

PORTCHESTER MATTERS

Issue 11

The Newsletter of the Portchester Civic Society (Founded 2000)

Autumn 2013

Life at School in the 1920s



Top left - Castle Street School, 2013; Right - Portchester Council School; Bottom left - Portchester Council School classroom with Miss L Sturgess

by Paul Woodman

Shortly after the 1870 Compulsory Education Act, Castle Street Board School was built in 1873 for the sum of £970, which included a house in the grounds for the headmaster.

It was enlarged in 1893 to accommodate 164 children. After the 1902 Education Act it was again enlarged to take 174 children and renamed Portchester Council School. By 1921 the population of Portchester had grown and the school could accommodate 203 pupils. The school, by then called Castle Junior School, amalgamated with Manor House Infants School in 1982 and after

a year of working on split sites whilst the builders made the necessary changes to accommodate 250 to 300 extra junior children, Castle Primary School came into being. Recently the Head lent me

some of Portchester's earliest school records, the logbooks, from which I extracted the following excerpts that give an interesting view of the life of a child at school in the 1920s.

'A School Year'

Portchester Council School
1921-1922

Accommodation

Inflo 57
Main Room - with partition 82
North Room 64
Total 203

Headmaster
Mr C J Brooks

Teachers

Miss L Cushen
Miss L Lander
Mrs H W Martell (nee Bennetts)
Miss L Sturgess
Mr P J Leigh
Mrs L E Nash (nee Tribe)
Mrs D E Martin (nee Sparks)
Miss M Patterson

continued on page 2 »

« Continued from front page

1921

May 23rd: School re-opened after the Whitsun holiday. The school has been scrubbed and desks also washed.

May 24th: Empire Day - special reference was made to the day - and an account given of the reasons for marking the day.

This afternoon - a girl - who was only admitted yesterday, fell in the ditch at the eastern end of the playing field. This ditch is a drain - carrying a good deal of the drainage of the centre of the village - and is known as "Fever Drain" from its repulsive state. The child was covered with filth - and after being attended to was sent home.

The attention of the Architect had previously been drawn to the necessity of providing a fence. A fence was erected between the playing field and the land adjoining, which was not such a necessity.

June 1st: Several away with mumps.

June 2nd: Several away today in addition to those with mumps. Sewing was postponed this afternoon, and drawing taken instead.

June 6th: 128 present this morning.

June 7th: Needlework and Drawing postponed.

June 15th: Mr Ansley, Physical Training Instructor, visited this morning. The girls being at Cookery, the remaining boys were taken out for exercises. The weather being extremely hot - in fact the hottest day for 25 years - took a great deal out of the boys.

June 16th: A supply of atlases - 4 dozen - arrived; they were requisitioned 2 years ago! 11 fresh cases of mumps. Attendance 113 this afternoon - 20 away.

June 27th: Mr E J Hicks, HMI, visited today and suggested that Miss Sturgess be given the opportunity of visiting other Infant Schools. She has been an uncertificated teacher since 1906 so her experience is only what she has had here.

June 29th: The School Medical Officer visited this afternoon and examined the drain at the East end of the playing field, about which complaints have been made.

June 30th: Two boys were 15 minutes late and lost their marks this afternoon. They had been out with cart for their father. (Illegal employment)

July 5th: The School Nurse visited this morning and examined all children. Two children were excluded owing to Vermin. They are living in a five roomed house in which 16 people live! A girl, just 5 years old, fell in the filthy ditch at East end of playing field and was sent home covered in slime. A fence is to be erected but so far has not been put up.



Castle Street Council School, Class 2, 1930 with Miss M Patterson - Teacher

July 7th: Notified Medical Officer of 15 more cases of mumps, also 3 later.

July 8th: Physical Training Instructor visited. Owing to the extreme heat no exercises were taken - and they will be discontinued during this record weather - the greatest drought on record.

July 11th: The great heat still continues. This afternoon the thermometer in both large rooms registered over 80 degrees. Still no blinds are fitted!

July 13th: School closed. Annual outing of Church Sunday School to Lee-on-Solent.

July 25th: More cases of mumps. Attendance 108 out of 141. Total cases today are 67. The fencing at East end of the playing field was finished last week. A letter was received from School Medical Officer reference to the obnoxious smells which come from the ditch - or rather drain - asking for the opinion of the Managers - as the Medical Officer recommended it being filled in. The Director of Education also wrote to the effect that he would visit the school with reference to the supply of blinds.

