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GOSPORT RECORDS



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Foreword



In writing a foreword to this edition of "Gosport Records" I bear in mind that my predecessor as Education Officer in Gosport, Dr. L.F.W. White, was a founder member and first Chairman of the Records Society.

The Society is approaching its tenth anniversary. During that time it has established itself through its public meetings and occasional publications as the prime source for the local history of Gosport. I am also aware that the interesting and diverse material which has been covered by the Society in its publications over the years has been the starting point for a good deal of interest and further enquiry into matters of local history, particularly in schools. This is entirely as it should be and I hope the process will continue and develop, particularly the association with the Gosport Museum.

The growth of interest in Gosport local history, however, relies entirely upon the quality and interest of the material which the publications contain. It is a tribute both to the authors and the editorial staff that such high standards are achieved. I commend this edition most warmly to its readers.

J. R. PLUMRIDGE

Harry and Bessie Sinclair

by

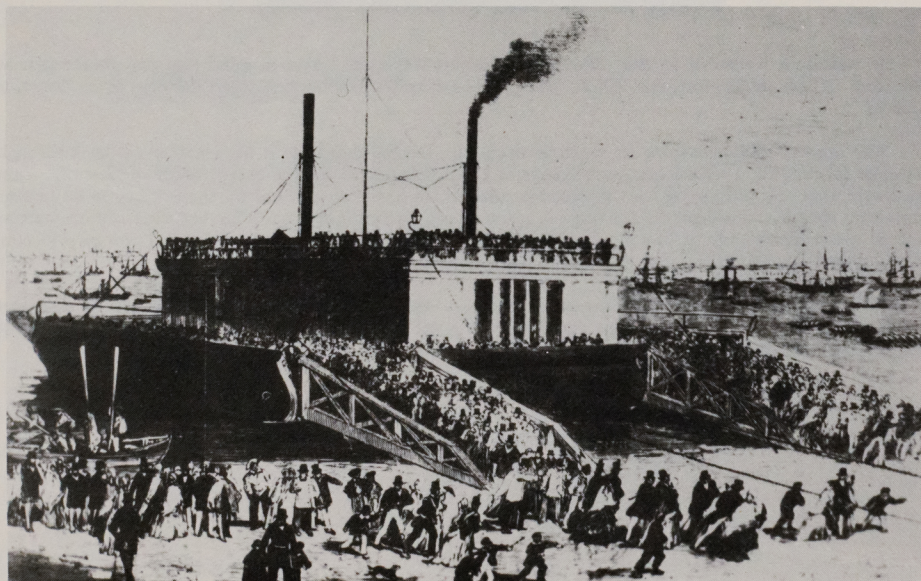
Keith S. Perkins

Harry and Bessie Sinclair were Victorian people, and indeed in a very special way they were also Edwardians whose lives were inseparably bound up with the waterfront at Gosport, and the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge which, for 120 years, operated across the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour.

Two Floating Bridges designed and established there by Devon civil engineer James Meadow Rendel, in 1840 and 1842, were later named the 'Victoria' and the 'Albert' respectively, the property of a company which, for many years, had as its chairman, Vice-Admiral Sir Francis William Austen, brother of the famous author Jane Austen, just one of other Austen family links with the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Company.

The 'Victoria' was Rendels sixth and penultimate Floating Bridge to be established in the British Isles, for he had established others at Dartmouth, Saltash, Torpoint and Southampton since 1831 but in 1859, the 'Victoria', after just 19 years service, was removed to the breakers yard whilst the 'Albert' continued to trundle back and forth across the harbour between Gosport Beach and Portsmouth Point.

In 1864, a new Floating Bridge constructed by Messrs. Lewis of Stockwell, arrived and was immediately pressed into service.



'Artists Licence' —
Rendels Floating Bridge during Naval Review — 1856.

Illustrated London News

The previous year, 1863, heralded the arrival in England of the Danish Princess Alexandra, upon the advent of her marriage to Edward, the Prince of Wales. And so with due respect and admiration for this beautiful princess, the new Floating Bridge at Portsmouth became the 'Alexandra'.

In 1891, Rendels' second Floating Bridge the 'Albert' unaccountably sank at its moorings and was never again put into service and the company decided that because of its age and general condition it was not worth repair. As a consequence the 'Albert', after 50 years service, followed its predecessor to the breakers yard.

With the needs of the company to maintain two Floating Bridges, the 'Duchess of York', ordered from Messrs. Allsup and Sons of Preston, was brought into service in 1892, when electric lighting was used for the first time. But on the 12th December, during a fearsome gale, the 'Alexandra' was driven across the line of passage and there sank. The result was complete closure of the service for several days and partially so for a longer period.

Harry Sinclair

In 1894, Harry Sinclair, who had served as Master-at-Arms aboard the Royal Yacht Osborne, retired from the Royal Navy, but one day in mid-June of that year he returned to his ship for a very special occasion: the presentation of a testimonial in recognition of his long service, for which purpose the entire ship's company assembled on the upper deck.

The present consisted of an electro-plated breakfast service with the inscription:

"Presented to Mr. H. Sinclair, by the ship's company of the Royal Yacht Osborne, upon his retirement. The kindly and considerate manner in which he carried out his duties as Master-at-Arms during the nine years he served on board the yacht is fully appreciated by his ship-mates, and is marked by this testimonial".

Chief Quartermaster Charles Stapleton, in making the presentation, said it gave him very great pleasure on behalf of the ship's company to ask Mr. Sinclair to accept that present which they all hoped he might live long to enjoy.

Harry in turn thanked them all for the very handsome gift, a testimony of their good will and sincerity. The three hearty cheers which followed would serve to remind him of by-gone days, but he was now departing his ship for the last time to take up new employment as manager of the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Company, having been highly recommended to the position by Lord Clanwilliam, the Port Admiral, and others.

The sunken 'Alexandra' had long since been raised with the aid of the buoyancy of 600 chemical drums on loan from Timothy White's the chemist and four naval lighters anxious to remove a navigational hazard from the entrance to Portsmouth harbour.

Bessie Sinclair (nee Temple)

William Temple had served the Royal Estate at Sandringham from about the time that Edward, Prince of Wales, and Princess Alexandra had been married in 1863, Sandringham having been purchased by the prince the previous years.

The Temple family lived in a delightful little cottage on the Royal Estate known as the 'Summer House', and as soon as the princess got her bearings she frequently visited the cottage, popping in for a chat whenever she was close by.

Eventually the time came when the princess needed two dressers, and she decided to take the two Temple daughters, Bessie and Nettie, into her service. This met with great opposition; everyone declared that two girls could not be taken off the estate in this fashion and she had best forget the idea. But there were no half measures where the princess was concerned once she had decided upon a course of action.

In time both girls were sent away for training, Bessie to a Scottish family and Nettie to the home of Sir Dighton Probyn, Keeper of the Privy Purse.

Eventually they rejoined Princess Alexandra at Sandringham, but since the recent death of their mother, Alexandra — or 'Alix', as she was affectionately known — tried not to take them away together, otherwise the father would have been left alone.

Bessie's travels with the princess took her to many foreign parts: Russia, Germany, the Mediterranean, Denmark — not least Denmark, aboard the Royal Yacht — so it could have been no surprise when romance blossomed between Bessie Temple and Harry Sinclair, Master-at-Arms of the 'Osborne'.

Harry proposed to Bessie in Denmark and, on 25th February 1895, they were married at Sandringham in the presence of Princess Alexandra. Yet arranging the wedding was no simple matter. Georgina Battiscombe, in her splendid and revealing book, 'Queen Alexandra' published in 1969, says of the Queen —

"Sometimes she would put her servants' interests so far above her own as to make them and her appear ridiculous, at others, she would behave as if they could have no interest at all except the interest of serving her.

"Bessie Temple (Sinclair) was a special favourite. Some of her experiences with the princess would be incredible were they not true. On one occasion during a Scottish visit, Bessie was given a room inconveniently far from that of her mistress. In the middle of the night the princess summoned her and, for some reason or other, desired her to stay in the room till morning. Bessie prepared to lie down on the sofa; the princess, however, (for she was not Queen at that time) insisted that Bessie must sleep in her bed whilst she herself took the sofa and it was only with the greatest difficulty that she could be persuaded of the incongruity of such an arrangement. Yet when Bessie became engaged to a member of the crew of the Royal Yacht, time and again she had to put off the date of her wedding because the princess insisted that she must travel with her on yet another and another journey —

"Just this once, Bessie, I cannot possibly do without you this time!"

"On another occasion she presented Bessie with a beautiful grey silk frock, remarking that she had a new one almost exactly similar. For that very reason Bessie took great care never to wear the frock when she was anywhere near the princess. One day, however, she was faced with the question—

"Why do I never see you in that pretty frock?"

"Because, ma'am, I do not want to appear dressed the same as your Royal Highness."

"Nonsense! That is exactly why I gave it you; I *want* us to look alike."

Alexandra's depth of feeling and sensitivity could clearly be measured in a letter she later wrote to George the Prince of Wales, on 11th January 1906, in which she recorded the tragic death of William Temple (Bessie's father) as the result of a 'horrible accident' he had suffered the week before when the carriage he was in was upset and fell heavily, breaking two ribs. He had, apparently, lain in the snow for several hours undetected. The Queen wrote —

"I cannot tell you how sorry I am about it as I have known him for 43 years, ever since I came.

"On my way home from Chatsworth, which we left on Monday morning, I drove straight from the station to call on him in his dear little house in Jocelyn's Wood.

"This afternoon we laid him to rest in our little churchyard next to his poor wife! We all and everybody on the estate attended the funeral.

"He was perfectly well on New Year's day when we saw him in church and on the 4th (January), in the morning he had the accident, and to-day, on the 11th, he is buried already! How too sad!"

In 1897, Charles Stapleton left the Royal Yacht to join Harry Sinclair at Gosport, where, eventually, he became traffic superintendent of the Floating Bridge and took over the manager's house.

Harry and Bessie moved into No. 4 Beach Street which, appropriately enough, they named 'Denmark House', the subject of a painting by local artist Martin Snape, a very close friend of the family. Earlier, in 1896, Bessie had given birth to a son, Alexander Temple Sinclair, christened at Sandringham on 30th March 1896, with Princess Alexandra as his godmother.

Two years later, in 1898, a second child arrived, to be christened Marjorie at Sandringham on 26th December. Both christenings were conducted by the Reverend F.A. Hervey.

Because of the children, Bessie was permitted to spend more time at home with her family, but Edward the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra had, upon the death of Queen Victoria ascended to the throne and 'Alix' found it convenient to have Bessie available at Gosport whenever she required to go to sea. At Gosport, Bessie was always in close proximity to the Royal Yacht and a telegram or other communication ensured that she was on board when needed.

On one such occasion when Bessie received her telegram, she prepared herself and reported aboard the yacht in the usual way.



Charles Stapleton Floating Bridge Superintendent 1897-1925.



Harry and Bessie with their children, Alexander and Marjorie, at Sandringham, 1906.



*Queen Alexandra (right) and Princess Victoria on board Royal Yacht
'Victoria and Albert' c. 1906.*

It was known that the yacht (this time the 'Victoria and Albert') was due to put to sea at a certain time but Harry Sinclair, who was always on the waterfront at Gosport attending to Floating Bridge matters, suddenly realised that the yacht hadn't put to sea as expected. After observing her for some time, he noticed a ship's cutter pull away from her side and head in his direction. To his surprise there were three ladies on board, and one of them was Bessie, his wife. Then 'the penny dropped' – he realised the other ladies were Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria!

Momentarily, the normally imperturbable Harry stood rooted to the spot; then he dashed up the beach to 'Denmark House', opened the door and called out that the Queen was coming.

It has since been a family joke that the look upon the face of Florrie – a sort of home help – was one of animated incredulity. Almost before she could compose herself, there was a swish of skirts and Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria were there before her.

Marjorie Sinclair, then just seven years of age, recalls that Princess Victoria asked her if, when she grew up, she would come and help her dress as her mother did for the Queen. Marjorie confessed that she could not tie bows, whereupon the princess raised her skirts slightly saying – "Look, I've got buttons on my boots. You could manage those, couldn't you?"

Brief though this unscheduled visit to 'Denmark House' was, a number of Floating Bridge people, including Charles Stapleton — who, as Chief Quartermaster, had served the Royal Yacht for 16 years — were presented to Queen Alexandra. Before her unofficial visit came to an end, an almost clandestine undertaking by the Queen in private consultation with Harry Sinclair arranged that Marjorie, then suffering from a glandular disorder, be taken into a nursing home to be operated upon by the Queen's surgeon. Bessie was not to be told about the operation until she had returned from her tour with the Queen. Harry kept this secret, but only with much anguish and worry until a telephone message assured him of the success of the operation.

