

# NEWSLETTER

Updating Hampshire's History

No. 11

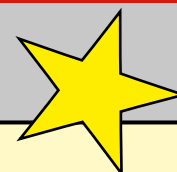
Spring 2018

VICTORIA  
COUNTY  
HISTORY

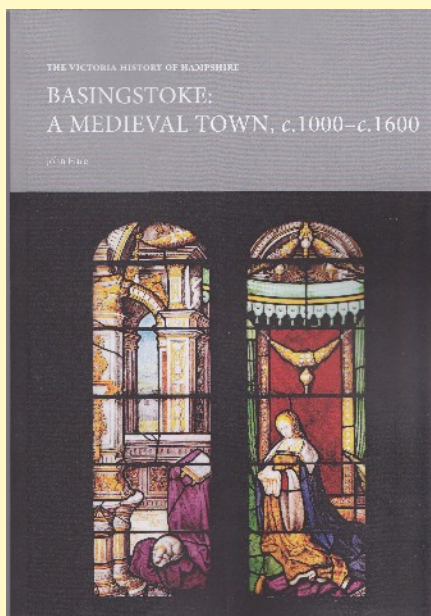


Hampshire

## PUBLICATION NEWS



### Basingstoke: A Medieval Town, c1000-c1600, by John Hare



Although Basingstoke is often seen as a modern creation, it has a long, rich and prosperous history. This book looks at the earliest centuries of the town from its beginnings c1000. It became a significant market centre for the area around, and a stopping place on the route to London from the west. It rose to importance as the centre of a major industrial area, whose manufactured cloths formed part of international patterns of trade. By 1500, it was the third most important town in Hampshire and among the top 60 towns in England. Moreover, it is well documented particularly for the 15th and 16th centuries. Much of the old town has been swept away by subsequent rebuilding and the shopping centre, but something of the medieval footprint of the town survives in the streets beyond, in a few surviving buildings and in its magnificent church, itself a reflection of the prosperity of the town at its peak. The book examines these buildings as well as the families, outsiders and locals, who made the most of the new thriving economic conditions, and whose dynamism helped create the town's expansion.

*This is the third short produced by the **Hampshire VCH** project. It is available price £12 for personal collection from the Willis Museum, Basingstoke Discovery Centre and the Hampshire Record Office, or by post from Dr Jean Morrin, 23 West Road, Emsworth, PO10 7JT (£12 plus £2 p&p; cheques should be made payable to Hampshire Archives Trust (**VCH** Project).*

## BOOK LAUNCH EVENT at Church Cottage, Basingstoke on 20 April 2018



Author, Dr John Hare



Professor Steven Gunn  
Oxford University

The launch took place before an audience of nearly 100 and in the presence of the mayor of Basingstoke, Councillor Frankum, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the county, Mr Nigel McNair Scott, and the Vice-Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Still.

The author, Dr John Hare is a specialist in the economy of the later Middle Ages and spent a career teaching history at Peter Symonds' College, Winchester. This is the third volume produced by the Victoria History of Hampshire, following on from studies of Mapledurwell and Steventon. It is the first of those that will deal with the fascinating history of Basingstoke itself. More is on the way.



VCH Hants Chair Anna McNair  
Scott and Nigel McNair Scott



The Mayor and Mayoress  
of Basingstoke



## MEDICAL MATTERS in BASINGSTOKE

## Typhoid 1905

Basingstoke's Medical Officer of Health had long argued that the town's water supply from the Totterdown well was unsafe. He blamed the well for an epidemic of pustular tuberculosis which occurred in 1894-95.

In 1905, during major repairs, a contractor put a block in the sewer pipe and forgot to remove it. The block remained in place for over a month. The sewage from Reading Road, Coronation Road and Steam Mill Terrace backed up and escaped through a gap in the joints. Once free, the sewage went off on its travels, wandering through the porous chalk, until it dropped into the well and contaminated the town's water supply.

When the Borough Surveyor finally removed the block, he didn't tell the Medical Officer of Health about the sewage's great escape. It wasn't until some weeks later when people started to go down with typhoid that he remembered removing the block and told the Medical Officer that there might be something wrong with the water supply. The Medical Officer issued a series of notices advising people to boil the water. By then it was too late. Over 170 people caught the disease, 15 of whom died.

The fear of water at the time must have done wonders for beer sales. Except in the case of the *Cattle Market Inn* (now the *Bounty*) where the landlord's son caught typhoid and was being nursed at home. The landlord complained to the Council that, "as soon as it became known that I had the fever in my house, my business fell off altogether".

When the disease abated, the lawyers moved in.

