bell was no longer in use, some of the old boys clubbed together and bought the bell to give him as a retirement gift.

When Mr. Bennetts first wife died, he later married Jessie Russell whose parents were custodians of the Castle, in an era when a wax works was the main attraction. When Jessie's parents died, the Bennetts became joint custodians and he built up a museum in an old army hut by the Castle. They lived in Castle Cottage and then when Mr Bennetts died, Jessie made the army hut her home. The next part is my theory of events..... When Dickie Bennetts died and she had to down size from Castle Cottage to the army hut, I believe she offered the bell to the church... then when the Ascension Church was built at the western end of White Hart Lane, the bell was hung in a small belfry over the porch where it stayed for many years. It was offered back to the school when the church was demolished for houses. So, this little story has gone full circle and the bell now resides in Castle Primary School.

In 1976 after several changes I became the Secretary/Admin Officer. In 1982 Castle Junior School and Manor House Infant Schools were amalgamated, working on split sites for a year while builders made the necessary changes to the infant school, to accommodate 250 -300 extra junior children. The Office and Dining Hall at one end, in the middle a building site, with 150 infants at the other end. Portaloos were placed at the front of the building for the children with the water supplied by hose running over the roof of the school. As the toilets were full size, platforms had to be built round them so that the children could reach! The only routes between the children and the Office/



Barrage Balloon and Crew in Portchester WWII

Dining Hall were either a circuit out on to the school field or round the outside of the building on the Castle Street Side. School work probably suffered quite a bit for the infants during that year with the distraction of JCB's, dumper trucks and the like working outside the classroom windows while extra water and drainage pipes were laid and classrooms and snugs built on. Originally

the Main Hall had three entrance doors from the lobby. The centre one was filled in and made into a recess. Placed under the shelf of the recess before it was sealed, is a time capsule containing items and children's work from 1982/3. I myself contributed a milk token, these were issued to children who paid at the start of the week for a third of a pint bottle of milk each day and then exchanged for the milk at morning break.

In 1992 the car in which I was a passenger was involved in a serious accident. Eventually coming home from hospital I needed a wheelchair. This made me very aware of the difficulties wheelchair users come up against. Joining the local Access Group proved very interesting and I was involved in a number of access surveys including Fort Nelson Car Park and the adjoining meadow, Portchester Castle grounds and the walkways around the outside. When Fareham shopping centre was being refurbished I gave a 45 minute talk to the developers and councillors suggesting ways to make it more disabled friendly. They were very co-operative and 17 out of 18 suggestions were implemented.

In the autumn of 1995 Nigel Lewis, who was at that time the Fareham Access Officer, asked me to accompany him on an access survey of the Crematorium. There proved to be a fair number of places that needed doorways widening and ramps to easily move a wheelchair over steps and kerbs. To

my amazement in March 1996 I was asked to go back to test the alterations at an 'opening ceremony'. All went well as we toured the building with the 'News' taking photos of the easier access for my wheelchair. At the close we were invited for coffee in the office. The gentleman in charge explained

continued »

that the office was the one place we had not surveyed, but they had realised and had widened the door and put a small ramp up to the step. Being slower than the rest, the first funeral of the day was arriving as I wheeled myself to the office. Waiting until the car had moved I went as quickly as possible to the open door. The small front wheels went easily over the step but then stuck between the step and a fixed doormat. Needing a six-foot turning circle because of a leg at a right angle and limited space in the office, several people had to climb over me and haul me out backwards. Luckily the press had disappeared by then as I was not a lot of help being convulsed with laughter!

Following an incident where a fire engine could not negotiate parked vans and cars to attend a small fire in Myrtle Avenue, the authorities decided to ban parking on verges and paint double yellow lines on alternate sides reducing parking from over seventy to approximately eleven places. Although the double yellow lines outside of our front door would not affect us with parking as we had paid for a dropped kerb into the front garden in 1989. The problem would arise for things like having the annual service to the boiler or gas fires. With such limited provision for parking, contractors would be unwilling to attend.

