

NEWSLETTER

Updating Hampshire's History

No. 24

Autumn 2024

VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Hampshire

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATION



Announcing an exciting new book from
VCH Hampshire

Basingstoke Reinvented 1800 to 1925: From Agricultural Town to Manufacturing Centre

will be published early in 2025.

Read on to find out more

The Reinvention of Basingstoke, 1860-1925

Before the 1860s Basingstoke was mainly an agricultural centre. Any goods it manufactured were mostly sold locally. Villagers would sell their produce and purchase goods in return, whether imported products or those produced in the workshops of the town. After the railways came to Basingstoke raw materials could easily be brought in, and manufactured goods could be easily exported to other parts of the country and abroad. It took a while before the town began to take advantage of the opportunities the railways brought, but from the 1860s its economy began to be transformed. By 1925 Basingstoke had well and truly reinvented itself as a manufacturing centre.



Towards the end of the 19th century the major employers were Wallis and Steevens, an engineering firm on Station Hill; Burberry's Gabardine factory between Hackwood Road and Mark Lane; Gerrish, Ames and Simpkins, who were mass producers of off-the-peg tailoring

clothing factory in New Street.

A further boost to the economy of the town occurred in 1898 when the Thornycroft Steam Wagon Company moved from Chiswick to a large site in Worting Road as its workshops at Chiswick had proved inadequate to cope with the demand for its vehicles. It became the town's largest employer, and its rapid growth required an influx of workers into the town. The 1921 census returns for Basingstoke show that only 46% of its employees were born in Hampshire.

The clothing factories transformed the employment of women and girls. In 1921 33.3% of the female workforce were employed in making clothes and textiles. By contrast only 20.5% were employed as domestic servants, compared with 40.8% in Alton and 33.5% in Andover.

All these extra people needed somewhere to live. The town expanded west along the Loddon valley to provide mainly terraced housing for the working classes. In 1869 land at "the west end of Brook Street", which later became May Street, was auctioned with

180 plots. In 1870 Alfred Tyrell, from Hadleigh in Essex, bought a large plot of land in the west of the town and laid out Essex, Southend, Rayleigh, Rochford and Solby's roads for building. The second half of the 19th century also saw an upsurge in middle-class housing on the higher ground on the South View Estate to the north of the railway and on the Fair Fields to the south of the town.

The arrival and expansion of the Thornycroft works led to further development in the west of the town. In 1899 John Mares, the owner of the Worting Road Estate, announced his intention of developing the estate by building a series of villas and semi-detached houses in Worting Road between the Queen's School and Highfield House and making three new roads – Queen's Road, Alexandra Road and George Street for building. The prospectus for the Worting Road Estate in August 1900 showed there were 205 plots "of various sizes suitable for the immediate erection of dwelling houses, cottages, shops, etc".



The next major development took place between 1920 and 1922 when 135 council houses were built in Sherborne Road, Kingsclere Road and Lancaster Road in the north of the town. (A crescent of 28 houses in Cranbourne Lane in 1914 were the first council houses to be built in the town.)

Between the 1860s and 1925, Basingstoke had undergone substantial changes. There had been a massive expansion of the built-up area. What were once fields were now estates of houses and most roads leading from the town centre had been subject to ribbon development. The population had almost tripled from 4,654 in 1861 to 12,723

in 1921 and comprised a mixture of families who had lived in Basingstoke for generations, people moving to Basingstoke to follow their employers, and people moving in from all over the country in search of work in the factories. The number of houses had grown from 945 in 1861 to 2,816 in 1921. Basingstoke in 1925 had become effectively a New Town.

Bob Clarke



The Importance of Religion in 1925 Basingstoke

From 1800 to 1925 Anglicans worshipped at St Michael's church, Congregationalists in London Street and adherents of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in Wote Street. During this period a remarkable number of new churches and chapels opened. These included Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan Methodist churches on Sarum Hill and in Church Street (pictured) respectively; the Roman Catholic church of the Holy Ghost situated to the north of the railway station in Sherborne Road which was consecrated in 1903; and since 1908 the Open Baptist church, occupying the former British School premises on the south side of Sarum Hill.