Yet another intriguing highlight in Bessie's life occurred when 'Alix' had her portrait painted. Once the artist had captured the Queen's true features, Bessie, who bore her some slight resemblance, donned the fine clothes and regalia and sat until the portrait was completed. It hangs today in the National Portrait Gallery.

Gosport Beach

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Harry Sinclair had been manager of the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Company for 20 years, a period of gradual prosperity, but wars have that uncanny knack of spiriting away men of military age who could least be spared. Out of 85 skilled and experienced employees, 51 joined the forces, placing considerable pressures and responsibilities upon the shoulders of those who remained, predominantly old men and boys. The effect was to reduce the efficiency of the ferry and Floating Bridge services and thus impose unacceptable strains upon the company's time-table.

In a report of the board of directors about 1916, Harry made it known that, as manager, he must take some of the blame for the situation, and that because of his advancing years and indifferent health, he should retire in favour of a younger man. In their wisdom, the board looked beyond this self-criticism to the many problems which surrounded their manager and he was persuaded to carry on.



*Bessie Sinclair at the
Floating Bridge ticket office.*

Faced with the need to find and train new staff, the company quickly discovered the difficulty of this task owing to the state of the labour market and inflated wage bills – for the ordinary labourer was demanding anything up to three pounds a week!

Two women were employed in the ticket office and this was where Bessie Sinclair could be found when not on call by Queen Alexandra, and where she shared duties with Elsie Arnell Stapleton.

Occasionally a 'bridge' chain would break, sometimes at night, and with the Floating Bridge stranded off shore for many hours Bessie would be there with others, preparing food and hot drinks for the crew and men carrying out the repairs.

About 1920, Harry, who eventually became managing director of the company, produced a document entitled "Linking Up Portsmouth and Gosport", in which he described the problems of the company as he saw them – in particular the steep gradients on each side of the harbour, where heavily laden, horse-drawn and even motor driven vehicles, disembarking from the Floating Bridge, attempted but often failed to negotiate the incline. These vehicles were forced to cross and recross the harbour until suitable means could be found to haul them up and off the gradient.

Extensive dredging of the harbour contributed to the gradual build-up of sand along the Gosport shore – which, in turn, created problems for the Floating Bridge on the ebb tide, especially the continuous struggle to keep the vessel afloat. Finally, there was the impossibility of operating the Floating Bridge through strong winds and tides.

Such were the main complexities which faced the company, and in order to overcome these Harry proposed a number of changes. Firstly, the landing prows at each end of the bridge were to be removed and a travelling landing platform would operate up and down the gradients on rails (on both sides of the harbour), to meet the Floating Bridge as it approached the shore, thus obviating all possibility of the craft grounding at ebb-tide. The travelling platform would also assist those vehicles unable to negotiate the gradient under their own power.

The final problem of wind and tide was to be overcome by removing as much non-essential superstructure as possible, thus reducing wind resistance to a minimum; in particular all passenger accommodation, since all pedestrian traffic was using the steam launches.

In the event, more than ten years passed before any major development was implemented, but alas, Harry was not around to see it.

In her latter years, Queen Alexandra shunned much of the pomp and ceremony of Royal life and settled down to a quieter existence. She frequently visited the cottage of Nettie Cole, in Norfolk, and it was the two sisters Bessie and Nettie, daughters of William Temple, who were called to her bedside on 20th November 1925 after 'Alix' suffered a sudden heart attack. She died later that same day.

Harry Sinclair carried on working beyond his 74th birthday, and died on 23rd February 1930, when his son, Alexander Temple Sinclair, took over as Engineer Manager of the company and, later, implemented some of his father's proposals.

Bessie herself outlived the Second World War and died in Southbourne at "The Nook", a cottage in which she spent her twilight years. She passed away on 16th August 1952 at the age of 82, and after cremation at Southampton her ashes were returned to Ann's Hill cemetery, Gosport, to be interred in the family grave.

The final crossing of the harbour was carried out by the 95 year old Portsmouth–Gosport Floating Bridge 'Alexandra' on 15th December 1959, and in 1961 – through lack of revenue – the Port of Portsmouth Floating Bridge Company was forced into liquidation.

Today, Gosport bus station stands upon the site of the old Floating Bridge chain house. There, through the shadows of an early morning mist, one may imagine the clanking chains of the 'Bridge' as it laboriously crosses the harbour. But it is a ghost which never arrives.

At Portsmouth Point, if you need a reminder that local history is our heritage, then there – amongst the names of other local worthies such as the artist Martin Snape – you will find a tiny plaque engraved simply –

"In Memory of Harry and Bessie Sinclair."

Sources

a) *Royal Archives Windsor:*

Extracts: from a letter written by Queen Alexandra to George the Prince of Wales on 11th Jan, 1906. (RA/AA.33/19.)

Photographs:

- (i) *Queen Alexandra and Princess Victoria aboard the Royal Yacht 'Victoria and Albert', c. 1906.*
- (ii) *Sinclair family at Sandringham 1906.*

All items mentioned above have been REPRODUCED BY GRACIOUS PERMISSION OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN.

- (b) *Extracts: from 'Queen Alexandra', by Georgina Battiscombe, published by Constable 1969 — Kind permission of the author. (P. 202/203).*
- (c) *Portsmouth Records Office:*
Floating Bridge Records 49A/5/1/26
 49A/5/1/30.
'Linking Up Portsmouth and Gosport', by Harry Sinclair (c. 1930).
- (d) *Charles Stapleton. Elsie Arnell Stapleton. Photograph and information supplied by the kind permission of Mrs. Joan Foster (Farlington Hants).*
- (e) *Lithograph of Rendels Floating Bridge during the Naval Review — 1856.*
ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.
- (f) *Hampshire News.*
- (g) *Gosport Museum.*

Acknowledgement:

My considerable thanks to Marjorie Whitehouse (nee Sinclair), for the kind assistance she has afforded me in retracing some memorable events in the lives of her parents, Harry and Bessie Sinclair.

K.S.P.

Steel Engravings of Gosport

by

Joe Merritt

Many readers will be familiar with engravings such as "The N.W. view of Portchester Castle in Hampshire" and the "West Prospect of Portsmouth", both by S. & N. Buck, and "A S.E. view of Portsmouth" by Jonathan Waters. Part of the latter is shown in "The Earlier Fortifications of Gosport": all show all or part of Gosport and all are available in cheap, modern reproductions. These are all copper-plate engravings, a characteristic of which was the rapid wearing out of the plate, so that prints in good condition may be rare and expensive (£250 or more for the West Prospect).

Between 1820 and 1830 line engraving of copper was superseded by engraving on steel. Much finer lines could produce more subtle effects and the print run was more or less unlimited. The growing ability of people to travel and in particular the spread of the railways encouraged the publication of illustrated books, some thematic and some in effect county or town guide books. An excellent example of this is "Views of Ports, Harbours and Watering Places" by E. & W. Finden (1838). By the 1870s photography was taking over, and steel plate engraving rapidly vanished from the scene. Most of the engravings now readily available come from broken books and so are relatively small. Most are sold mounted, many framed and almost all "hand-coloured" in recent times. This leads to ludicrous results such as Haslar Hospital with yellow walls and a red tile roof, and boats' crews wearing yellow p.v.c. oilies. It should also be said that modern photo-reproductions exist, and if well-produced are hard to distinguish from originals when framed.

Several firms issued sets of steel-engraved vignettes, used in books, sold as booklets or used to head writing paper or trade material. Gosport views were published by J. & F. Harwood and J.S. & Co., and include the Railway Station and the Royal Clarence Yard. Degenerate versions of these were used as wood engravings to illustrate books such as Cassel's "History of England".

Most plates were engraved by professional engravers after the works of artists, some of whom must have travelled round the Kingdom at breakneck speed. Thus to artistic licence for the sake of composition and the picturesque are added details filled in from the imagination of the engraver, who is unlikely to have visited the scene of his engraving. Nevertheless, some prints are all that exist to give us an idea of what the scene looked like, and some capture successfully the spirit of the times.

H.M.S. Victory was fitted out as flagship of the Port Admiral in 1823 and moored off Gosport, and so appears in many prints with a moveable collection of hulks, passing frigates, hoys and ships boats, with steam appearing early. Prints already published in Gosport Records include "Gosport" dated 1842 (no. 1), Alverstoke Church and Rectory (no. 4), Gosport Station (no. 5 and "Gosport's Railway Era"), Clarence Square (no. 10), and Blockhouse Point Portsmouth (*sic*) (The Earlier Fortifications of Gosport).

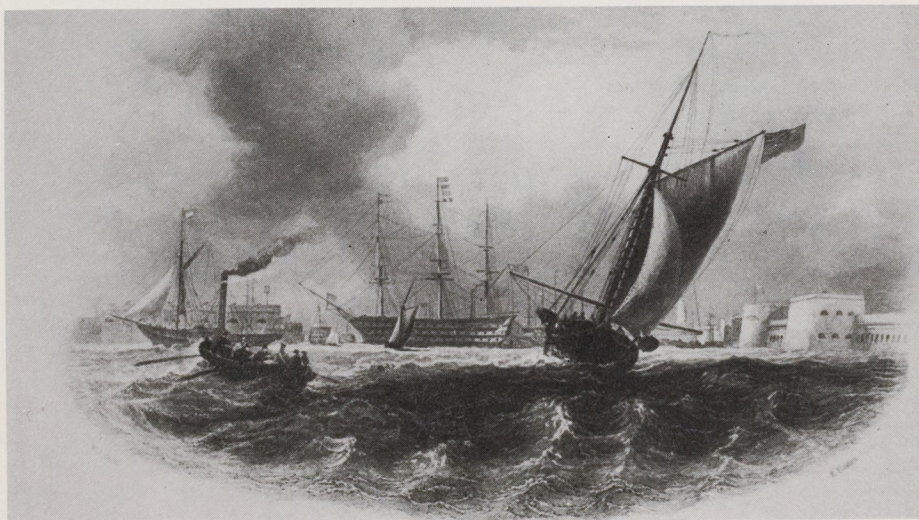
Acknowledgement:

My thanks are due to Cdr. G.S. Clark, Curator, RN. Museum Portsmouth for a sight of some unusual prints.



"Haslar Hospital".

Like the view of Gosport in Records no.1 from Mudie's "Hampshire", which is available in modern facsimile. The wooden footbridge is presumably an artistic guess at the wooden bridge which "Haslar the Royal Hospital" tells us stood from 1811 to 1814. Like other "Haslars" the high surrounding wall is reduced or disappears to help the view.



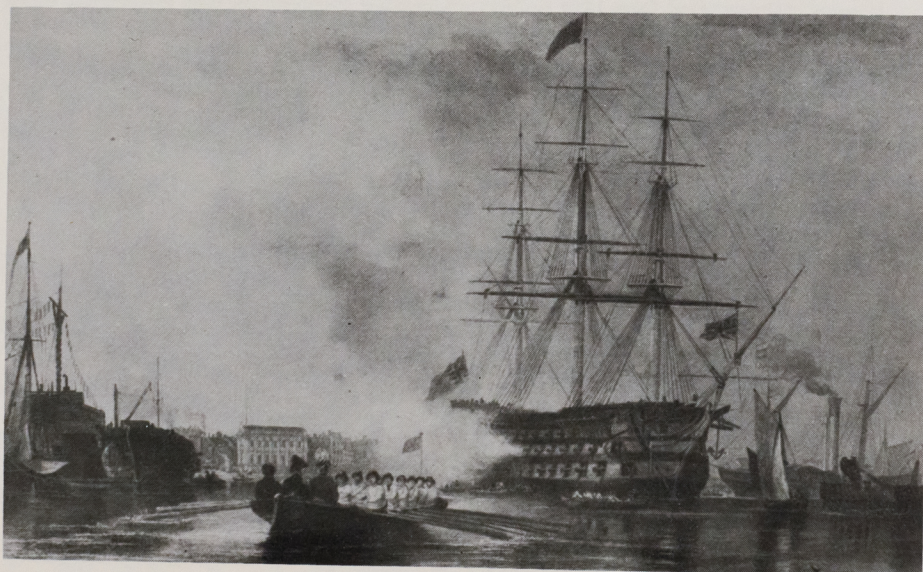
"The Entrance to Portsmouth Harbour", by W.J. Cook, engraved by E. Findon.

A high quality plate from the book mentioned above, although in common with other "entrances" only Blockhouse can be seen clearly.