We toured the surrounding authorities areas to see what solutions could be found, making many notes and taking many photographs. Compiling a file of things like sloped kerbs, hardened or grasscreted verges allowing two wheels of vehicles to park on the path. Because the cost of a dropped kerb was between £700 and £900 per house, we also made the suggestion



45A Southdown bus heading south in Castle Street, c1948

that if enough people were willing to park in their front gardens a reduced fee could be charged for bulk supply of dropped kerbs, or alternatively pay by instalments. We asked to attend and put forward our ideas at a highways meeting. We were allotted ten minutes to say our piece. The first meeting was cancelled so we turned up at the second meeting and I put forward all our ideas and left them with the file. Several other residents had obviously been in touch



Portchester Cricket Club - T Sparshatt, McDonald, H Wilson, G Wilkinson Snr, G Wilkinson Jnr, W Bailey, R Harris, T Robinson, W Pratt, V Hannat, Wilstead, A Durant, G Durant, R Ridge, F Ridge (Captain), J Froggatt, G Russell, Mrs Russell (Scorer)

Doctors surgeries have changed considerably since 1936. The early ones were held in a room of the doctor's house, then later in a green corrugated iron building in Castle Street on the corner of Cow Lane. As extra doctors were needed with the rising population, this plot of land was sold and a new surgery combined with a library was built on the site of the old Turret House. While the building work was taking place some doctors who could not accommodate a surgery in their private houses had temporary accommodation in a portacabin in the car park behind Iceland whilst others had rooms at the back of the building in West Street where Marlows Accountants is today. Again because of rising patient numbers a further surgery complex has been built near the Community Centre in Westlands Grove.

In 1936 there was no County Library in Portchester. Mrs Craggs who owned a wool shop on the corner of The Downsway ran a 1d. Foyles book loan. The first public library was in a room of Portchester Community School with access from Chalky Walk and

with the council and the outcome was to apply to the government for a regeneration grant to make a 'Home Zone'. Many public meetings, exhibitions and redrafting of plans occurred before fruition. The contractors were extremely good and very helpful over access at difficult times.

Like all new innovations there have been some teething problems, but overall the road is much more attractive and tidier. The big lorries no longer use the road as a rat run but only for deliveries. The young lads on Vespa type scooters do tend to race using the flower-beds as chicanes. The problems occur when people park awkwardly or householders allow their hedges to protrude over the footpath. Another concern is that it is suggested the residents take over the care of the flower-beds, most people are either past taking on anymore commitments or are working too long hours to cope with anything extra.

was run totally by volunteers. Later when the County supplied paid staff a hut was built nearer to the Chalky Walk gate. This was is use up to the date of the opening of the present library

An item of interest. At a social gathering, while talking to elderly Miss Silvester one time resident of Bowery Cottage in Castle Street, she mentioned that the church shaped doors came from St James' Church. We've not been able to establish if it was St James, Southwick or St James, Milton. The Milton Church did have a serious fire so it does seem the most likely. Miss Silvester, an adventuresome lady, was one of the first to go on a "Cook's Tour", and proudly related that she drove a motorcycle and sidecar during World War 1 and crashed it into a tank!

**Ruby, a lovely lady, wrote this account of her life in Portchester in 2006 before she died in 2011**

## Anthony Cowper Bailey (Author)

Anthony Bailey, an internationally known author, lived his early years in Portchester. His father, Cowper Bailey, who lived over 'the shop', was manager of the Portchester branch of National Provincial Bank which is better known to us all as the recently closed NatWest Bank.

Anthony Bailey, known to his friends as Tony and by the Pricean schoolboys as Yank, was born in Portsmouth on the 5th January 1933. His first school was St. Benedict's School, Fareham but at the age of seven he became an evacuee. His parents decided Tony must escape

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# PORTCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY NEWS



by Paul Woodman

## Lidl

After a very aggressive campaign by Lidl they now have planning permission to build a new store on the Castle Trading Estate at Portchester.

The planning meeting was rescheduled from the Civic Offices to Ferneham Hall to accommodate the estimated 400 Portchester residents who came to see the result of the application.

According to a letter from Lidl they are applying for amendment to the plans as they wish to build a larger store having bought the adjacent property to the two they already own.

## Agincourt 600

The first of a series of presentations of the play 'Across the Dark Water' was staged in the Keep of Portchester Castle over three days in July by a cast from Eastleigh's Berry Theatre. The play focussed on the lead up to Agincourt and the plot to overthrow Henry V.

The intimate setting of the room in the Keep was the perfect venue and



Agincourt Archer 2015  
(Courtesy of Farrow Creative)



Agincourt re-enactment in the castle in August

with a stunning stage set and excellent actors it was a privilege to be part of the audience following the plot in one of its original settings. The play was taken to other venues between Portchester and Southampton during July following the dates in 1415 that the plot unfolded. It was great to see the Castle being used for this historical event and the re-enactment of troops leaving for Agincourt that was staged over the weekend of 8/9th August in the Castle.