July 27th: Dr H Brook called today with reference to Epidemic of mumps. Cookery class held.

July 28th: There were 304 absences during the week owing to mumps. School Exam, none were taken under the circumstances. The obnoxious, nauseating, and sickening smells that emanate from the Wicor Bone Factory have been overpowering this week and in spite of the extremely hot weather the windows on the south and west have had to be kept closed most of the week, to the great discomfort of all. The school was closed this afternoon for the Summer Vacation of 4 weeks; to re-open on August 29th.

Summer Holiday

Sept 5th: School re-opened with 134 present out of 139. Delayed due to re-tarring the yard not carried out by contractor.

The following report of H.M.I. (*His Majesty's Inspector*) was received during the holidays:-

Board of Education, 13 August 1921
Portchester Council School, No. 278
Inspected on 27 June 1921
Report by Mr E Wynn Williams H.M.I.

Mixed Department with Infants Division

"The Head Master, who took charge of this school on 18th October 1918, is doing much valuable educational work.

He realises the deficiencies and is endeavouring to remedy them, and there are evident signs that his efforts are attended with considerable success.

The children attend regularly and are under very good control.

There is a good understanding between the teachers and their scholars, and the older children apply themselves diligently to their assigned tasks.

A higher standard of classification is being secured, and the syllabuses of instruction are now wider in scope and more definite in aim.

The special efforts of the teachers are now to be directed to the teaching of the English Subjects in the lower classes, and to the encouragement of a reader and more intelligent response to oral questions generally.

The infants are kindly taught and the teacher in charge of them is most careful and painstaking, but she would do well to visit for a short time a thoroughly efficient Infants Department, in order to gain a wider and more intimate knowledge of present day aims and methods of teaching young children."

It was noted by the school that, "The 3 Assistant Teachers here have had very little experience beyond Portchester. They were all born here, attended this school as children, and have spent most of the remaining years here as assistants.

There is no doubt that 'Refresher Courses', such as are held in other countries would do much to help the assistant teachers, and such courses should be provided at certain intervals - and the teachers should be able to attend at quite nominal charges, and not have to sacrifice their vacation."

The Tar - 6 barrels - was delivered at school today.

Sept 6th: The foreman visited today to see about the tarring of the yards.

New arithmetic books, exercise books and rulers were given out.

Sept 28th: The cookery class was held today. The teacher in charge reported that the stove smoked in every way possible and needs attention. Needlework was postponed this afternoon - elder girls had knitting and boys, reading.

Oct 6th: Extreme heat still continues, the thermometer being at 72 on opening school.

Oct 7th: Medical Inspector spent the morning here. A boy excluded (Verminous). Cards distributed to several other special cases.

Oct 11th: A boy, during playtime this afternoon, fell from a tree in the adjoining meadow (where he was trespassing) and was sent home apparently much shaken.

Oct 12th: The above named boy has slight concussion. Pointed out to the assembled school this morning the result of disobedience.

Oct 13th: The closets are satisfactorily cleaned and emptied - as far as present duties of cleaner admit. It would be better if buckets were emptied daily and the offices (toilets) swept out daily also instead of only twice weekly as at present.

Oct 14th: Miss Sturgess - Infants teacher - will be visiting Wimborne Road (Portsmouth) School for the next 2 weeks as per arrangements made - as a result of Mr Hicks, H.M.I. recommendation.

Oct 21st: School closed for Autumn Week Holiday.

Oct 31st: School re-opened. 7 children away suffering with whooping cough.

The shocking quality of the ink now supplied is very pronounced. It rapidly forms a jelly like mess or else turns watery. Today - after a week's holiday - the ink in inkwells was found to be unusable and work this morning had to be by means of pencils.

Nov 11th: There are 30 children away this morning - whooping cough - colds and the bitter cold weather being the cause. Fires were lit this week as the sudden change from summer heat to winter was most marked.

Armistice Day Service. The usual service was held in large room at 10 minutes to 11am - and was most impressive.

Several articles of girls clothing - hat - 2 pairs of gloves and handkerchief were taken from girls' porch this morning. Reported same to PC Hill who has the matter in hand.

Nov 17th: The gloves that were referred to above were recovered by PC Hill. The thief, a woman of 21, was placed on probation for 12 months - and the case revealed a deplorable state of things - the family living in a pigsty.