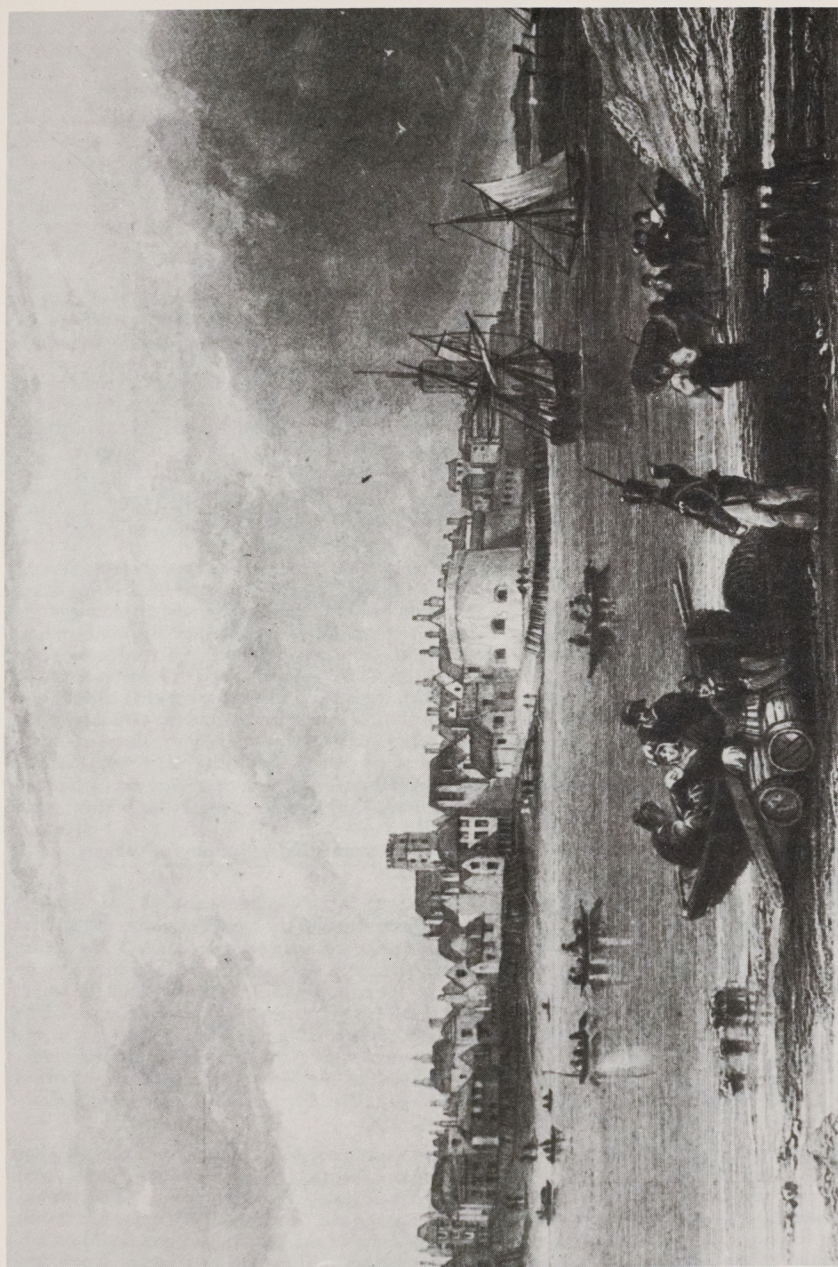
"Gosport" drawn by G.H. Sargeant and engraved by J. Woods.

A not very realistic picture of Gosport; the same pair also produced the print of Haslar mentioned above.



"Gosport, Flagship Saluting".

More of Cooke and Finden's excellent work, although not much of Gosport is to be seen. The Market House shows up in their "View from the Saluting Platform, Portsmouth".



"Portsmouth Harbour from Blockhouse Point".

Engraved by Shury & Son after J. Salmon, who also produced an interesting "View from the Parade, Portsmouth" showing parts of Gosport, and "Portsmouth Harbour from Gosport". The soldier in the foreground is identified as a member of the Dockyard Defence Battalion, formed in 1848 and disbanded in 1856.

The German Legion at Gosport

by

W. B. Tyler

During the Crimean War the British Government came to the conclusion that there would be insufficient British troops for the war against Russia. Consequently Corps of foreign legions were formed following the passing of the Foreign Enlistment Act 1854. These foreign troops included a Turkish contingent, a Swiss Legion, an Italian Legion, a German Legion, a Sardinian contingent and the Cossacks of the Sultans. The Italians were organized at Turin by Sir James Hudson who was British envoy there from 1851 to 1863, and were to be officered by Italians. Of the 3100 men raised 1719 were Sardinians, 837 Austrians, 144 Modenese, 59 Romans, 85 Tuscans and the rest variously Neapolitans, French and English. The Italians were sent to Malta where they mutinied and were disbanded. Many of the men could not return home as their governments had not approved of their original recruitment. The Argentine Government offered to take them. The Swiss Legion was formed in 1855 and two battalions of the first regiment fought in the Neapolitan service at the Crimea.

The largest of the foreign legions was that of the Germans. 8000 were recruited mainly from Prussia, Hanover and Hamburg. Parts of the Legion were sent to the Crimea but took no part in the fighting there. Following the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 the legion had to be disbanded under the terms of the 1854 Act. Prior to a decision as to their future the Germans were stationed at Aldershot, Browndown near Portsmouth and later at Plymouth and Colchester. A number of serious incidents occurred at Aldershot between the Germans and the Somerset Militia and later with the 41st Regiment. Questions were asked in the House of Commons and there was increasing concern with the alleged behaviour of what the Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Clarendon termed 'our legionary plagues'. It was decided to send the Germans to the Cape of Good Hope where according to the *Hampshire Telegraph* they would make excellent colonists. There was relief that they were to leave Britain. For them to be part of the British army would not be 'palatable to the British public'. A writer in the *Hampshire Telegraph* imputed that there was a German influence behind the throne and feared that a German military force would back up this influence and added:

'Foreign legions have ever been the most unscrupulous instruments for the purpose of suppressing popular opinion of public liberty'.

The terms of service at the Cape were issued on September 24th 1856, and the final review of the German troops stationed at Browndown was to have been undertaken by the Queen on August 9th. The visit was postponed due to wet weather. The Review took place on Saturday 23rd August, the Queen being accompanied by Prince Albert and the Prince of Wales arrived at 4.30 p.m. The troops were drawn up in line two deep. The 2000 men of the 1st and 2nd regiments were inspected and then followed the march past. According to one eyewitness 'No body of troops could have presented a finer appearance'. The Queen then reviewed the tents and re-embarked aboard the *Fairy* at 6.30 p.m. The Final Review of the German Legion took place on Tuesday 30 September at Colchester when 5000 Germans heard their commander Baron von Stutterheim speak of the 'good behaviour exhibited from the first moment of your arrival in this country'. This review at Wyvenoe Park Colchester was attended by the Duke of Cambridge accompanied by General Gascoigne the G.O.C. of the District.

The Germans were not entirely happy with the arrangements made for them. Many of them did not want to go to the Cape. The Queen expressed regret that so few Germans had accepted the 'liberal terms of the Government' but insisted that they should be 'made to sail soon'. Problems soon arose at Browndown. In October 1856 Colonel von Hacke then in command of the 4th, 5th and 6th regiments had shown insubordination towards Colonel James Woolridge, the commander of the 1st Brigade, and had been arrested. The Legion tried to rescue him, attacking the police station and threatening to shoot Woolridge.

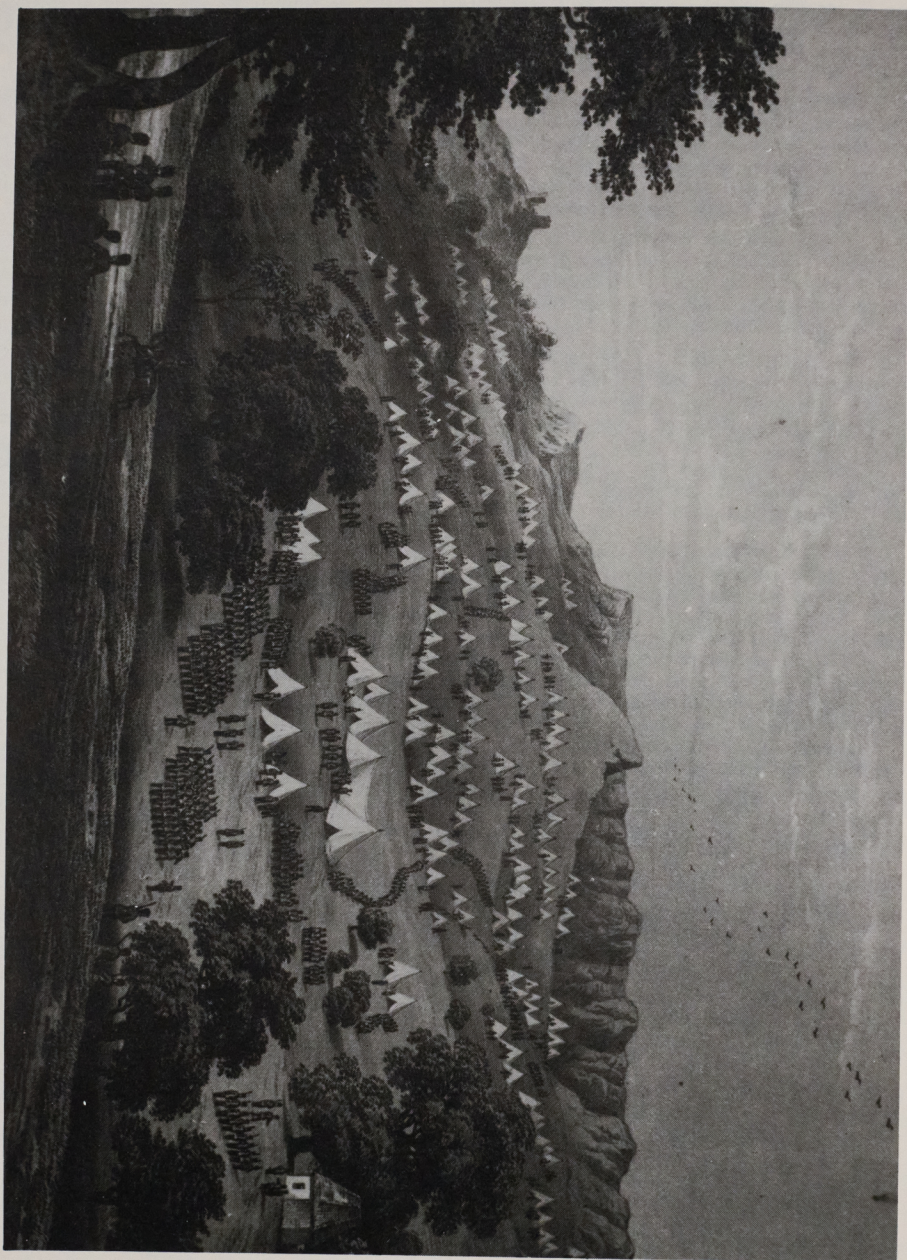
Six of the ring leaders were tried by Court Martial. Five were publicly flogged and the sixth flogged privately by von Hacke contrary to the orders of Woolridge. The three regiments were removed to Colchester and from there, still commanded by von Hacke, to the Cape. At the Cape the Governor was ordered to remove von Hacke from his command.

The Legion was due to leave Portsmouth during the second week in November. In early November there were disturbances amongst the Germans which culminated in the serious event of Saturday 8th November. A quarrel at a public house in White's Row, Portsea between August Winkeler and Peter Duhr led first to fighting with sticks and then with knives. The unfortunate Peter Duhr was found staggering in the street with blood streaming from a cut artery in his thigh and he died from a haemorrhage. His fellow legionary August Winkeler was arrested and committed for manslaughter.

On the same day a serious riot occurred at Gosport with the Germans inducing terror amongst the inhabitants. According to one recent account 1200 Germans were involved in the wrecking of pubs. The Germans were forced back by a combination of Royal Marines from Forton Barracks, British troops from the Portsmouth garrison and 'navvies'. Over that weekend stragglers amongst the Germans were picked up and put on board the ships due for the Cape.

A few local worthies were not happy with what had happened on that Saturday. A public meeting at Gosport unanimously passed a vote of thanks to Colonel Graham of the Royal Marines for the 'prompt exertion' in quelling 'the disgraceful riots'. This resolution was placed in Marine Orders and read to the Marines at Forton Barracks. There were others who thought otherwise. The Crown Hotel and Posting House which was also the Inland Revenue Office was the venue for a meeting presided over by Captain G.C. Blake, a local magistrate. A delegation of Gosport and Fareham magistrates wished to forward a petition to Winchester magistrates. They wanted an investigation of the attacks made on the soldiers of the German Legion and the conduct of the police on that occasion.