The *Portsmouth Evening News* commented:

*"The Basingstoke Town Council have got over the typhoid visitation, only to find an epidemic of writs issued against them for damages. A burdened ratepayer asks, 'Which is the most serious?'"*

## Church and charities

Before the days of the Welfare State, help for the sick and poor was to some extent provided by charities and benefactors; the various churches in the area played an active part, as can be seen from the entry from the church magazine for St Michael's for June 1870, announcing that two wheelchairs, crutches, a mattress, and even bed-rests and hot water bottles could be borrowed from Church Cottage when needed. Sometimes there was a more unusual initiative, such as the weekly clinic started in January 1925 for children with bone troubles – rickets, joint deformities and other troubles. A London orthopaedic surgeon was to attend once a month, and qualified nurses on other weeks, for the 'small fee of 6d for each child'.

## Trainee Apothecaries

An excellent glimpse into the businesses and trades of a parish can be seen in the records of the duties paid for apprentices. In Basingstoke, surgeons John Gale, Giles and John Lyford took on apprentices between 1732 and 1783 and three apothecaries, William Herne, John Covey and Robert Hulbert between 1753 and 1802. The apprentices were probably only 14 years old, having left school, so not only did they enter scary and responsible training but one wonders how scared their patients were.

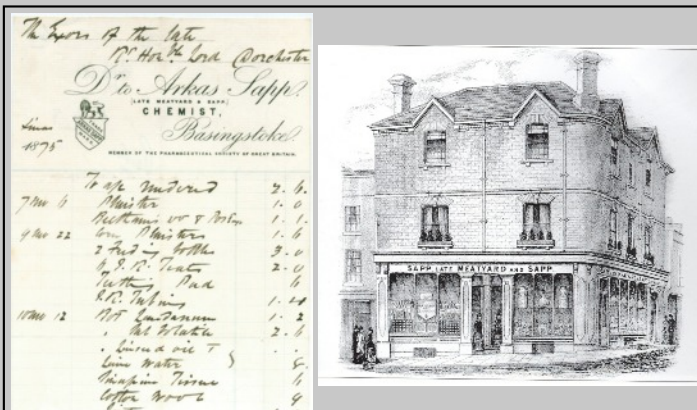
## The tribulations of a poor law doctor

Before 1834 doctors were hired on an ad hoc basis by the Overseers in the parish to treat the poor. The 1834 Poor Law stipulated the contracting of doctors for groups of parishes and several were thus hired in each union. The job was difficult, often involving travelling across miles of open country in all weathers on non-existent roads and tracks, and dealing with people who were chronically sick as a result of awful living conditions and bad diet. It is not surprising that there were occasional complaints. A doctor would lose some of his local patients through fear of contamination from the poor.



The doctor received an annual fee, from which he found all his expenses and medicines. He applied for additional fees for surgery, difficult confinements and expensive medicines, and this would create an often protracted exchange between the doctor and the London authorities (which, fortunately for us, gave details). In one case, in 1861, fees for Dr Edmund Covey of £20 were not sanctioned until after his death, and were paid into his estate. Sometimes fees were not sanctioned for simply being claimed on the wrong form. A doctor could also claim fees for performing smallpox vaccinations, water and sewage surveys etc. for the union.

For all its problems, this is the first time in English history that the poor received formal free health care. *Barbara Large*



1875 Billhead for Arkas Sapp and image of Meatyard  
and Sapp, Chemist, in Market Square

## Basingstoke Cottage Hospital

For many years, on an almost weekly basis, the *Hants and Berks Gazette* published not only statistics for the Cottage Hospital, such as patients admitted and discharged, but also subscriptions and gifts in kind, with the latter making particularly interesting reading. Here are some examples from 1903: week ending January 13th, Mrs Bates - rabbits; w/e May 12th, Mrs Shipway - vegetables and flowers; w/e August 4th, Mrs Mitchell - dressing-gown and papers; and w/e 24th November, P. Laming Esq. - pheasants. Needless to say, at harvest time the hospital was inundated with gifts of fruit and vegetables from the churches.

*Roger Ottewill*

## VCH Hampshire Work in Progress

The group is currently researching the history of Basingstoke and its surrounding parishes. As well as publishing three Shorts, *Mappedurwell*, *Steventon* and *Medieval Basingstoke*, we have also placed material on the national **VCH** website and the Explore website. The Hampshire section of the national **VCH** website, <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/counties/hampshire>, has draft texts. We have recently added sections on Public Health and Public Services in Basingstoke and the Religious History of Dummer.

The **Explore** website, <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore>, is used to publish short articles about interesting local people, places and themes and also transcriptions of wills, inventories, censuses and other documents used for research. Items added recently to the **Explore** website include: settlement and buildings in Overton; histories of Overton Silk Mill and Portals Paper Mills; Rectors of Dummer and transcriptions of 16th century wills and inventories from Basingstoke, Old Basing and Dummer.