## Community

The Civic Society had a rest from meetings in July and August but we have had a very informative walk around Wickham, led by local guides.



Wicor litter pick, July 2015

Elsewhere, Bernie Lendon has written a report on the visit to Wymering Manor in September. In July members and helpers took part in a clean up of the Wicor Recreation Park and in September the seafront around Portchester Castle was cleaned and surveyed for litter, as part of the Marine Conservation Society's annual Great British Beach Clean.



Society member John Peyton Great British Beach Clean 2015



The Great British Beach Clean 2015

« Anthony Cowper Bailey  
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the threat of the Nazi invasion of Britain so it was arranged for him to stay with a family in Dayton, Ohio. His stay resulted in four very happy years as the family were prepared to make a gesture of support for Britain. He returned to live in Park Gate in 1944 and furthered his education at Price's School, Fareham until 1948 where he passed his School Certificate. At the age of 14 his parents moved back to Portchester to live in Dovercot, a house near the south end of Castle Street.

Having been introduced to sailing at a summer camp whilst an evacuee it was no surprise for this interest to be furthered when Anthony realised his near neighbour was Commander C.E. Hammond, the honorary secretary of Portchester Sailing Club. Also a few doors away lived Jonathan Rowe who had his own sailing boat and soon

generously took Anthony along as his crew. This experience generated his lasting love of sailing. So it wasn't difficult for him to talk his father into buying his own thirteen-footer which was christened 'Caprice'. So soon he began sailing in earnest with his father agreeing to crew. Before not too long he had the urgent desire to build his own boat. So with a loan from his father to cover the materials he purchased plans for a 'Cadet', a ten foot six inch racing dinghy designed for easy construction by young people and sponsored by a yachting magazine. The hard work of building his own boat was clearly going to need some help and his school friend, Howard (Wheezy) Williams soon volunteered. Wheezy was well known for his wry sense of humour, adequate scientific skills and his passion for messing about in boats. Like Wheezy Tony was soon engulfed building, rebuilding and/or restoring other boats. To-day he owns a Portchester Duck built by Wheezy and shipped to him from Canada and is happily sailing it on a nearby lake to his Mercia Island home in Essex.

Anthony Cowper Bailey, to quote his full name, is author of 22 books, a number of poems, many short-stories, essays, pieces of reporting and reviews. Much of his work has been translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese and Hungarian. He has been awarded a Lowell Thomas award for best travel book (1994), was shortlisted for the James Tait Black Memorial prize for biography (1997) and the Whitbread biography prize (2001). He was staff-writer for The New Yorker magazine 1956-92.

After leaving Price's School he went onto Churcher's College, Petersfield for two years and then Merton College, Oxford after completing his National Service. When on National Service he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant seeing service with the 3rd Battalion, the Gold Coast Regiment, the Royal West African Frontier Force.

David Williams

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2016

### Tuesday 19 January

The Falklands - Islands of Kings, Tyrants & Grants  
by Mike Read

### Tuesday 16 February

Under the Veil  
by Sandra Simmons

### Tuesday 15 March

The Life & Times of Alfred the Great  
by Kay Ainsworth

### Tuesday 19 April

Highgate Cemetery  
by Reverend Ian Meredith

### Tuesday 17 May

Nursing Experiences - When things were different  
by Sonia King  
Parish Hall, 7.30pm

### Tuesday 21 June

Haslar - A walk through history  
by Eric Birbeck

### Tuesday 20 September

Gosport & Fareham Inshore Rescue Service  
by Steve Hobbs

### Tuesday 18 October

The Hayling Island Railway  
by Peter Keat

### Saturday 12 November

Memories of Portchester Exhibition  
Parish Hall, 10am - 4.30pm

### Tuesday 15 November

Nelson's Ships  
by Christopher Knox

PARISH HALL

CASTLE STREET

PORTCHESTER

PO16 9PY

WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS

# PORTCHESTER MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Portchester Civic Society

Founded 2000 | Registered Charity No. 1090509

Member of:

CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England); BTCV; NCVO; Solent Protection Society; Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust; Portsmouth Harbour Conservation Group

For further information please contact our Chairman Hazel Woodman: 02392 382778

[www.PortchesterCivicSociety.co.uk](http://www.PortchesterCivicSociety.co.uk)