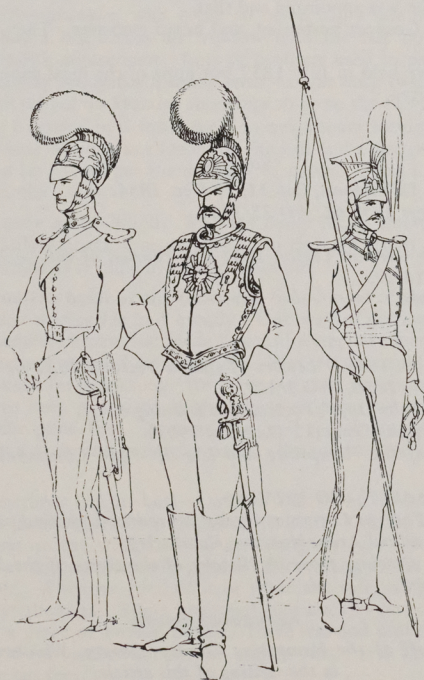
The Foreign Legion Camp near Hythe. c. 1856

The investigation of the part played by the Hampshire Police on November 8th was opened on April 24th 1857 at the Crown Hotel, Gosport. By that time the Germans had left for the Cape on board the ships *Sultana*, *Culloden*, *Abyssinia*, *Covenanter*, *Stamboul*, *Mersey* and *Vulcan* between the 11th and 24th November 1856. According to the *Hampshire Chronicle*:

'The departure of the troops has afforded great satisfaction, it is believed, to the majority of the upper classes of the inhabitants in the locality of Gosport and the encampment, to whom the presence of the legion became an evil owing to the coarse conduct of the men generally'.

Thus five months after they had left for the Cape and an uncertain future there an eminent body of men heard evidence of their last days at Gosport. The investigating Committee included George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, a future Colonial Secretary and at this time Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire. With him was Sir John Simeon Bt., the M.P. for the Isle of Wight and Melvill Portal who was to be the M.P. for North Hampshire for 40 years. Portal had been appointed a magistrate in 1846 and was at this time Chairman of the Hampshire Quarter Sessions a position he resigned in 1903. Also present at the inquiry was Captain Edmund Philip Samuel, the local magistrate and the Reverend Mr. Walpole. Mr. Walpole represented the interests of Capt. Blake and the police were represented by Captain John Henry Forest, the Chief Constable of Hampshire who had the reputation as a strict disciplinarian.

The Committee of Inquiry had to consider a serious complaint that the police had applied for military assistance without asking the permission of the local magistrates. Mr. Walpole alleged that the police had neglected their duty; that the Chief Constable should have obtained the full facts before reporting to the Home Secretary, and that the police should have applied to the magistrates before asking for military assistance.



The details of the events of 8th November were recalled by Mr. Walpole. There had been continual troubles between the Germans and the local inhabitants which had gone on for several hours. The Police Sergeant applied for help from the Royal Marines without informing Captain Samuel. A public meeting was held on the 10th November to discuss the police action and complaints were then sent to the Home Secretary. Capt. Forest conducted an inquiry which reported to the Home Secretary who rejected the complaints, although the views of the magistrates had not been heard.

The Inquiry then heard evidence from individuals involved. Samuel Munday Horn, a greengrocer of 43 High Street, Gosport said that the police sided with the navvies against the Germans. Daniel Monk, a butcher of 101/2 High Street, said that the Germans were then dragged off by the police. George Dimond a newsagent and stationer of 39 High Street, thought that the police allowed the riots to proceed. Capt. Samuel had nor heard of the riot until the following day — Sunday, and asked for Marine help and confined the Germans to barracks. Capt. Forest told the inquiry that there were precedents in not applying to the magistrates as with similar occurrences in September 1855, October 1856 and September 1856 when there had been no complaints about police actions.

First hand accounts of the riots were given by George Viner, a tinman and brazier who lived in 67 Lower South Street and by Hollis Thorpe a baker and grocer who lived at 71 Lower South Street. They gave evidence that the riot started at the Princess Royal Public House in South Street when the Germans broke windows and drew their bayonets. According to them there were insufficient police and that the navvies saved the town. The landlady of the Princess Royal, Mrs. Scriven, wife of John Scriven considered that it started when the Germans began fighting amongst themselves over a woman and broke up the bar. According to Mr. Matthews the landlord of the King of Prussia, another public house in South Street, the Germans burst into his hostelry, were armed and broke up the place. Some British soldiers there, including a Sergeant Lee of the Hampshire Regiment, were stabbed.

The Special Committee's meeting of April 24th was fully reported in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, published the following day. The issue of the *Hampshire Advertiser* of the same date — April 25th 1857 baldly states that the committee was appointed and that

'This committee met at Gosport yesterday, and heard evidence. They will report to the next Quarter Sessions'.

The next Quarter Sessions were held in July 1857 but none of the local papers have any further reports of the proceedings of the Committee.

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Illustrations: (i) 'The Foreign Legion at Hythe' reproduced by kind permission of the Curator of the National Army Museum, Camberley.

(ii) Line drawings from 'A History of the Dress of the British Soldier', Lt. Col. John Luard.

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My Edwardian Childhood

(continued from Issue 15)

by

P. J. Collins

Sunday was the day of the Winkle Man and the Watercress Man. Every Sunday morning they came, and nearly every family bought one or the other for their Sunday tea. Winkles were sold by the pint or half pint, watercress was sold for a penny a bunch. The Italian Ice Cream Man also came Sunday lunch time, a cornet would cost a halfpenny and a wafer a penny. You could also buy the same amount in a cup. Sunday newspapers were bought from a man who came about 9 a.m. He carried a huge bag full of papers. He always shouted out "Sunday papah's", in a voice like a foghorn. Talking about newspapers, lots of boys sold them round the streets. I had only eighteen customers, we were paid twopence for selling a dozen, the papers were one penny each, so in a week I sold nine dozen, which brought me in one shilling and six pence a week, which pleased my mother very much.

I often look back and wondered how she managed to bring up six of us. It must have been a terrible struggle for her. One blessing was, our terraced house was only three shillings and sixpence a week. Some people were very poor, and that is where the Pawnshops in those early days did good business. There were four in Gosport. People used to pawn watches, rings, etc. If they were not redeemed in one year, they became the property of the Pawnbroker, who every so often had a sale of unredeemed goods including clothing. One Pawnbroker had a bill across his window with the sale notice - "Nicholsons" trousers down again', much to everybody's amusement. Lots of mothers used to pawn a Sunday suit on Monday and then redeemed it on Saturday ready for Sunday wear. I was only twelve when I had this job which I hated. I was kept home from school on Monday mornings to go to the Pawnshop. I took along one of my brother's Sunday suits which I carried in a small sack, so neighbours would think I was going to the Rag and Bone store. A loan of a half crown was allowed on the suit and a charge of two pence was imposed on the loan. On Saturdays I had to go and get the suit out of pawn. When I went to work at thirteen years old, my mother ceased the practice.

I said before that we were never bored. We were really lucky where we lived, nearby was a park, the Cocklepond a pond for sailing boats, a moat which ran through a part of the town and Haslar Creek where the water rose up and down as it came in from the Solent.

In the summer we sat on the bank of the moat and fished most of the day. We only caught eels but we enjoyed it. We used garden worms for bait mostly. One way of getting these was - we pinched some of Mother's mustard and a medicine bottle and made mustard water. We went to the park and found worm casts, then poured a little mustard water down the hole. The worms could not get out fast enough! The widest part of the moat was used for swimming. We made our own yachts with a flat piece of wood carved out, a piece of lead or nails to keep it upright, with a piece of stick and paper for sails. We had races to see whose "yachts" crossed the pond first. At times we used a cork from a wine bottle, a nail to keep it upright and a match-stick for a mast and paper for a sail. We used to wait for ages for them to sail across the pond.

In Haslar Creek we sometimes caught bass as well as eels. One of our favourite pastimes was called "crabbing". We went to the fishmongers shop to get a fish head. This we tied onto a piece of string, then proceeded to the creek and sat on the wall with our feet dangling over the side, dropped our fish head on the string down into the water and caught crabs galore. They clung to the fish head and came up out of the water without any trouble. When we tired of it or when the tide had gone out, we counted the crabs to see who had most, then let them go. Some boys gathered cockles out of the mud. Sometimes a boy would cut his foot badly on a piece of broken bottle. There was and probably still is a lot of broken glass in the muddy Haslar Creek. Boys used to throw an empty bottle into the water and throw stones at it until it was broken, hence the cut feet.

Another favourite game was called 'Whip behind'. We waited for a horse and cart to come along, then we ran and caught hold of the back of the cart, and if it was a four wheeled cart we sometimes jumped up onto the back of it and had a ride, until a boy saw us as he passed by, he would yell out, "Whip behind". The driver of the cart would look round, and when he spotted us he would flick his whip back at us. Sometimes we caught a flick, then we chased the boy who gave us away. As there were no motor cars at the time we used to skip right across the road with a long skipping rope. There was no danger as only an occasional tradesman's cart or van came along or a bicycle.

Roads were very muddy in the winter. A cart with huge brushes came round at times and swept the mud to one side of the road, followed by a horse-drawn cart with a man who shovelled up the mud into the cart and took it away to the dump. In the summer the roads were just the opposite, a water cart came round, the cart had a spray at the back, sometimes we dared one another to dash in and out of the spraying water.

Scavengers carts were mostly two-wheeled carts all open, and sometimes a strong wind blew rubbish onto the road. Before the flush toilets were introduced, men came to empty the toilets during the night. If you had no back entrance, like our terraced houses in Holly Street, you had to leave the front door unlocked so they could walk right through the passage down to the toilet which was at the end of the garden. The men wore heavy boots and used to 'jaw' away when going through the passage. Lots of people kept rabbits, fattening them up for Xmas dinner. Many of them vanished during the night near Christmas time. We knew who had taken them — the 'Night Men' — but of course we had no proof.

At the bottom of the High Street was an open space where the hawkers sold merchandise from trucks. I remember a man dressed in black who sold bottles of a wonder mixture which cured everything from chilblains to toothache. One man did actually pull out teeth for a few coppers. The victim sat on a chair upon a platform, while the man performed the operation which must have been a very painful experience. Some Chemists would pull out a troublesome tooth for a shilling. Mostly workman went to them during their dinner hour, whether the tooth-puller froze the gum I don't know. The Salvation Army held a meeting every Sunday evening on the open space. They came round for a collection, and after counting up the coppers, the leader would announce that they wanted another two pence to make up a shilling, then they came round again with the collecting boxes.



The Hard, Portsmouth, c. 1912. (note Blakes Gosport Ales).

Most Doctors did their rounds on a bicycle. All medicines were dispensed at the Doctor's surgery. A bottle cost a shilling, and a visit cost two shillings and sixpence including the bottle of medicine. Lots of people could not afford a Doctor, unless it was really serious. Our mothers doctored us up with the ghastly castor oil, which we hated. Camphorated oil was used for sore chests. My Mother used a sheet of brown paper smothered in what was called Russian Tallow, this was slapped on our sore chest. Most children suffered with chilblains owing to poor footwear. We boys had to put our foot with the chilblain on into the chamber pot after it had been used. Whether it cured the chilblain I don't really remember! Almost every child had all the childish ailments – measles, mumps, chickenpox, whooping cough. Some unlucky ones caught scarlet fever or diphtheria. These unfortunates were taken straight to the Fever Hospital at Elson for at least six weeks. The house was fumigated, and any other child in the family had to stay away from school. Even with measles you were kept away for three weeks if one of your family had it. When my sister caught the measles, my pal's sister caught it at the same time. We had an enjoyable three weeks playing together in the Horsefield.

In the dark evenings we were allowed to stay out till 8 p.m. We used to play all sorts of games round the side streets. The only street lighting was a naked gas jet, so all the streets were quite dark. Men on bicycles from the Gas Company came round to light the gas lamps. They carried a long pole with a hook on one end, which they used to pull down a chain which then set the flame alight from a small pilot light. Sometimes this had been blown out and then the man shinned up the lamp post and lit it with a match. One game we played in the dark was called "Nicky Nightlight". One boy carried a lighted lantern, he then hid away, mostly in a front garden, the rest of the boys shouted out "Nicky Night show your light". He would then flash his lantern for a second, then we rushed off to find him. Darkness never worried us. Shops were open till 8 p.m. and we used to play football in the park on a bright moonlight night. One night when we were playing, a man smoking a pipe joined in the game. Unfortunately for him the football struck his pipe, the shock of it made him bite the stem and he swallowed about an inch of the stem. Needless to say he retired hurt.