A newspaper cutting of the time reveals that the family of eight were living in an old ruined house at Wicor, Portchester. There were no doors or windows. The family lived in one room upstairs, access to which was gained by climbing over a fence surrounding a pigsty and getting past 5 pigs, which were living on the bottom floor. The room where the family lived was 15 foot square, practically void of furniture. In the far corner of the room was a heap of straw and an old feather bed on which the whole family slept. The room was very dirty and offensive. The living conditions were reported to the R.S.P.C.C. and to the probation officer. The clerk to Fareham Rural District Council was forwarded the particulars of the case in order that they might take immediate action.

Nov 18th: 26 children away this morning with colds or whooping cough.

Nov 25th: A great deal of illness is prevalent - whooping cough, colds and influenza. 32 children away and several more ought to be away by the 'barking' that is heard. All 3 teachers in upper school are very unwell, having got influenza.

A young girl - infant room - is ill with bronchitis, whooping cough and septic pneumonia and is not expected to recover.

Attendance dropped to 103 today. The state of the offices (toilets) is satisfactory as far as present arrangements allow. 5 bales of peat came to hand on Tuesday. (Used in earth closets.)

Nov 28th: The young girl died on Friday evening. She contracted whooping cough at school - and bronchitis and pneumonia followed. This is the second death of a scholar since re-opening school in September.

Dec 2nd: Very wet and cold. 31 absent.

Dec 6th: Owing to wet weather and darkness, drawing and needlework was postponed. Reading exam was taken in 1st Class.

Dec 9th: By permission of the Managers the children who are members of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides were allowed to leave school at 2.30pm to form a Guard of Honour to Mrs Ramsay JP at the Parish Hall - where she opened a Parish Bazaar.

Dec 22nd: School was closed for holiday until January 4th 1922.

1922

Jan 4th: School re-opened. 115 present out of 128 on books. Bitterly cold, thermometer only at 40 degrees on entering school.

Jan 16th: Miss Cushen away all-day - unwell. Mrs Martell is present but cannot talk much - having had 10 teeth extracted on Saturday last.

Jan 17th: Several children away ill. The fathers of two children visited to protest against the sending of 'warning' notices with reference to children who are ill. Explained that this was done by Attendance Officer, who evidently does not accept the word of the parent or the marking in register. Wrote the Superintendent of Attendance Officers on the matter. Several children are back at school with whooping cough owing to the persuasions of the Attendance Officer.

Jan 20th: Owing to the illness of the staff no Physical exercises have been taken this fortnight. Extra attention will be given in the succeeding weeks. Attendance yesterday 99 out of 136.

Jan 26th: 94 present today out of 136. Sickness (influenza) increases and school is worked with difficulty. Today was so dark that this afternoon it was hardly possible to read. Lessons have had to be arranged to fit the circumstances as far as possible.

Jan 27th: Two parents called with letters from Superintendent of Attendance Officers - with reference to the absence through sickness of their children.



Castle Street Council School, Class 6, 1926

Jan 31st: Wrote to Attendance Officer again to effect that a father had called to notify that his boy was now able to get out of bed but not able to leave the house.

Feb 1st: I was unable to be in school this morning owing to illness (the first occasion since taking up duty here in 1918). I was able to be in school this afternoon but too shaky to do anything but marking. Influenza is the chief cause of the low attendance.

Feb 2nd: Very wet again. Attendance down to 106. 31 away. Two children were specially examined by the Schools Nurse and were found to have verminous heads and are consequently excluded from school.

Feb 6th: Very cold. 40 degrees only most of this morning. Children's overcoats and jackets had to be worn.

Feb 8th: Very little progress can be made owing to the great amount of illness amongst the children. The school would have been closed - with advantage - the amount of epidemic illness would then probably have been over quickly. The schools in the locality are closed owing to illness.

Feb 17th: The attendance has improved. The percentage this week being 91.1 - the first week over 90 since October 21st last.

Feb 24th: Notice received that schools will be closed on Tuesday next by desire of H.M. the King - on the occasion of the wedding of the Princess Mary.

March 8th: A terrific gale - with rain, snow and hail raged this morning. The attendance suffered and work in school was only carried on with difficulty - the noise being overpowering. The girls cloakroom could not be used. Several tiles were displaced. The girls attending the Parish Hall for cookery class reported this afternoon that the teacher had not put in an appearance.

March 9th: Received letter from Cookery Teacher to effect that owing to the gale it was unsafe to venture out. (The gale registered 108 miles per hour - according to this morning's paper.)

March 13th: The Director informed me that a gas cooker will be fixed at the Parish Hall for the cookery class, in addition to the ordinary range.