These churches offered social, cultural and educational events. From the perspective of 2024 it is difficult to appreciate fully the degree to which people's lives were influenced by the churches even if they were not members. With their Sunday schools, organisations for women and men, fund raising events and campaigning roles they were much in evidence. The number of column inches in the *Hants and Berks Gazette* devoted to church events illustrated this.



During 1925 musical events organised by churches attracted large audiences, from a performance by the Silchester Temperance Brass Band at George Street Mission Hall in February when 200 were "packed to the doors" to "a programme of music" given by the Thornycroft Military Band at the Wesleyan Church in April; and from an organ recital at the Parish Church in May to an entertainment at the Salvation Army barracks given by the United Village Choir in late July. Also of note was the



bazaar organised by London Street Congregational Church held at the Town Hall in December to raise funds for the extension of May Place Hall in memory of Alderman Tigwell, who had died earlier in the year.

During the afternoon the bazaar was enlivened with music by the Mr Vernon Griffiths Orchestra and in the evening the Primitive Methodist Orchestra. As it had done since 1899, throughout the year the Basingstoke Brotherhood based at London Street Congregational Church offered opportunities for men to enjoy fellowship and aspirational speakers. Intriguing titles included in February "Some aspects of student life in India" and in April "St Francis" and "Thinking and Being".

Roger Ottewill

May's Brewery - a job for life?

Mays Brewery was founded in the 18C and by 1921 was the largest brewery in Basingstoke, also owning many of the town's pubs. Those working for May's in 1921 (other than as pub licensees) living in Basingstoke are identified in that year's census. There were 35 employees, all men and roughly a quarter were aged 60 or over. This, and the company's dominance, suggested that some of those working for them in 1921 may have worked there for some years and this is borne out in other sources.

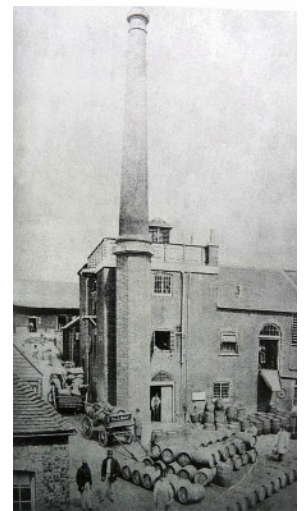
In 1911, 34 of the 1921 workforce would have been old enough to work. Of these, 18 were working in brewery jobs, and several were confirmed as May's employees in newspaper reports from as early as 1893. In 1901, 13 of 29 were brewery workers and William Smith was already living in Brook Street, close to May's Brewery, and probably an employee even then. Henry Appleton, who was 69 in 1921, was injured on the railway at Basingstoke in 1903 while working as a carman for Mays.

Other men had worked for Mays since at least 1903 and some for much longer. Ernest Swayne was working in Farnham in 1891 and 1901, but was in Basingstoke representing Mays in a licensing hearing in 1903 and was May's collector in 1921, evidently a well-paid role as his house had 12 rooms. Lloyd Brown had been innkeeper (and carpenter and joiner) at the [Three] Tun's Inn and then became licensee of the *Rising Sun* in 1893. Both were May's pubs. He gave up the licence of the *Rising Sun* in 1903 but was still employed by Mays in 1921, still working as a carpenter and joiner, showing that not all roles were directly involved with brewing.

There were also family connections between employees. Two brothers, Thomas and William Sims, were employed as maltsters in 1921. There were three Goodyears, James T aged 65, William [Charles] aged 49 and Edwin aged 44, who are recorded as brewery workers, however James and William and other Goodyear family members had probably worked for May's for many years. Another William Goodyear had been a maltster in 1881, living next door to May's Brewery. His son Edwin was working for May's in 1921. Charles Goodyear, a maltster at his wedding in Basingstoke in 1969, married the sister of William Dolton, who fell to his death at May's Brewery in 1911, while working with William Charles Goodyear, his nephew. William Dolton was reported to have worked for Mays for about 50 years so several generations of the family worked for May's over a period of 60 years.