*Empire Theatre (Edinburgh Road), 1897.
The home of Music-Hall – the site today houses Sainsbury's.*

We had no cinemas, the only thing we did have was a Magic Lantern Show in our front room. My eldest brother had a lantern and lots of slides. The children used to enjoy it. I still have the slides, which were shown over seventy years ago. My eldest brother was a keen gardener. When I was about eleven years old, I had to get up at 7 a.m. in the spring and go out with a bucket and shovel to gather manure for his garden. My first call was the cabstand outside the railway station in Spring Garden Lane. The old four-wheeler horse cabs waited outside the station all day. If I was lucky I could quickly fill my bucket. He never paid me for it, but what he did was he took me to one of several Music Hall second houses on a Saturday evening. I enjoyed this very much. I saw a lot of the old music hall stars, including Harry Lauder, Vesta Tilley, Marie Lloyd, Florrie Ford, Harry Tate and two great ventriloquists, Arthur Prince and Fred Russell. Arthur Prince dressed as a naval officer and had a sailor boy dummy, also a sailor walked up and down the stage. I liked these two very much, or anything funny like Harry Tate's comedy shows. The lady singers did not interest me, although as a rule they topped the bill. In later years I saw George Robey and Joy Laurier. The audiences were large in those days, we used to have to queue for an hour at times. It wasn't really boring because street buskers used to give a show, some were quite good turns. They gave a show for the queue at the first house and second house. One variety performer I saw must have been well off, he topped the "bill". I cannot remember his name, but he gave his salary away in postal orders, for one shilling, two shillings and half crowns. This is a fact because I was lucky enough to get a half crown one. I believe it was every twenty-fifth or fiftieth person entering the pitt door was a lucky one.



*The Hippodrome, Guildball Walk, Portsmouth, c. 1910.
The theatre was destroyed in the blitz of January, 1941.*

When a circus arrived in town it was a great day for us boys. The circus was usually Lord John Sangers, about the best in the country at the time. We boys were up and out by 7 a.m. to meet the circus when it arrived at Gosport station. If we were home from school we carried the poles in to the men putting up the big top in the Horsefield. I saw my first animated picture, as it was called in the early days, in a circus. It only lasted a very few minutes, it was a policeman chasing a burglar over a roof. Before the first performance in the afternoon the circus paraded round the town. In front was the circus band, seated in a gaudy sort of coach drawn by circus horses, then came the wild animals in their cages, also the clowns and of course the elephants. It was quite a spectacle greatly enjoyed by the people of the town.

Fairs also were quite frequent visitors. We spent all day around the fair when on holiday. Lots of families went in the evenings. There was no rowdyism and it was most enjoyable, with the roundabouts, swings, hoop-la and the boxing booths. The boxers appeared on the platform outside the booth, the booth owner offering £5 to anyone lasting three rounds with any boxer on view. When I was a few years older I saw Joe Becket in the ring there. He hit some rash local man for six. Later Joe became British Heavy-weight Champion. There was of course no wireless in those days, and on the night of a big heavy-weight fight a 'special News' came out between 10 p.m. and 11 p.m. with the results. The newsboys shouted out "Big fight result", and they sold quite a lot of News. I think the public was more interested in those days. Local football was more popular too, our local county league team always had a big crowd at home games at Gosport Park. People were three and four deep all round the ground. Boys were allowed in free at half-time. We had to crawl between the spectators legs to get to in front to see the match. There was quite a lot of local service football too. You could always see a good game between these local service teams. Army cup ties were very popular.

When Edward VII was crowned, the schools all had a holiday and met at Gosport Park where sports etc. were held. We had races and each child received a Coronation Mug. The next few years our local sports club held their annual sports meetings on Coronation Day. We boys always looked forward to this public holiday. We had one of the best cycle racing tracks in the south at Gosport Park. Many crack cyclists came to the meeting. Our favourite was C.B. Kingsbury from Portsmouth. He was the five mile racing champion of the world. Kingsbury's racing costume was always black and white squares with a skull cap to match. He usually won the five mile race by a lap ($\frac{1}{4}$ mile), and also won the half mile and one mile races. There was always a big amusement fair, usually Bartletts. Most families went to the sports meeting, it was quite a family outing day. All the shops were closed. The weather was always fine and sunny.

August Bank Holiday was another family outing day. Everybody who could walk went to the nearest beach at Stokes Bay, mostly all day. We had to walk as there was no transport, only a tram about every two hours. Only people who lived near the Gosport Railway Station used the trains.

Easter was very popular with children. Boys of about twelve years old sold Hot Cross Buns on Good Friday. Two of us went round to neighbours getting orders for the buns which were a halfpenny and a penny each. We were up at 6 a.m. and with a borrowed big clothes basket went to town to get our buns. We carried extra buns for sale. We used to shout out "Oner, twoer, any Hot Cross Buns". Sometimes we would add "If you have no daughters give them to your sons, one a penny, two a penny Hot Cross Buns".

Two older boys went to some Forts way out of town, where soldiers were quartered. They never sold a bun out of a large basket full. Good Friday afternoon they sat on the grass in the Horsefield, our local park, with their large basket of buns. We all sat round giving them advice what to do with them, which they did not accept. Finally they plucked up courage and went back to the baker with them and explained their position. He was a decent sort of man and he took them back and possibly sold them off cheap next day. The two boys had the buns from 6 a.m. till 3 p.m. and had nothing to show for their labour, not even a bun. Good Friday was also the day the married men met in the park to play rounders. This seemed to be an annual event and they arrived with crates of beer.

Easter Chocolate Eggs were plentiful and cheap. In fact all confectionery was cheap, some sweets were four ounces a penny, and you could buy a farthings worth. One front room shop made what we called Stickies. They were about the size of an old half crown but much thicker. They sold at eight a penny, and were very popular as they lasted so long. Most Cadbury, Frys and Rowntrees chocolate bars were a halfpenny, penny and twopence all unwrapped.

Some sweet shops had what we called halfpenny dips. The shopkeeper had a cardboard box, about the size of a shoe box. This was filled with plain envelopes, but underneath the flap of the envelope was marked either 1 oz, 2 oz, 3 oz, 4 oz, 6 oz and 8 oz. You paid your halfpenny then drew out one of the envelopes, and looked under the flap to see the number of ounces you had won. The envelope was put inside until the others had all been drawn. Every boy asked if the 8 oz was still not drawn. One home made sweet shop had one envelope marked 16 oz. Much to my amazement I drew the lucky one, fancy, a pound of sweets for a halfpenny. But what a shock I had, the shopkeeper weighed me up the pound alright, but they were the stickiest sweets in the shop with one large lump of sweets in one mass, in a big bag. Anyway all the boys with me retired to our park and sat down and tucked into them. Other boys joined in so the sticky mass of sweets soon vanished. Cakes, such as rock cakes, doughnuts, buns were a halfpenny and a penny each. Every morning the cake shops opened up at 8 a.m. and sold stale cakes off cheaply. A queue of children lined up each morning and received quite a bag full for twopence and threepence. Some grocers sold block cake, mainly plain, for two and halfpence per pound. At the greengrocers shop we could buy a halfpenny worth of pecked fruit. This was apples, oranges and bananas just 'going off'. They never did us any harm, so we enjoyed the best part of the fruit. Cabbages, marrows were one penny each. Potatoes were sold by measure, half gallon and one gallon. Some greengrocers placed very large potatoes at the bottom of the measure so often you did not get good measure. Corn, for the fowls which many people kept was also sold by measure. Cigarettes were very cheap in the early 1900's. Woodbines were one penny for a packet of five. The bigger cigarettes were about threepence halfpenny for ten.

One well known comedian at the time, I believe he was called Billy Williams, also sung on the old cylinder records. The chorus of the song went

"Five cigarettes in a dainty little packet",

"Five cigarettes that cost one D" (penny)

The very early records always started off with the name of the song such as "Thora — sung by Harry Bluff, Edison Bell Record". I think they cost a shilling each. As children we used to enjoy these old phonographs as they were called, especially at Christmas time. My father passed away in 1903, and my mother with six of us, seventeen the eldest to my youngest sister only two years old, so we never had a special sort of time. We had plenty of nuts and fruit, oranges one year were fifty for a shilling. We had three Xmas puddings, no mince pies. Also we never hung up our stocking on Xmas Eve, never had a Xmas tree or Xmas cake. My eldest brother bought us games, snakes and ladders, ludo, race game and tiddly winks, which we liked best. One fairly big draper shop dressed their largest window with all toys about three weeks before Xmas. When we heard the shop was 'dressed up', we used to rush down to town to see it. The Xmas trade never started till three weeks before Xmas Day. Three days before Xmas Day, the butchers and poulterers had what was called "Show Night". The butchers had a huge display of meat, whole carcasses hung all around the shop. The poulterers shop front was covered with chickens, turkeys, geese, ducks etc. It was quite impressive. Most families trooped to town on "Show Night". Shops kept open late the three days before Xmas Day. On Christmas Eve the butchers and poulterers kept open until midnight. Lots of people waited outside until the last minute to buy the bird for Xmas dinner or beef or pork. The tradesmen sold them off cheap to get rid of them. There was no cold storage then. Some of the cattle hanging up in the butchers were marked "first prize". I don't know who judged it.

At the top of our street was a bakery. The baker, Xmas morning, would cook the turkey, chicken or your joint of beef or pork for a few coppers. It was quite a sight to see the people hurrying home with a large dish on which was their roasted bird or meat all ready for the Xmas dinner table.

Workers only had the two days off, Xmas Day and Boxing Day unless Sunday came at the same time, then they had those three days off.

On the opposite corner of the street opposite the bakery was a large blank wall, this was used for advertising. There were several of these advertising walls in the town. A man called a Billposter was fully employed by an advertising company to go round and paste adverts on the walls. Adverts for soaps, Sunlight, Watsons, Lifebuoy, or patent medicines. One large advert was for a new story for Women's Weekly magazine. There was a large picture of a girl, with the words underneath "Too late Daisy Dean". What she was too late for I never knew, but for a long time it was quite a saying with the boys, "Too late Daisy Dean". A well known firm of patent medicine once sent round samples of their kidney pills. Lots of boys ate them. Next day when they met they all said their waterworks had turned green. Whether this meant they had kidney trouble, or did not have it, nobody bothered to find out. The main thing was the pills did not do any harm.

When I was eleven years old and playing for the school football team, before I went to play at the local park I had to wash the floor over from the scullery, through the passage to the front door, also wash over the paving stones in front of our house. I then had to run errands before I was free to go. I often had to run all the way to the park to get there by 11 a.m. for the kick-off of the school match. I did this until I left school. My older brother had to do it until he left school and went out to work.

Many shops employed an errand boy. There were not many other jobs available and better-off boys went as apprentices on the different trades, for which they received about half-crown per week. Doctors employed an errand boy to deliver bottles of medicine to the higher class people who lived on the outskirts of the town in large houses. One boy, who we called Dusty, worked as an errand boy for two doctors who were partners. Dusty rode into the park on his carrier cycle, with his basket full of bottles of medicine for delivery. One part of our park was low lying and after heavy rain a large pool of water formed. It had done so this day. We boys bet Dusty he couldn't ride through the pool on his tradesman's cycle. Dusty, who was a 'bit of a lad', accepted the challenge, and rode off. When he reached the middle of the pool, it was deeper than he thought, and he went flying off his cycle. When he pushed it out onto dry land he found that he had broken nearly all the bottles of medicine. All he said was "Sack again". He was about fifteen years old and he counted up to fourteen different jobs he had, even one as a Page Boy. I met him many years later. He lost a leg in World War I.

There was about half a dozen blacksmiths shops in the town, and they did well with many horses for shoeing. We used to take our hoops to one near our school if we had broken it, they soon repaired it for us.

We also had a barber shop near our school, most boys had close crop hair cuts, for which we were charged twopence. The barber always gave us a picture postcard. There were very few men with beards in those days if we saw one we yelled out "Beaver" to him. Mens side-burns we called "Louse Ladders", which did not please the few men who wore them. Most men who worked in offices or shops wore stiff collars. The laundry charged one and halfpence each for washing and stiffening them. Bowler hats were worn quite a lot.

In the early years of this century a boy could sit for what was called 'The Labour Exam'. He had to be twelve years or over when he sat the exam which was quite simple and most boys passed. If you passed you could leave school when the school broke up for Easter. I passed and left school at Easter 1908, when I was just thirteen.



Gosport Station, Spring Garden Lane, c. 1914.