March 16th: So far during the year - no less than 5695 absences are shown.

March 21st: The Time Table will be varied from today - in view of the Terminal Examinations.

March 24th: Exams have been taken during the week and will be continued during next week.

March 31st: Exams have occupied most of the week - and annual returns were made up and sent off today - the last day of the School Year.

April 3rd: School was closed today owing to rooms being required for an Election of a Rural District Councillor.

April 4th: School re-opened. 126 present out of 134. Admitted two fresh children from Portsmouth. Both are backward for their age. Mr Hartley H.M.I. visited during the morning.

April 6th: First class had Painting 1st lesson this afternoon. The Records - marks of scholars - are completed and classes will be re-arranged on Monday next.

April 12th: Cookery class held. Boys had a Reading and Drawing 1st lesson this morning, while Form 9 was being made up.

The Requisitions sent in during last month were received back today from the Education Office with an intimation that the orders must be reduced by £17 4s 9p - practically a cut of one third. This delay will severely handicap the first terms work. Exercise books and new Arithmetic books were urgently required - and should have come to hand by this time. Several new books - new History and Geography textbooks are required - but no new goods are to be allowed. No intimation had been received that only a certain amount was to be allowed - and as a result the practically to be gone over again.

April 13th: School closed for Easter Holiday.

April 24th: School re-opened. 137 on books - 131 present.

April 25th: Forms 9E (*stationery and text book requisitions*) were returned to Winchester. I pointed out the waste of time that resulted from no intimation being received as to amount allowed for goods. Practically it means a two-month delay. Owing to want of goods, lessons have had to be varied somewhat.

May 1st: The usual May Day Holiday, which has been the rule for many years past, was discontinued and school held as on any other school day.

May 5th: Notification received that the amended requisitions had been approved - except Test Cards. The amount of stationery is a great handicap, at the commencement of the year's work.

May 8th: The small needlework requisition was allowed- and came today. There being no drawing books for lower classes - drawing was not taken this afternoon.

May 9th: A hot spell of weather - after a very cold week proves very trying.

May 17th: The stationery from Arnold's was received and unpacked and given out to the various classes today.

May 26th: Very hot weather this week - all records for temperature in May being broken (since 1870). Outdoor exercises could not be taken.

June 1st: The temperature on entering school this afternoon was 76 degrees and the heat was oppressive. Sewing (girls) and drawing (boys) were postponed and other quiet lessons were substituted - children's hands are too hot and damp for either sewing or drawing.

June 2nd: School closed this afternoon at 3.50pm for Whitsun Holiday.

Additions in italics and extracts edited by Paul Woodman - Castle Primary Community Governor

An Early Visit to Portchester

by Peter Hoade, May 2013

I was born in Copnor, Portsmouth and lived there with my parents and sister who was four years older than me. My father had retired from the Royal Navy in 1937 but on the outbreak of the Second World War was recalled, promoted to a commissioned rank and sent to H.M.S. Collingwood in Gosport to help train new recruits. He rode there each day on a bicycle.

In 1943 'Lord Haw Haw' made reference to a new road which was being built to take traffic off Portsea Island in one of his infamous broadcasts. This was the Eastern Road which was close to where we lived. He promised the road wouldn't last long and certainly frightened my Mother.

Arrangements were made quickly for us to move to Portchester in a rented house in White Hart Lane which I believe was on the North side beyond the Secondary School towards the Wicor end. We had not been there long when the house was hit by an incendiary bomb during a night time raid. It burnt its way through the roof and into the front bedroom. My father stamped quickly around the edge of the fire and it dropped down to the front room downstairs. Luckily my father was not on duty and he sent my Mother and us two children off to a brick built shelter which was in the road near to where there are now shops. He stayed behind tackling the fire and ensuring the house was safe.

When he had achieved this he set off to find us in the shelter. However on the way he heard a child shouting from an upstairs house window. Seeing the house on fire he broke in rescuing the boy and his parents. On finally arriving at the shelter he was met at the entrance by an old man who greeted him by saying, 'What are you doing coming to hide in a shelter? Men like you should be in the armed forces fighting the Germans'. I was never told my father's reply.

My wife and I returned to Portchester in 1961 and have lived there ever since.