Did this pattern continue to 1939? The evidence suggests it did. Eight of those working for Mays in 1921 were still either at the same Basingstoke address or carrying out the same work as they had in 1921, by which time May's was the only brewery in Basingstoke.

Janet Hird



A Slave Owner in Basingstoke

The report in 1830, that banker Augustus Robert Hankey of Down Grange in Basingstoke had died, claimed great numbers of the labouring class would regret his death because they were saved from parish poor relief by the employment he gave them.

In lamenting his loss it was not mentioned that he was also, with his banking partners, buying slaves in Jamaica for the Arcadia sugar plantation which they part owned.

Janet Hird



Basingstoke and the Early Years of the First World War

The British declaration of war on Germany on Tuesday 4 August 1914 heralded some dramatic changes for Basingstoke. To pre-empt a run on the banks all three within the town had closed the previous Saturday and remained shut for the rest of the week. Grocery stores also had to close midweek when they ran out of stock due to panic buying. Horses were brought into town from surrounding farms to be assigned for military use and a recruitment office was set up in the Town Hall on Friday 7 August. By September 1914, 300 Basingstoke men had signed up, but this was considered inadequate by the organising officer, Major-General Sir William Knox. He labelled Basingstoke "*gun shy*" and the same sentiment was echoed by Lord Curzon, the tenant of Hackwood House. This prompted a furious response from the mayor and other dignitaries in the town.

Rapid recruitment was also taking place throughout Britain and, given that there were not enough established training camps, Basingstoke became a holding centre for troops. As a hub for road and rail, with direct lines from London, the north and west, the town received army regiments, which were then transported to Southampton and Portsmouth to embark for France.

This changed the character of the town. In November 1914 the first large contingent of 900 men from the 12th Hampshire Regiment arrived. These were quickly followed by other battalions from Wales, Cheshire and Worcester. By early December 1914 the troops numbered about 5,400. This swelled the population of Basingstoke, which prewar was around 12,000. Many of these men were billeted in private houses. The rates offered were 3/- a night for officers and 9d for other ranks, with the stipulation that every man had to have his own bed. Meals were not provided, and mess tents were set up in Goldings Park. Other buildings, such as Church Cottage, the Mechanics' Institute and Fairfields School, were requisitioned for military use. Pubs were obliged to close at 9 pm., to ensure that men were back in their billets thirty minutes later.

By the spring and summer of 1915 more troops were gathered in Basingstoke. These numbered between 18,000 and 20,000 in total, swelling the population of the town even further and causing concern for the supply of water and gas and sewage disposal. Given the better weather these men were accommodated in tented encampments on Basingstoke Common and in the fields surrounding the town. Columns of men on training marches became a common sight. For example, battalions of troops regularly marched to Sherfield on Loddon for training on the village green and some marched as far as Greenham Common near Newbury.

However, the influx of troops was a temporary situation. By 1916 more permanent training camps had been established throughout the country and men were transported directly to these. The population of the town declined, but not completely to prewar levels, the sea of tents disappeared and Basingstoke Common and the fields around the town reverted to their earlier use. Lesley Mason



The Massagainian Banquet

When the Salvation Army arrived in Basingstoke in 1880, many saw them as a bunch of uniformed invaders who wanted to shut the pubs and breweries, put their employees out of work and stop their customers enjoying themselves. Between 1880 and 1883 there were riots and other disturbances in Basingstoke against the Salvation Army by a group calling themselves the 'Massagainians'. These included the so-called 'Battle of Church Square' in March 1881 when an estimated 3,000 people crowded into the square, many of whom were involved in the fighting.

As a result of a private prosecution by the captain of the Salvation Army for "*violent behaviour*" in obstructing a Salvation Army procession, 10 Massagainians were sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment. Shortly before their sentence was due to end, a notice was circulated around town inviting people to a dinner at the Corn Exchange to welcome the 'Massagainian Martyrs' home from Winchester Gaol.