I did not get a job until June 1st, which was my Mother's birthday. It was funny how it came about. I was fishing in my favourite place in the moat about 7 p.m., when I saw a Telegraph Boy on his Post Office red cycle, riding towards the moats across the park. The boy lived a few doors from me, and he evidently knew where to find me. He told me they wanted a boy as a Telegraph Messenger at the General Post Office, and would I like to try for it. I said I certainly would. I don't know what I looked like after playing all day. Anyway, I left my fishing line still in the moat, and ran all the way to the Post Office in the High Street. I don't remember a thing about the interview with the Postmaster, but I got the job, and was told to report at 8 a.m. the next morning. I ran back to the moat to get my fishing line, and found I had quite a large eel on the line. As we did not like eels at home, I took it to our fishmonger and he gave me twopence for it. I then went home to tell my Mother the good news and she was delighted, as well as the rest of the family. This now meant four of us boys were out to work, which made things much easier for her in the future.

I reported at the General Post Office next morning at 8 a.m. I was told the hours would be nine hours a day for six days and three hours every other Sunday. The times of my duty would vary, one week early finishing at 4 p.m. or 5 p.m. and next week late, finishing at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. Sunday hours 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. and then 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. The wages would be six shillings per week plus sixpence for Sunday work, twopence per hour. Sometimes we walked miles on a Sunday as no Sub-Post Offices were open, and there was only one cycle among about six or eight boys on duty. We used to get lots of telegrams in a day, especially during the summer when two or three extra boys were taken on.

When I reported at 8 a.m. on my first day, I was told I had to fill in a Declaration Form to say I would not delay or destroy etc. any telegram given to me for delivery. After signing the form I was told a Magistrate had to sign it as well. The nearest one was next door who owned a large grocery store. A bit of luck, I thought. It was not: he did not arrive at the shop until 11 a.m., so I had a wait of three hours. The snag was those three hours did not count. So I did not start until 11 a.m., so to get in my nine hours I had to work right through until 8 p.m. There were no meal breaks, you ate your sandwiches in between times, waiting for a telegram to come. Each boy took turns, one boy might get a telegram for a shop a few doors away. The next boy might just as easily get one for two miles away. The first one I had to deliver was only in the next street, for a bookmaker's office. I believe I ran all the way. My next problem was, I had no food with me. My pal, who was senior messenger, arranged for me that if a telegram came for anywhere near my home I should take it, and I could then nip down home and get my dinner. A telegram came about 2 p.m. for a road near mine. After delivering it I nipped down home and Mother had my dinner all waiting for me. My next meal was 8.15 p.m. when I reached home, so my first day at work took me over twelve hours. Next day I did my real duty hours, it was 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. then 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at a Sub-Post Office. The following week my duty was 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at this Sub-Post Office. This was an easy one.

Telegrams only cost twelve words for sixpence. I had one for a big wholesale grocer who used to get quite a lot. It was a reply paid telegram, and it was about a mile walk. I handed in the reply at the counter of the main office, and the counter clerk said there was a halfpenny to pay. He was a miserable sort of man, he said the word 'its' counted as two words, hence the halfpenny short. I had to walk all the way back to collect it. I had a telegram one day for a Sick Berth Steward at Haslar Hospital. At the hospital I was directed where to find him. I knocked at the door and getting no reply I opened the door and went in. It was a dormitory and there were several men in there fast asleep, they had been on night duty. My trouble was which one I should awaken. I decided on first come first served, so I woke up the man in the first bed. I was one out, the man I wanted was in the second bed. I believe the telegram was to say he must return home at once owing to illness of his parent. A Naval Officer who was a patient in the hospital had his own room. I think he must have been courting an actress as his room was full of photos of her. He had quite a few telegrams and the boy lucky enough to deliver them always received a shilling, which was quite a lot of money for a boy in those days.

The Postmaster was a Scotsman, he was only about five feet high and wore a pointed beard, and always had a walking stick. He always walked to the Post Office from his home and back again as there was no transport. I was looking over the railings down into the moat below, when he came along one day. He hit me across the back with his walking stick for loitering, but when I explained that I was off duty he just walked off. Every morning at 11 a.m. he always had $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of ale. One of us boys took a brown jug that just held $\frac{1}{2}$ pint to the Star Hotel opposite the Post Office. Although I was still only thirteen years old, he always picked on me to go. He used to say quite often to me "Are you fourteen yet my boy?"

This was the age you were allowed to go to the 'Bottle and Jug Department'. He was quite pleased when the day came when I reached fourteen. I was entering the side passage of the Post Office one morning with the jug of ale, when boy-like I tried to blow the froth off the top of the jug. A postman saw me and he swore I was drinking the 'Old Man's' beer. The Postmaster was a typical Scot. He used to send me to the Hotel opposite to buy his bottle of whisky, every so often. He gave me a small leather bag that a bottle just fitted in. The whisky was called 'Auld Reekie', and cost three shillings and sixpence a bottle. He also smoked 'Smith's Glasgow Mixture. I think it was eightpence per one ounce packet. I also went to the bank for him to deposit five pounds at a time. To me it seemed a fortune.

The postal service in those days was first class. The General opened at 7 a.m. until 9 p.m. six days a week and from 8 a.m. until 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings. A postcard cost a halfpenny to send and a letter one penny. A postman did four deliveries a day finishing about 8 p.m. after starting 6.15 a.m., also one delivery on Sunday. Sub-Post Offices opened from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m. A postman's wages were about one pound a week, with extra for Sunday work. Postmen and the Telegraph Messengers had two suits of uniform a year, one for winter and one for summer wear. New boots once a year, but I think these were only issued to boys. We were also issued with a waterproof cape.

All parcel deliveries were made by push carts. They were made of basket work on two wheels, and were quite easy to push. Only two deliveries of letters were made on cycles. These were outlying districts. All the rest were made on foot. A postman usually did the same round every week.

The night mails were taken to Fareham Railway Station at 10 p.m. by a Royal Mail van drawn by four white horses. The incoming mails the mail van came back at 3 a.m. with. Three men were on duty at this time to receive them. Naturally Christmas time was the busiest time of the year for the Post Office. Even telegrams increased in number during this period. It was Xmas Eve in 1909, when I was on late duty, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. then 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. Just before 9 p.m. the morse machine used in those days started ticking, and several telegrams came through. There was only two of us boys on duty. I had half a dozen telegrams to deliver, five of them were two miles or more to walk. The other boy rode the cycle. His telegrams were much further away to go. I left about 9.15 p.m. on my journey, and it must have been nearly 11 p.m. before I reached home. For overtime, we had a penny for a short distance telegram, and twopence for one over a mile away. So I received the sum of elevenpence for my two hours overtime.

The postal Christmas card rush started three days before Xmas. Xmas Day and Boxing Day was the two heaviest post days. Most people posted their cards so as to reach their relatives or friends on Xmas morning. Postmen started duty at 4 a.m. with a break for breakfast at 7 a.m. finishing their round between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Some came back by what we called 'by rail'. They had a few drinks on their rounds, and passing the Park on their way back had frequently to catch hold of the Park railings to steady themselves. Hence coming home 'by rail'.

Nearly opposite the Post Office was a Recruiting Office with a Recruiting Sergeant in charge. He often toured the town looking for recruits for the army. Living in the town was a young man who strangely enough was named Brain. It was one thing he did not possess, he was really 'soft'. One day I had a telegram for a soldier in the 60th Rifles, stationed in a barracks near the town centre. Walking through the barracks I was amazed to see this young man Brain in uniform. Two soldiers were marching him up and down with his cap on back to front, and he looked thoroughly unhappy. I felt so sorry for him. It was about a week later I saw him again, but he was in civvies again. He must have been kicked out as hopeless, which he really was. How he was ever accepted for the Army I could never understand. The Recruiting Sergeant must have received extra pay for each recruit he signed on, so he may have been to blame.

Myself and another boy issued a weekly magazine written in a halfpenny exercise book. I painted a comic picture on the front cover, also painted a comic football cartoon inside. One of the Postal Clerks played for a Wednesday football team. The cartoon I copied from a Sunday newspaper. We called the magazine "The Messengers Weekly". We did four only, but it was quite popular with the Clerical Staff and I received the name of 'Mr. Editor' afterwards. One column was called "What we want to know", and we found plenty. Also an account of the football match the Clerk played in, which pleased him very much, especially if they had won. I painted the comic cartoon to suit the result, which I found in the Sunday paper back numbers. We enjoyed it while it lasted, but I had the job of writing it all.

I spent three years as a Telegraph Boy in which I must have walked hundreds of miles. Summer was the busiest time. As I stated before we took turns in taking telegrams as they came in, until it was discovered that a boy at times had only taken short distance ones. Perhaps he had only walked a mile all day.

Another boy may have walked over ten miles. So a check was kept on each boy and the distance he had walked. When a boy had walked over ten miles, he was given the shortest distance telegrams, and a boy who had not walked far was given long distance ones, which was much fairer.

In the summer, big racing yachts came into harbour at times. When we had a telegram for a yacht, a Wherryman, as they were called, took us out to the yacht in his boat. The charge was ninepence, unless the yacht was further up the harbour, when they charged a shilling. One evening I had a telegram for a famous racing yacht 'White Heather'. When I went to the Hard she was just entering the harbour. I jumped into the Wherryman's boat to go out to her, but she sailed on right to the other end of the harbour. We were a long way behind until she finally moored. We were gone one and a half hours. I enjoyed the trip, but had to make explanations when I arrived back at the Post Office.

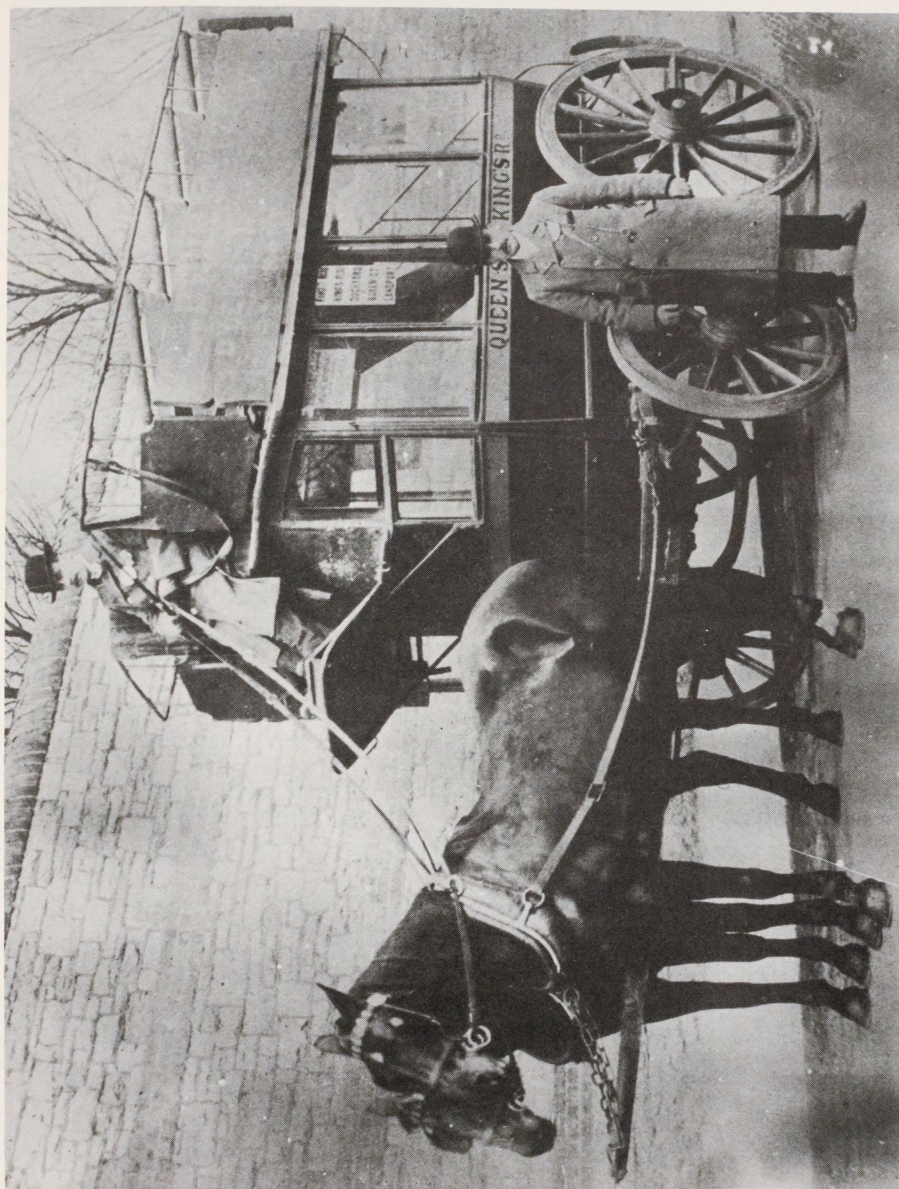
At the Sub-Post Office where I did duty at times, there was some quite large houses where the better class people lived, but a lot of them owned large dogs which I did not fancy, but they seemed to fancy me. One lady came out and said her big dog would not hurt me. She told me to pat him on the head and call him "Samuel". I am afraid I never tried it.