Portchester Castle 1851

From the pages of the Hampshire Telegraph, 19th July 1851

The greatest success continues to attend the numerous and varied attractions of this splendid "Time-honoured Pile." Thousands have borne testimony to the delight expressed by all who have visited the Castle; the Mammoth Picture of Vesuvius, by Ubsdell; the ERUPTION of the MOUNTAIN, allowed to be the chef d'oeuvre of Pyrotechny; the Unrivalled Band for the Votaries of Terpsichore, the Magnificent Ball-Room, Theatre, Cosmorama Views, Illuminations, healthful Gymnastic Recreations, Cricket, Archery, Rifle Shooting, the Views from the Castle Summit of the Harbour and Fleet at Spithead - all that can amuse and instruct the most fastidious.

N.B. The Castle is open every day for Promenade, Music and Dancing. Refreshments on a scale commensurate with the times.

Gala Days, Monday and Wednesday.

The South Western Company will run Trains from Portsmouth at 11.10 am, 2.15, 3.30, 6.15 and 7.30 pm, returning from Portchester at 4.40, 5.30, 7.54, 10 and 11 pm. Fares, there and back, 3rd Class, 6d; 2nd Class, 1s; 1st Class, 1s 6d.

Omnibuses for the convenience of the Public, from the Railway Station to the Castle, at 2d each Passenger.



Portchester Pageant, 1932 - 'The Return of Arviragus'

Machinist, Mr T. Thorne, and assistants. The whole of the arrangements under the entire direction of Mr Van Buren.

Preparations are making for the production of an Entertainment on a novel and most extensive scale, never attempted out of London - eclipsing all that has ever been produced here or elsewhere.

Beachwatch 2013

by John Morgan

On Sunday 22nd September we joined with the Marine Conservation Society again for the annual Beachwatch event. We chose the shoreline at the south of the castle along to Hospital Lane. Fifteen volunteers turned up for the event, which was a very good turnout helped by a nice day.

We were pleasantly surprised that there was not an awful lot of litter/rubbish on the shore, but we measured the survey distance and scoured the shoreline for any pieces we could find. In the end, in total we picked up six bags of rubbish and some iron bars from where a concrete base had been set for a new seat (we assume).

After the 100 metre area was cleared some of the volunteers carried on along the shoreline past Hospital Lane and cleared some more litter. Again there was not much to be found, only various pieces of plastic, glass, and metal from the inside of a car wheel.

All in all it was a very good event with volunteers from all over the area helping to find what litter there is on the shore and keep the area clean. Thank you to those who turned up.



A happy band of volunteers

Portchester Castle 1852

From the pages of the Hampshire Telegraph, 27th March 1852

'The Castle of Portchestre standeth three miles by water from Portsmouth town.' - Leland.

The lessees of this interesting and imposing remnant of Antiquity, with the extensive grounds attached to it, have, during the recess, been engaged in completing from the design and pencil of Mr. R. H. C. Ubsdell.

A magnificent panorame of Iceland, exhibiting in Colossal dimensions, (many thousand feet of canvass being covered by the pencil of the artist, and some novel mechanical contrivances, having been brought into requisition).

Mount Hecla, and the Yokuls and other Craters, with their numerous volcanic Mountains and Geysers, or boiling fountains, emitting volumes of steam and sprouts of boiling water. These issues are situated at Hankadal in the rear of Heela in whose three snow clad summits form the grand apex of the picture. Among the other varied effects exhibited by day will be the numerous Cataracts, one of which is of enormous height, formed by the melting of the snows and ice. The village of Holme with its ancient church, huts, and picturesque bridges, occupying the fore-ground those remarkable curiosities of nature, clusters and columns of Basalt Rocks spread throughout the picture in diversified masses.

As dusk approaches, reindeer and herdsmen will be seen crossing the numerous Bridges over the Falls, and leading homeward; various sounds attributable to volcanic action begin to strike the ear. As night comes on flashes of fire will be seen issuing from the summit of the mountain this will be the signal of the portending eruption. Columns of fire with loud reports as of cannon fall in quick succession; the western side of the mountain is rent from top to bottom; liquid lava and Stones roll down and choke up the valleys, cataracts of fire destroy and consume all that by day appeared so fair; and thus in darkness and apparent desolation is ended this magnificent specimen of artistic talent and skill.

In the production of the above combination of the work of the artist's pencil and mechanical contrivance and skill, the proprietors have soared no expense; taught by the experience of

the past season they have succeeded in avoiding the many crudities and imperfections incidental to the first attempt of such a character, and the result of a liberal though wise employment of capital, experience and skill, is the production of a work of art of a character and magnitude never attempted before in the provinces.



