

NEWSLETTER

Updating Hampshire's History

No. 9

Spring 2017

VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Hampshire

Basingstoke: a medieval town, c.1000 - c.1600,

by John Hare

So far our **VCH** publications have focused on the countryside around the town. Now the first book concerning Basingstoke itself is in press, a volume on medieval Basingstoke, when it emerged as a major trading and industrial town. This will be the first of several on the town itself that will explore the rich history of this important place. It will be followed by a book on the town in the 19th century. Before that, we will return to the countryside, with *Cliddesden, Hatch and Farleigh Wallop* by Alison Deveson and Sue Lane.



VCH Exhibition at Basingstoke Discovery Centre in January and February 2017



LITERARY BASINGSTOKE

Jane Austen in Basingstoke

As Basingstoke was the nearest market town to Steventon, Jane and her family often visited the town for shopping and entertainment.

In 1792 the shopkeepers included six bakers, four butchers, four drapers, three peruke makers, two grocers, two hatters and an ironmonger. There were also 10 businesses simply described as shopkeepers. In her letters to Cassandra, Jane mentioned some of her shopping trips to Basingstoke. In October 1798 she went to Mrs Ryder's "*& bought what I intended to buy, but not in much perfection*". In January 1801 she wrote to Cassandra:

"The Neighbourhood have quite recovered the death of Mrs Rider – so much so, that I think they are rather rejoiced at it now; her Things were so very dear! - & Mrs Rogers is to be all that is desirable."

Mrs Rogers was originally Miss Bishop. Miss Bishop had a shop in London Street. In May 1799 she announced that she had just returned from London with "*a new and elegant assortment of millinery, flowers, rich alamode for cloaks, gloves, etc.*" In August 1800 she married a Mr Rogers and in 1801 she moved her business from London Street to a shop in the Market Place.



The most significant purchase from Basingstoke was made by Jane's father in 1794 when he paid John Ring of Church Street 12 shillings for "*a Small Mahogany Writing Desk with 1 Long Drawer and Glass Ink Stand Compleat*". This was the portable writing desk on which Jane wrote all her novels. He also bought Jane the notebooks in which she

wrote her juvenilia. He probably got these from John Chambers' haberdashery and stationery shop. John Chambers was a woollen and linen draper who also sold "*pocket books, atlases, and all other types of books and almanacs, likewise millinery, perfumery, and a variety of patent medicines*" and had two men "*constantly employed making hats.*"

Jane attended many of the Basingstoke Balls at the Town Hall (for more details see *Jane Austen Basingstoke Balls* and *Wicked William Wilson* on the **VCH Explore** website).

Bob Clarke

Jane Austen and Hampshire Country Houses

Jane Austen lived for the first 25 years in Steventon Rectory (see the **VCH** publication, *Steventon*) and she was very familiar with the country houses that lay within a few miles of her home, which provided her with inspiration for her novels. Most of these were no more than small to medium sized houses supported by estates of up to 4,000 acres and a number of them have been rebuilt or altered. These include Steventon manor house, tenanted by the Digweed family, Ashe Park owned by the Portal family but tenanted by the eccentric John Holder, and Oakley Hall, home of the childless Wither Bramstons.



Manydown House

Perhaps the most significant was Manydown Park in Wootton St Lawrence, demolished in 1965, the home of the Bigg-Wither family. Three of the daughters, Elizabeth, Alethea and Catherine Bigg were close to the Austen sisters in age and they became great friends. It was here at a ball early in 1796 that Jane met and flirted with Tom Lefroy. It was also here that the son and heir, Harris Bigg-Wither, proposed to Jane in December 1802 and she, after accepting, changed her mind the next morning. This did not prevent the women remaining friends and it was Elizabeth, then settled in Winchester, who arranged Jane's final lodgings in College Street in 1817.



Steventon Rectory

As well as Steventon, two rectory houses were also important to Jane; Deane Rectory, now demolished, was rented by George Austen to the widowed Martha Lloyd with her two unmarried daughters Martha and Mary. They remained firm friends. Jane and her sister visited them frequently after they moved to a

small country house at Ibthorpe, 15 miles from Steventon, in 1792. Jane was also very fond of the lively and cultured Madam Lefroy, the wife of the rector at Ashe, until her untimely death in 1804. The house is still extant but now called Ashe House.

Jane went to dances at other rather grander houses; these included Hurstbourne Park, Kempshott Park and Hackwood Park.

Derek Spruce

John Arlott OBE, 1914-1991

Leslie Thomas John Arlott was born at Cemetery Lodge, Chapel Hill in Basingstoke, where his father was cemetery keeper. He attended local schools and his career spanned clerical work at Basingstoke town hall and Park Prewett Mental Hospital and 12 years as a policeman at Southampton. He also studied Russian, military history and took up boxing as well as developing his well known love of cricket. He stood as Liberal candidate for Epping in the general elections of 1955 and 1959 but was not elected.



Cemetery Lodge

He is best known for his cricket commentaries on BBC radio and television but few people are aware of his literary talent. Under John Betjeman's guidance he secured his first post in BBC radio in 1945 as Overseas Literary Producer, succeeding George Orwell. He produced a weekly programme entitled 'Book of Verse' and regularly directed Dylan Thomas and the two became friends. They broadcast from 1945 to 1950 and collaborated on several books and anthologies of poetry, including some of his own works. He regularly wrote for Wisden Cricketers' Almanack and even composed a hymn – 'God Whose Farm is all Creation'.