A Telegraph Messenger's job was a dead-end one in those days. You had to leave when you were sixteen years old, or to become a Postman you had to sign a declaration to say you would join the Army when you were eighteen years old. When you came out on the Reserve you became a Postman, but could be called up at any time. I did not fancy the Army, so I left four months after I was sixteen. Later the rule was cancelled.

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Coronation of King George V, 1911 — Guildball, Portsmouth.



Horse drawn cab (pre-1914).



*'Clarrie' Kingsbury, Olympic Cycling Champion, 1908.
He is seen here wearing his black and white racing costume.*

Gosport Water Supply 1856-1955

by

G. P. Aston

During the Middle Ages, it was said that only those "who live by agriculture or by land labour" resided in Gosport. The Tudor period saw the emergence of a small fishing village, but gradually the tiny hamlet became a sizeable town, looking more and more to the harbour and to the navy for its livelihood. It was also the home of the great inventions of Henry Cort, who had consolidated the processes of puddling and rolling using coal in both cases, and had opened up the vast iron foundry of the nineteenth century.

For natural reasons, Gosport was not to be part of the Industrial Revolution. Instead, it was to be a significant part of the large-scale fortification programme during the 1850's, when the danger of a full-scaled French invasion of the South Coast was very real. It was realised that the gravest danger would arise from a capture of Portsmouth and consequent crippling of the British Navy. Gosport's fortifications, therefore, provided the first line of defence not merely for Portsmouth, but for the whole country.

Prosperous towns in the 1850s, as in the present day, had their individual problems. Gosport suffered from congestion and disease within the town. At this time, Gosport was part of the parish of Alverstoke, as were Anglesey, Elson, Hardway, Forton, Brockhurst and Bridgemary. The first successful census was conducted in 1821, and the parish was found to house a total population of 10,342. By 1851, this figure had increased by 63% to 16,908, of which 9,846 lived within the "town" of Gosport.

In 1861, there were 1,429 inhabited houses in Gosport, with an average of 5.5 persons in each house. Added to these overcrowded conditions were back-to-back courtyards, with open cesspits, and narrow dark alleyways, all of which obviously attracted diseases such as cholera. Needless to say, the water supply was totally inadequate. In 1850, it was described as "health-destroying" and "lamentably deficient".

There were two early attempts to provide a piped water supply. The first was made in 1698 by an enterprising Londoner named Thomas Lewis. He obtained an Act of Parliament for the erection of a waterworks at Forton. Water was supplied to 240 houses through the hollowed out elm tree pipes that were then used. However, the company, faced with financial difficulties, was forced to close down.

An attempt to reopen the above works was undertaken at some point in the early years of the nineteenth century. This is deduced from the fact that an article in the Times, 28th March, 1816, gave notice of a Special General Assembly of the Proprietors of the Gosport and Forton Waterworks so that all the property belonging to the company could be sold. The works consisted of a well and pumping station.

Consequently, as late as 1850, public supply of water was from great carts. Water was drawn from the wells in the district and then sold at one farthing a bucket. Despite the poor quality and the intermittent supply, 7776 gallons came daily from the three main wells in the town. One was obviously at Forton; a second was on the premises of Mr. Bowden Puttock at the Brewery, Haslar Street; and the third was located at the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, and was reported to be 300 feet deep.

In addition there were many private pumps in the district, many of which continued to supply their owners with water long after public supply was laid on.

The military supply was described in an 1858 survey, conducted to discover the sanitary conditions of the barracks in the Portsmouth district. Of the Gosport barracks, Blockhouse Fort was said to have a water supply "derived partly from wells, partly from rain water". Fort Monckton's water was "derived from fresh and salt water pumps" and was considered to be sufficient. The military hospital and prison were both supplied by a well.

Gosport is situated on the Hampshire Basin, which is based on two of the great series of sedimentary rocks, the Tertiary and the Cretaceous. The strata that occur near the surface are the "Bracklesham Beds", the "Bagshot Beds" and the "London Clay". The Bagshot series are of importance from a water point of view. The top division, being mostly sand, is permeable, and sometimes may yield a moderate amount of water. There are also sands in the Bracklesham Beds, sometimes of fair thickness, though not of constant occurrence. The bottom division, largely consisting of sand, forms a water-bearing bed; the pebbles at the top, which are of very local occurrence, going with the sand.

The underlying chalk is the great water-yielding formation of Hampshire, the area of which is ideal for collecting rainfall in large quantity; its thickness makes it well fitted for storage. The strata are therefore favourable as far as water-bearing formations are concerned, and the rainfall, between 25 – 27 inches a year, is adequate.

Demand, geology and geography were therefore all favourable. All that was needed was entrepreneurial skill to make a conscious effort to introduce a piped water supply.

In 1856, the initiative was taken by a few supporters of an intended water company, to hold a meeting at the India Arms Hotel. They wanted, by deed of settlement or an Act of Parliament, the latter being a necessity to extinguish or counteract the existing "Forton Waterworks Act", to form a Company to be called the "Gosport, Forton and Anglesey Water Consumers' Company Ltd."

A prospectus was issued in December 1856 and the public canvassed to support the scheme. It stated that the promoters had procured an estimate from a contractor, Mr. Murray, who was willing to undertake the necessary works for £23,000. It was therefore decided to form a Company with a Capital of £25,000, raising the sum by the issue of 2,500 shares of £10 each.

However, the public support was disappointing with only £4,150 being subscribed. Meanwhile, Mr. Murray recommended Mr. Pilbrow, a London Civil Engineer of much experience in waterworks, to be consulted on the subject. Having read the prospectus, he furnished a report and estimate, stating that he would undertake the scheme for only £14,331.

In January, 1857, a second prospectus was therefore issued. The new Capital was to be £17,000, raised by the issue of 1,700 shares of £10 each. The support for this was far more encouraging and by 1862 it was reported that £10,003 had been fully paid up. All 1,700 shares were fully subscribed for by 1869.

This led to the passing of the "Gosport Waterworks Company Act" on 11th May, 1858, an Act "to supply with water the inhabitants of Gosport, Forton and Anglesey, and other places in the Parish of Alverstoke in the County of Hants".

Seven directors were nominated by the Act, qualification of which was the possession of at least 10 shares in the undertaking. They were:— the Reverend E. Burney (also the first Chairman); D. Compigne T. Watton, A. Wright, J. Starkey, W. Rogers and H. Dashwood. James Pilbrow was appointed engineer; Messrs. Tyrell, Paine and Layton the solicitors and parliamentary agents; Compigne the secretary, and J.G. Blake the auditor. The Head Office was at the Market House on Gosport Hard.

The considerable increase in population during the 1850-60 period (34% in the parish of Alverstoke) fortunately coincided with the major development in the introduction of an authentic piped water supply.

Mr. Pilbrow believed that a new well and boring could be sunk at Bury Cross in the water-bearing strata of the Bracklesham Beds and the Bagshot sands. The works, started in May 1857, were completed by 1860. They comprised a 7' diameter well, sunk 70', with an 18" boring carried into the sand beds to a depth of 330', yielding 300,000 gallons a day; a pumping station and a water tower, the capacity of which was 7,250 gallons.

The first two attempts at a mains water supply had used hollowed out elm trees of 6" diameter. The present company stated that they would tap the water mains (9" diameter), insert ferrule and stop-cock, and lay down all the branches and galvanised iron services, extending from the main pipe as far as the premises to be supplied. The user must then lay down, at his own cost, galvanised wrought iron pipes, ½" diameter in the bore.

The water rent was to be paid quarterly, determined by the rental value of the house supplied. For example, if a house, which did not possess a bath, and whose annual rental value was under £8, then the cost would be about 1.75d per week. Yet the house of £40-£45 annual rent would have to pay 1s. per week. If there was a bath to be supplied, then this would cost an extra 1.2d per week in the first case, and an extra 2.3d in the latter.

For the purposes of trade and manufacture, supply was to be by meter. Consumers using between 15,000 gallons and 100,000 gallons per quarter, would have to pay 1s. per 1,000 gallons. Above this, special agreement with the company had to be made.

From the very outset, the supply was more or less inadequate. The most favourable period, in the life of Bury Cross Works, was in the early 1860's, and then the supply was never in excess of 14 gallons per head per day. In 1864 it was reported that only 800 premises were supplied.

To improve this situation, costly well works were constructed between 1860-1892. These included four more wells and six more borings; a 71,670 gallon water tower in 1866, additional pumping plant in 1874; and a second pumping station in 1883. The additions of 1883/4 and 1886/7 (two of the six new borings) increased the number of premises supplied by 217 and 278 respectively.

During this period, the directors had raised additional capital under the Gosport Water Orders of 1872 and 1883. The former authorised sums not exceeding £10,000, or £2,500 to be borrowed on mortgage. The latter gave permission for £23,000 to be raised, or £5,750 to be borrowed on mortgage.

By the 1890's, this elaborate system of wells and borings, all situated within the very limited area of the Bury Cross site (about two acres), were now giving a total daily yield of 32,000 gallons. Thus the yield had been increased by 7% since 1860, but during the same time the population had risen by 12%.

Furthermore, the company had ceased to become a solely domestic supplier, because in 1889 an agreement was made to supply the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard and the Royal Marine Barracks at Forton with 30,000 gallons a day.

With the Bury Cross works working to capacity, it was necessary to look for a new site, where a fresh source of supply could be found. Thus with this end in view, the company consulted a geologist, Mr. Whitaker, in 1893. He reported strongly in favour of obtaining water from another geological formation. He advocated making a well and headings in the Chalk at Foxbury Point, the northernmost limit of the Company's district. There, relatively close to the surface, lay the London Clay and the Reading Beds.

Chalk is not strictly a very permeable formation. The water is mainly distributed by means of the vertical planes of jointing which cut across the rock in various directions: where these fissures open out at all there may be large quantities of water passing along them, and the way to ensure a large supply, therefore, is to carry out works in such a way as to cut as many fissures as possible. This is done by horizontal extension below the plane of saturation, or water-table.

Mr. Whitaker's advice, as to the location of a new site, was taken, and Foxbury Point was selected as being, perhaps, the only one within the Company's then district where a well could be successfully sunk into the chalk bed. The risk was that excessive pumping might result in drawing in salt water.

When consulted on the subject, Mr. Hildred (appointed engineer in 1896), thought that, at 30 gallons per head per day, 900,000 gallons would be required each day in 1901 (assuming the population to have risen to 30,000. Thus, with Bury Cross yielding 320,000 gallons, an additional 580,000 gallons per day were required.

The Gosport Order of 1897 empowered the construction of the necessary works and granted permission to raise further sums not exceeding £24,000, or to borrow on mortgage sums not exceeding £6,000. The works included a well; a pumping station with two "single-acting bucket pumps"; a water tower holding 320,000 gallons and a 15" pipe, reducing to 12", from Foxbury, 3.25 miles to Gosport.

Although the water tower was not completed until 1900, Mr. Hildred, writing in March 1897, stated that 1,070,323 gallons per day were being raised, and assuming the domestic and trade consumption of 30 gallons per head per day, this would supply a population of 35,677. With the population at the 1891 census being 25,452, there was, irrespective of the Bury Cross yield, ample supply.

In the same year that Foxbury was yielding at least 1.25 million gallons, there was a violent attack on the quality of the water from the well. It had been realised that excessive pumping could lead to direct infiltration of sea-water, a fact stated by Mr. Hildred when the directors inquired into the installation of a new pumping engine with greater capacity.

The attack was made in February 1903, by Dr. Reid, a member of the Ratepayers Association. He said that the chalk stratum from which the well drew its water, was exposed in many parts of Fareham Creek, and that Mr. Hawkins, the Government Geologist, declared that the well might be polluted by sewage. Thus:—

"The population which uses its water must always be liable to the dangers of a widespread epidemic of water typhoid entailing great loss of life".

In order to safeguard the lives of the 28,884 inhabitants of the locality (now the Gosport and Alverstoke Urban District Council by virtue of the Local Government Act of 1894) the ratepayers suggested that this source of supply should be abandoned in favour of a safe site.

The geologists, Mr. Whitaker and Mr. Hawkins, recommended three sites — one in the parish of Bishop's Waltham, another in the parish of Swanmore, and the third at Mislingford in the Meon Valley, situated in the parish of Soberton, 11 miles north of Gosport.

Soberton was chosen, primarily because it is situated upon the clays of the Reading formation which, at the point in question, overlies the chalk some 30 or 40 feet in thickness. Secondly, the proposed site adjoined the Meon Valley Goods Depot and this gave it a preference from commercial considerations.