Portchester Pageant, 1932 - 'The Return of Arviragus'

The ball room will be decorated by tapestry and heraldic ensigns, painted and gilded by numerous assistants whilst the windows well-filled up with stained glass, bearing the effigies of the Kings and Queens of England. In the centre of the Court-yard and surrounded by a platform will be a royal tent of the most elegant design, being copied from a tent of the times of Henry VIII.

The Amusements will be of every description, including Archery, Cricket, Rifle Shooting, Trap-bat and Ball, &c. &c., affording enjoyment and recreation to all.

The Grounds and Castle will open for the season on Good Friday, April 9th, and Easter Sunday, when the Panorama of Iceland will be submitted for public inspection together with a variety of other spectacles of interest.

On Easter Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 11th 12th and 13th, will be given a grand gala, when the whole of the resources of the establishment

will be brought into requisition, including the Eruption of the Mountain, a Ball, Vocal and Instrumental Concert &c. &c.

Admission on Gala days 6d. each.

Viands and Refreshments of every description of the best quality and lowest charges to be had at the Castle.

Trains will run at times suited to public convenience, the times of which will be hereafter notified. Fares there and back 6d, 1s, and 1s.6d.



This miniature by Ubsdell is believed to be of Thomas Goble c1851 the veteran of Trafalgar who is buried in the grounds of St Mary's in the Castle.

R. H. C. Ubsdell

by Paul Woodman

The mentions of Ubsdell in both the 1851 and 1852 reports refer to Richard Henry Clements Ubsdell 1812 – 1887.

Ubsdell was a Portsmouth artist who became famous for his miniature portrait paintings. His greatest achievement came in 1842 when he was chosen by the civic authorities to commemorate Queen Victoria's first visit to Portsmouth. The painting was destroyed by enemy bombing in World War 2. There are a number of his works in the National Maritime Museum. Ubsdell was probably involved in photography as early as 1849.

Portchester Gala - Over a Century of Tradition

Edited from a 1999 article from Joanne Riley by Paul Woodman

Lasting for two days, with all 800 residents of Portchester taking part and thousands of tourists coming to watch, the Portchester Pageant of 1907 started a tradition of summer galas and fairs that have attracted millions of visitors for more than a century now.

These village affairs kept the community spirit alive as Portchester grew from a tiny village surrounding a Roman fortress into a sprawling town, but at times they have struggled to survive as the population expanded and newcomers showed little interest in the old-fashioned entertainment. The summer event died for a decade in the late 1980's, but in 1999 the annual gala was resurrected and its enormous success proved that village life in Portchester is still alive and kicking.

The original pageant of 1907 was staged within Portchester castle to celebrate the official birthday of King Edward VII. The historical spectacular depicted the story of Portchester in six episodes and it is reported the whole village dressed up and played a part in this Oberammergau reproduction. Hundreds of visitors arriving at Portchester station were astounded to see Romans riding on bicycles and Druids driving motorcars around the village.



Gala Parade - 2013

Portchester stepped back in time annually for the next thirty years.

Founder of the Portchester Players, Audrey Bill recalled her neighbour's role in a pageant as a Roman centurion. She said, "He was the village milkman and had a cart shaped like a chariot so he was offered the part."

Arthur Watson remembered acting in a 1920s pageant when he was a pupil at Castle Street School. He said, "The theme was ancient Britains and the story depicted the ghost of the white lady in the castle."

World War Two pulled the curtains on the pageant and the festival that grew from the rubble became the Portchester

Gala. A colourful carnival procession of richly decorated floats and marching bands wove through the packed village streets and finished at the castle where visitors were greeted with side-shows and stalls within the keep. The gala aimed to rebuild the community, crushed by the war, as well as raise money for urgent repairs to St Mary's, the priory church within the castle walls. The vicar of St Mary's wrote in the "Portchester Review" of 1959: "The gala provides an opportunity for us to meet together as a community to enjoy ourselves. In the preparation of it we all have the chance to work together."

Preparations for gala day began months in advance and the village would be bustling with activity as locals eagerly awaited the big day. A lady preparing to hold a stall at the 1959 gala wrote in the "Portchester Review": "The pace gets hot by gala until by gala week we shall be in a whirl of excitement with visits to make, perishable items for stalls to be made, and stations set up for packing our goods as attractively as possible." Reports for the 1959 gala show organizers were faced with agonizing questions, such as "How much hydrogen is required to fill 100 balloons?" and "If the band plays Colonel Bogey is a licence required from The Performing Rights Society?"