Few of Arlott's poems have survived. Those that have are short and some linked to cricket such as 'Cricket at Swansea' and 'To John Berry Hobbs on his Seventieth Birthday' which appears in his biography of Hobbs. Others reflect the horrors of war – 'Tea with my Aunts' and 'Bomb Crater' – while another entitled 'Death on the Road' was a tragic premonition of his own son's death on the road ten years later.

In 1961 Arlott moved to the former Sun Inn in Alresford which he renovated as his home and renamed the 'Old Sun Inn'. He served as President of the Alresford Historical Society for 15 years. He moved to Alderney in 1981 where he died ten years later. His headstone is engraved with lines from one of his own poems:

*"So clear you see those timeless things,
That, like a bird, the vision sings."*

Jennie Butler

Revd Charles Butler, 1560-1647, a native of Wycombe, Bucks, was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, and appointed rector of Nately Scures in 1593. Two years later he became Master at the Holy Ghost School and then in 1600 became vicar of Wootton St Lawrence where he remained until his death aged 87 in 1647. He wrote various educational books but is best known for his treatise on bee keeping, *The Feminine Monarchy*, published 1609. Written from his own experience as a bee keeper, it remained the authority on bee keeping for the next 250 years. He is commemorated in his church by a stained glass window.

Mary Oliver

Thomas Warton, 1728-1790, poet,

was born at the parsonage on 9 January 1728. He was the younger son of Thomas Warton (1688-1745), vicar of Basingstoke. Warton was educated at home by his father until 1744 when he entered Trinity College, Oxford. He eventually became Professor of Poetry there, as his father had been. Warton was made Poet Laureate in 1785. He wrote a sonnet 'To the River Loddon' which he had loved in his early years. He is commemorated locally by Warton Road at South View, carrying his name.



The Old Rectory

Bob Applin

Revd Alfred Capes Tarbolton, 1853-1925

The Revd Tarbolton, who ministered at London Street Congregational Church between 1887 and 1907, was not only a highly regarded and well loved Christian pastor but also a talented poet. As recorded in his official obituary: "He had considerable literary gifts about which he was most modest". His poems were published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. In addition, he wrote a more substantial work 'Joseph the Dreamer', which led to his being invited to become a member of the Society of Poets. However, in keeping with his reticence, he declined the invitation.



Roger Ottewill

VCH Hampshire

What We Do

We are a group of volunteers who are researching the history of Basingstoke and its surrounding parishes to update the original **VCH Hampshire** volumes published at the beginning of the 20th century.

We have published two books - *Mapledurwell* (2012) and *Steventon* (2016) - and are due to publish *Medieval Basingstoke* shortly and *Cliddesden, Hatch and Farleigh Wallop* later this year and have other books in the planning stage. We have uploaded draft chapters onto the Hampshire section of the national **VCH** website <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/hampshire> about Basingstoke, including its medieval history, education, trade and industry, markets and shopping, railways and inns, pubs and breweries, as well as draft chapters of the histories of Cliddesden, Farleigh Wallop, Herriard, Nately Scures, Newnham, Old Basing, Tunworth, Up Nately and Andwell, and Upton Grey.

We use the **Explore** website <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore> to publish short articles about interesting local people, places and themes and transcriptions of documents used for research. To date there are 61 articles. They include Jane Austen at Steventon; a study of timber-framed houses on the Hampshire downlands; Swing Riots and Cliddesden convicts; Basing House; Congregationalism in Ellisfield; the riots against the Salvation Army in the 1880s; a history of the Basingstoke Volunteer Fire Brigade; Sanitary Inspectors' reports from the 1860s with their graphic descriptions of privies that were 'constant sources of noxious effluvia'; and why the impresario who organised the balls Jane Austen attended in Basingstoke was sent to Newgate for six months.

The group also post transcriptions of a selection of local wills and inventories onto **Explore**. The inventories provide a fascinating tour of 16th and 17th century houses, describing the contents of each room that provide an insight into domestic life at the time. Luckily some inventories of shopkeepers and other trades people have survived to show us what goods they were selling. They include the fascinating inventory of an 18th century chapman.

From the spreadsheets of local censuses we have posted, visitors to the **Explore** website can track the changes in people's occupations between 1851 and 1901 and perform other types of analysis, on migration for example.

Bob Clarke

FUNDRAISING: We need your help

We are very lucky to enjoy the dedicated long-term work of our volunteers. They have become a highly skilled group, led by Dr Jean Morrin and Dr John Hare, both volunteers themselves. We are also greatly indebted to a number of grant-making trusts – notably **Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Fund**, **Marc Fitch Fund**, the **Bulldog Trust** and **Hampshire Field Club**. Our thanks also to the **University of Winchester**, **R.J. Smith & Co of Whitchurch** and for help from **Hampshire County Council**, **Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council** and several generous individuals.

But we need now, as other active **VCH** counties have done, to widen our fundraising base to add many more individual donors who will give small or larger amounts to us regularly. Taking advantage of **GiftAid** we will be able to recover another 25% of their gifts from HMRC at no extra cost to them. Please consider doing this on a monthly, or half-yearly basis. No separate gift is too small. All will help our core costs for photocopying, image copyright, research and publication. Please ask Jean (jean.morrin@winchester.ac.uk) or John Isherwood (johnisherwood0@gmail.com) to send you a donation form.

If you would like to help with fundraising, either John or Jean would be delighted to hear from you.