*An early water pump.
(Still in use).*

Authorisation for the Soberton scheme was given by the Gosport Water Act of 1904. Furthermore, this increased the Company's statutory limits of supply to include the parishes of Crofton, Rowner, Wickham, Shedfield and Swanmore. The total area now being 25 square miles and the population requiring water was 34,250.

The scheme, commenced in February, 1905, was completed two years later, the formal ceremony of turning on the supply for general distribution being performed by the Chairman, Mr. W.E. Churcher, on May 24th 1907. On completion of the undertaking, Gosport was supplied with an excellent supply, both in terms of quantity and quality. A geologist, John C. Thresh, wrote in 1908:—

"This is a chalk water of the highest degree of bacterial and chemical purity. It can be certified as a pure wholesome water, well adapted for the purposes of public supply."

The Foxbury works ceased to exist as one of the Company's pumping stations in March, 1907, and similarly the Bury Cross works in October. The storage tanks of both plants remained in use.

The well shaft at Soberton was sunk into the chalk formation to a depth of 55' below ground surface. At the bottom, a heading was driven from the well shaft to a distance of 385'. These works were built to yield a maximum 1.75 million gallons per day, which was more than double the demand at this period (0.8 million gallons per day).

The pumping engines originally installed at the Foxbury Station were dismantled, removed and re-erected at Soberton. A covered reservoir was constructed at Gravel Hill (200' by 128') in Shedfield, with a capacity of 2.1 million gallons. Thus, together with the two other tanks, Gosport had a water storage equal to nearly 2.5 days supply. Finally, the supply raised from the well at the Soberton Station was delivered through 1.875 miles of 16" diameter main to the Shedfield reservoir. From there it was extended some 8 miles through Shedfield, Wickham, Fareham to Gosport, where, at Bedenham, a junction was made with the existing 15" trunk main.

The Act of 1904 had given authorisation to another very important scheme — the purchase of the "Lee-on-the-Solent Waterworks Company" for £5280. Lee-on-the-Solent occupies the foreshore stretching from the Browndown Ranges to Hillhead and Southampton Water. It was a growing seaside and residential district, but the Company, which supplied their water, had no statutory powers.

Their works consisted of a well 6' in diameter and 22' deep, a storage tank of 15,000 gallons capacity, and oil-driven plant. When the transfer had been effected, these went out of use. Their mains were connected to the Gosport distribution system. The actual transfer did not take place until 1915, by which time the average daily supply of the Lee undertaking was about 30,000 gallons to 200 properties.

Meanwhile, the directors decided to proceed with extensions of their existing well and headings works at Soberton to increase the yield and to make the Company's future supply assured. The contract works commenced, but owing to exceptional and unavoidable stoppages and delays due to the outbreak of war, were not completed until March 1915. The result of the completed operations exceeded expectations. The works were capable of producing over 2.5 million gallons per day.

As the war continued, the call made by the Admiralty and other Government Departments grew year by year, so that by 1918 the average daily demand was 1.5 million gallons, an increase of 88% on the 1912 figure. The directors, realising the urgency of installing pump power, took immediate steps to that end. The scheme ultimately involved and successfully carried out was to divide the total water lift of the smaller of the two established pumping sets, utilising the engine with new and larger pumps to raise water from the well to ground surface only, and put down an independent engine to do the high lift to the reservoir.

The completed plan was in full and effectual operation in 1919. The cost of the scheme, including the extensions described totalled £64,000, and by the Gosport Waterworks Company (Capital Issues) Consent of 1920 and 1924 the amount that could be borrowed was raised from £5,750 to £14,000 and £19,380 respectively. Furthermore, an Order of 1923 stated that the charge for a supply must not exceed 2s 6d per 1,000 gallons.

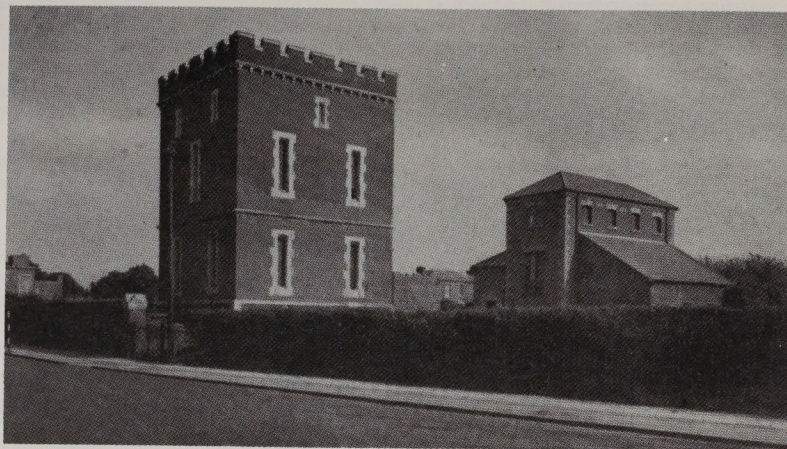
After the First World War, the average daily demand fell slightly and remained for the next 16 years at around 1.3 million gallons. The number of additional premises supplied during the war had obviously been minimal. In fact in 1917 only 11 new supplies were effected and just 8 in 1918. Now was the time for progress. Between 1919 and 1928, there were 2,208 new connections. By 1931, 9,968 houses were supplied.

This rapid growth in the number of connections did not necessarily signify increased demand. Housing conditions were poor and the post war housing programme was aimed principally at redevelopment. This is underlined by a comparison of the population of Gosport (incorporated as a municipal borough in 1922, and under the Gosport Extension Act of 1930, the wards of Alverstoke, Brockhurst, Christchurch, Elson, Forton, Lee-on-the-Solent, Leesland, Newtown, and Town itself were now termed the Borough of Gosport) between 1911 and 1931. This increased by only 4,627, so that in 1931 Gosport had a population of 38,443.

The following decade saw a staggering additional 6,043 new connections and by the mid 1930s the average daily demand began to rise again. Extensions were becoming necessary. Furthermore, the limits of supply were extended to include Boarhunt in Droxford. The statutory limits of supply now had a total area of 29 square miles with an estimated population supplied numbering 46,500. The Gosport Water Act of 1937 had authorised this addition and also enabled the Company to construct adits connected to the well in Soberton.

In 1936 an additional pumping shaft, 10' in diameter and 130' deep, was constructed. A short length of adit from this well was driven to connect up to the existing adits. In 1937 the Company purchased about 86 acres of adjoining land known as "Bere Farm Estate" and in the following year an access shaft, 10' in diameter and 155' deep, was constructed on this land.

In 1938 there were two further innovations. A Uniflow steam engine of 2.5 million gallons per day capacity was installed, and the 16" diameter pumping mains from Soberton to Shedfield was duplicated.



Bury Cross Works, Gosport.

The outbreak of war in 1939 made additional demands by the Admiralty and other Government Departments on the Water Undertaking. Consequently, a second covered reservoir was constructed at Gravel Hill (259' x 179') and opened in October, 1940, with a capacity of 3.5 million gallons. The old steam plant, with a capacity of 1.5 million gallons per day, was replaced by electrically driven plant, capacity of 3 million gallons per day. Yet Soberton, whose maximum daily yield was 2 million gallons, was obviously strained to supply the requisite 2.3 million gallons per day in 1940.

To lessen the burden of the Soberton Works, one of the most important acts in the history of the Gosport Waterworks Company was passed. By the Gosport Water Act of 1940, the Bishop's Waltham supply was transferred from Southampton City Council to the Gosport Company for £11,170. The works consisted of two shallow wells, about 20' apart, joined by a gallery in the chalk; a pumping engine at Northbrook, which had a capacity of 6,000 gallons per hour; and a service reservoir at Vernon Hill of 183,000 gallons capacity.

Secondly, there was the authorisation of the "Bishop's Waltham Scheme", which entailed the construction of a well and pumping station on a site at Hoe, between Suetts Lane and Newlands Lane, about 1 mile south-east of Bishop's Waltham. This was totally independent of the works at Bishop's Waltham, and this well was driven 150' and was 8'6" in diameter. Following a pumping test of this well, which yielded about 1 million gallons a day, it was decided to drive adits from 90' below ground to obtain additional water.

The timeliness of this work was underlined by the air attacks on Gosport, 10th/11th January 1941. Mains were damaged and the Fire Fighting Service had to draw heavily on the available supply. Within three days, the two reservoirs at Gravel Hill were drained to within 3'9" of floor level. To safeguard Gosport's supply an immediate decision was made to defer the adit work at Bishop's Waltham, and although not complete, the new well was chlorinated and put into use.

Furthermore, owing to a frost period about the same time causing many burst house service pipes, the well had to be kept in continuous use, making necessary the construction of another well 150 yards away, in order to complete the adit work. The scheme was finally completed in 1943, and in the following year the average daily yield was 3.5 million gallons, a 159% increase on the corresponding figure for 1932.

The final provision of the 1940 Act was the extension of the Company's limits. The following parishes in the Droxford Rural District were added to increase the statutory area to approximately 39 square miles:— Bishop's Waltham and part of Durley.

At the end of the Second World War the consumption reached a peak of 3.8 million gallons a day. By 1950, this figure had dropped to 3.5 million gallons, in spite of increased domestic use. The reason was obviously a fall in demand from the armed services. However, the services demands were expected to increase again. This was justified by the consumption figures for 1950 and 1951. The Admiralty used an average of 1.16 million gallons a day in the former year and 1.22 million gallons in the latter. Moreover, a substantial increase was to be expected due to large housing schemes being developed by the Borough Council.

In 1951, the Gosport Waterworks Company applied to the Minister of Local Government and Planning for an Order to extend their boundary of supply. The Gosport Water Order, 5th July, 1951, added most of the remaining Meon Valley parishes, namely Soberton, Droxford, Corhampton and Meonstoke, Exton, Warnford, West Meon and Upham. This made the areas of supply approximately 76 square miles with a population of 67,000 to be supplied.

At that time the only existing piped supply in these parishes was at West Meon, where in 1939 the Droxford Rural District Council had introduced a supply to the village from a small borehole in the Chalk at Vinnell's Lane with an electrically-operated pumping station and reservoir. Under the Order of 1951 this was transferred to the Company.

In response to these post-war extensions, an extensive programme of new works was undertaken in the first half of the 1950's. At Soberton, steam-driven pumping plant was superseded by the use of electricity. Four steam engines had been used at Soberton. The oldest was the engine transferred from Foxbury in 1907, and this, together with the Worthington Engine installed in 1920, was removed in 1953. They were followed by the Uniflow Engine in 1957 (and the fourth steam engine had of course been removed in 1940). In their place a second electrically-driven pumping set with a daily capacity of 3 million gallons was installed.

Yet the major developments lay outside Soberton. Plans for a large-scale programme of works were put forward in 1951, and undertaken during the 1950's.



Foxbury Water Tower.

It was proposed to build a covered service reservoir at Hoads Hill, of 2 million gallons capacity, and connected by an 18" trunk main to Hoeford, a distance of 7,000 yards. These were for the purpose of maintaining adequate pressures and rates in the Gosport area.

A further covered reservoir was to be constructed at Streete End, and this too was to have a capacity of 2 million gallons. A 6" main was to supply the above reservoir with water from Vernon Hill (a distance of 1,600 yards), which in turn was furnished by a second borehole at the Northbrook works from where a 12" main was laid. On completion of the reservoirs, the total service capacity was about 7.9 million gallons, which was practically two days' supply.

The Streete End reservoir was also to be used to supply the parish of Upham, and to this end a 4" main was to be laid. A further proposal was the laying of a 15" main from Northbrook to the Hoe pumping station. Finally, for the supply to the Meon Valley parishes, a service reservoir holding 200,000 gallons was constructed at Fir Down and water being pumped thereto direct from the Soberton works.

In 1955, the end of an era was reached when the Gosport Waterworks Company ceased to be an independent undertaking. It was agreed to amalgamate with the Portsmouth Water Company to form the Gosport and Portsmouth Water Company, under the Portsmouth and Gosport Water Order, 17th March, 1955.

The 1944 White Paper on National Water Policy, followed by The Water Survey had earlier laid down broad principles for the extension and amalgamation of existing water undertakings, where areas, sources of supply and works offered advantages of economy and convenience by means of amalgamation, then it was in the interest of the national economy, as well as being financially desirable, that they shall merge.

By the 1955 Order the whole of the Gosport Waterworks Company's undertaking was transferred to the Portsmouth Water Company and the former was dissolved. The latter took over all assets and liabilities of the Gosport Company. Two of the Gosport's Company's directors were appointed to the Board of the new Company, and its' principal officers were compensated for loss of office and in fact retired on pension.

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