Deciding what to wear was a major decision for Mrs Bill, who recalled that her family used to dress smartly for the occasion. But the best-dressed girl at the vent was always the gala queen. One year the gala queen was picked at a Valentine's dance and another year she was the winner of an essay competition entitled, "Why would I like to be Miss Village Fayre."

Tourists flocked to watch the arena events, which became more spectacular each year. A parachutist, intending to make a dazzling entrance at the 1972 gala, disappointed crowds when he jumped too early and missed the arena, landing in the mud creek outside the castle.

In the seventies the gala metamorphosed into the more modern Village Fayre, which offered a funfair and sideshows such as bowl for a pig, but abandoned the glamorous procession. The fair raised money for a new roof on St Mary's Church, but for strict gala-goers it was a pale shadow of its predecessor and with dwindling tourist numbers and rising costs, the Ferris wheel ground to a halt in the late eighties.

In 1999 Portchester born Hazel Woodman, then chairman of the Portchester Society and Alan Simpson, chairman of the Traders Association, worked together to recreate the gala of their 1950's childhood. Castle Street and others on the route decorated their homes with bunting and balloons and a forty-float procession snaked through the streets. Mrs Woodman said: "The pavements were packed with people and there was the same excitement as years ago." Another long time resident of Portchester, Mrs Bobbie Nickolson added: "It was what I would call good old-fashioned village entertainment."

Since 1999 the gala has annually continued to provide entertainment and a meeting place for the people of Portchester whilst supporting local causes. The villagers of 1907 Portchester would be pleased to know that the tradition stills exists and is flourishing.



Gala past - Band march down Castle Street

PORTCHESTER PERSPECTIVES NO. 19

The Poor in Early Victorian Portchester

by Bryan Jerrard ©

Since Elizabethan times the state via the local parish has made attempts to support the poor by taxing the better off and providing work and work materials, apprenticeships for young children, money grants of pence a week - and in Portchester by providing accommodation in a Poors House in West Street; this was renovated in the early C19th where those who were desperate could be sheltered. Overseers of the poor were elected to organise help and the records show how locally and nationally the cost of outdoor relief in aid of wages rose dramatically. This led to the degradation of labourers and the ruin of farmers whose rates in some places were heavier than their rents. The state passed the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834.

was sold for £105 to a Mr Wates, a grocer from Fareham.

Here is the published diets at the time.

The Scale of their Diet

FOOD	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN
Bread	16 oz	12 oz	12 oz per day
Meat	16 oz	13.3 oz	10.3 oz per week
Cheese	14 oz	10.6 oz	9.3 oz per week
Pudding	12 oz	10 oz	8 oz 1 day a week
Potatoes	4.75 lbs	3.9 lbs	3.3 lbs per week
Gruel	1 pint	1 pint	1 pint per day

(NB 16 oz or one pound (lb) = 453.5 gr., one oz (ounce) = 28.3 gr.; one pint = .568 litres.)

This may suggest quantities but was no guarantee of the quality of the food.

The Average Age at Death

As a sideline and using the burial register at St Mary's in Portchester in the 1820s men died on average at 38.9 years of age and women at 34.5 years; rates in the 1850s were marginally worse. Burials of children in the 1820s aged 5 years or less were 22% of all burials; in the 1850s this rose to 29%. (Figures for the averages for adults and the percentages for children are similar in Southwick and Boarhunt at these times.)

All these figures suggest that the quantity and quality of life in Portchester and area in early Victorian times was poor although those in the workhouse were at least fed regularly under a harsh regime, totally lacking in compassion. The Act came to be hated.



Victorian poor

The Abolition of Outdoor Relief

Under this act, only medical attendances persisted in the outdoors and the able bodied were expected to go to the new workhouse in Fareham, built in 1836 for £4,242. The poor also from Boarhunt, Fareham, Southwick, Titchfield, Wickham, Widley, Rowner and Wymering were accommodated, with children separate from their parents and men and women kept apart. The Poors House in Portchester

The Cries of the Poor in the 1920s

Writing this reminds me of Dursley, in Gloucestershire in 1973 when an elderly history class member asked me if he could speak out. He recalled as a young man the horrific screams of a young mother being dragged by the parish officers to the workhouse in the late 1920s with her two young children. This chilling memory is still with me... and is worth more than many words.

Chairman's Letter

by Hazel Woodman

Dear Members

What joy to reflect on such a wonderful summer. I do hope you had a chance to enjoy it.