Early in the morning of 21 September 1881, preparations began for their return. The town was bustling with people stretching strings of flags and bunting in triumphal arches from one side of Winchester Street to the other. The decorations were in such profusion that the *Hants and Berks Gazette* commented that a stranger would have believed that a royal entry to the town was about to take place. In the Corn Exchange men were arranging a pyramid of six 36-gallon barrels of XXX beer labelled "*Massagainian Stingo*". Horse-drawn vans continually drew up at the Corn Exchange from various parts of the town to unload vast quantities of meat, fowls, ducks, bottles of wine and other items for a great feast.

By four o'clock an enormous crowd had gathered in Winchester Street and the Market Place. A great cheer sprang up as the procession came into sight – a cart containing a band playing "*Hail the Conquering Heroes Come*" followed by outriders "*dressed in gay scarlet*" and a coach drawn by four horses with the Massagainians on board. As they passed the Town Hall, a group of young women stood on the balcony waving their handkerchiefs like maidens at a medieval tournament.

At seven o'clock the Corn Exchange was packed to bursting point. 521 people sat down to enjoy the feast. Allowing for supporters who had volunteered to act as waiters, an estimated 600 people were there, including several councillors and prominent farmers from the outlying villages. When the last course was finished ("*Massagainian Puddings all on fire*"), there was a series of toasts, interspersed with songs. Each of the ten were presented with a silver watch. By the time that copious amounts of Massagainian Stingo and the other booze on offer had been drunk and all was merry, everyone was ready to sing "*The Massagainian Song*", the lyrics of which had been printed on handbills especially for the occasion. Bob Clarke



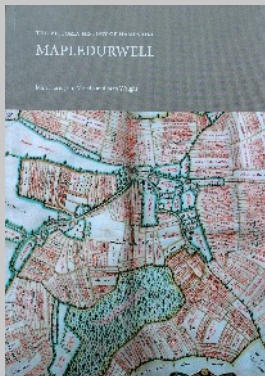


Diocesan Reformatory, 1878 to 1927

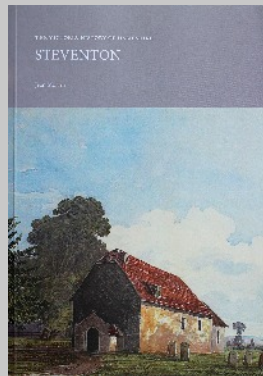
St Thomas Home, Darlington Road, became the diocesan penitentiary housing about 60 *'friendless and fallen young women'*, when it transferred from Gosport in 1878. Many girls came to escape from prostitution or after being thrown out of their families. A few girls had illegitimate babies who were cared for elsewhere, while their mothers were educated for a reformed life. They lived and worked in one of five cottages linked by a covered corridor, two of which were laundries, two were for needlework, including sewing surplices and altar cloths, and one was a kitchen. The girls, aged 13 to 22 in 1921, were trained for two years for domestic service or running homes of their own by a kitchen matron, laundry matron and needlework matron.

Today the converted buildings and the chapel, designed by Henry Woodyer, house St Thomas Care Home.
Jean Morrin

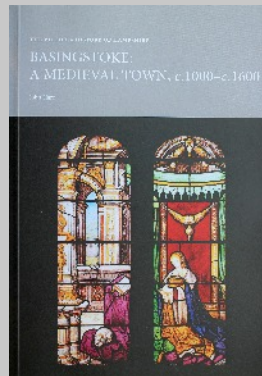
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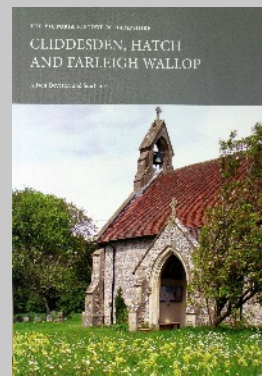
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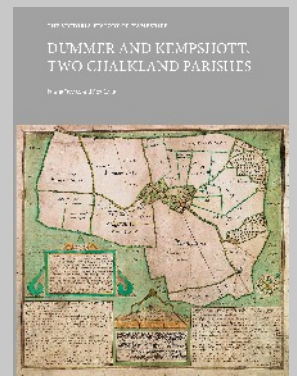
Steventon



Basingstoke: a
Medieval Town



Cliddesden, Hatch
and Farleigh Wallop



Dummer and
Kempshott, Two
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