Welcome to new members who will be reading your first Society newsletter that includes historic facts, planning issues and information on our forthcoming meetings and events.

Summer Visits

We visited Bursledon Brickworks and had a guided tour of the works. I enjoyed it and found it so interesting especially as my Dad was a bricklayer around the local area. In his early days he actually made the bricks from the local clay before building the houses. Before his death he passed on some of his skills to my husband, Paul, who can produce a nice brick wall and does all the hard landscaping in our garden.

Portchester Gala

Although the Gala was again a great success we were unable to put up our display again this year due to the strong winds.

Heritage Walks

In conjunction with Heritage Open Days our local historian member Bryan Jerrard took two guided

walks down Castle Street. They were both well attended but unfortunately the rain stopped the walk on the second day but all our visitors managed to dry off in the Church tearoom.

Beachwatch

This was very well supported again this year but only collected one bag of litter in the 100 metres surveyed. We were so surprised, but very pleased, to see how much cleaner the shoreline has become.

Planning Issues

Our main focus at the moment is on the new outline planning application for Trafalgar Wharf, the former Vospers site. Last year's proposal for houses and a 12 storey apartment block with restaurants underneath was withdrawn and a new application put in for a 10 storey block with no restaurants and a revised entrance/exit from Hamilton Road onto the A27. The Society has objected strongly to Portsmouth City Council on the inclusion of such a prominent structure in the setting of Portchester Castle, its surrounding parkland and conservation area. The proposed block is 37.4 metres high; over six metres above the Castle keep.

The new Co-op store next to the Wicor Mill public house is nearly complete and we await the news on what will happen to the present Co-op store premises nearby. Opposite, the development on the former Smiths Hardware store site is progressing. The two houses in the garden of the former White Hart pub are now occupied and the consensus is that they are in keeping with the conservation area after our persistence in challenging the bland frontage first applied for.

Working with Schools

I am so pleased with our contact with Wicor School. It has always been an ambition of mine to introduce the Society to the younger generation. Paul has recently been invited to talk to the children on local history and has spent a couple of Mondays on the subject of Portchester in World War 2. It sounds as if they really enjoyed it, as he was able to take in a few items loaned from the Royal Navy Museum including a duffel coat and a gas mask. The Year 5 pupils were particularly interested in where bombs fell in Portchester and the effect it had on the children at the time. The school has a small museum that we are loaning some local books and artifacts to. Castle Primary has also expressed a wish to hold similar sessions.

Help

I am still looking for new committee members as our numbers have reduced, making the workload higher for us all. We do our very best to keep on top of everything but do miss some local planning applications so are not fulfilling one of the main aims of our Society. If you feel you would like to find out what is involved in helping the Society look after the built and living environment of Portchester then please contact me. We need to look to the future of the Society and bring in new blood to ensure we have an active, vibrant committee to carry on the good work we have already achieved.

On a lighter note I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Hazel

Programme of Events for 2013/14

2013

Saturday 9 November

'Memories of Portchester' Exhibition

An exhibition of photos, paintings and memorabilia of Portchester past organised by the Portchester Civic Society. Parish Hall, 10am - 4.30pm
– for more information 02392 382778

Tuesday 19 November

AGM and The RSPCA Solent Branch
by Vanessa Eden. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 17 December

Christmas Party & Quiz
£5 per member or guests. Tickets: 02392 382778
Parish Hall, 7.30pm

2014

Tuesday 21 January

A Window in the Lives
of Portchester People 1500-1750
by James McInnes. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 18 February

Fingerprints by Roger Shearn. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 18 March

Diving for the Royal Navy
by Martine Michael. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 15 April

Swords for Naval Officers
by Dr John McGrath. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 20 May

Canine Partners
by Ian Parker. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 17 June

To be Confirmed. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

No meetings in July & August

Tuesday 16 September

Wildlife of a Working Forest
by Mike Read. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 21 October

'A Century of Change'
The new National Museum of the Royal Navy Galleries
by Christopher Knox. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

Tuesday 18 November

Plantation Houses of Virginia
by Bryon Jerrard. Parish Hall, 7.30pm

PARISH HALL, CASTLE STREET,
PORTCHESTER, PO16 9PY
WE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
AND VISITORS

PORTCHESTER MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Portchester Civic Society

Founded 2000 | Registered Charity No. 1090509

Member of:

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

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

www.PortchesterCivicSociety.co.uk