

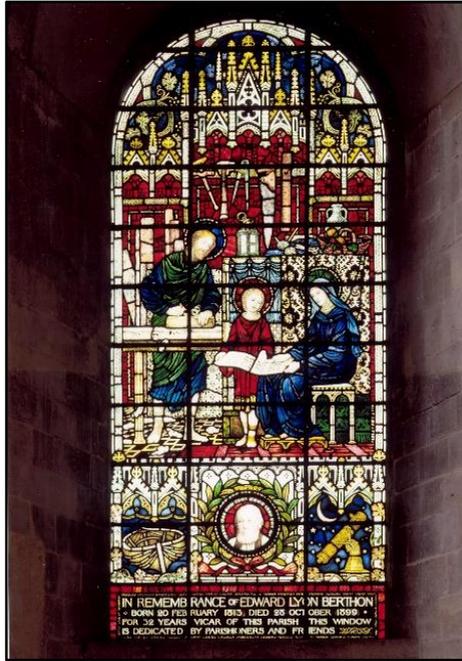
Romsey Local History Society

[LTVAS Group]



Rev. Edward Lyon Berthon
(See article on page 3)

Spring 2021



Berthon Memorial Window
set in the south wall of the north transept
The chapel in this transept is dedicated to St Lawrence

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Cover Picture: a portrait commissioned by the Berthon Boatyard Workforce displayed in Romsey Town Hall Council Chamber

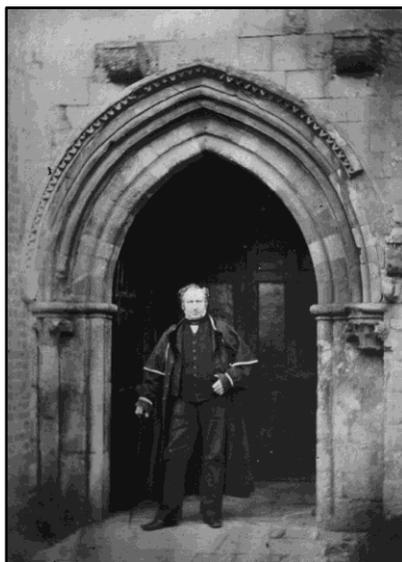
Two Victorians Who Remade Romsey Abbey

by Terry Proctor

When I joined the Romsey Local History Society, I was invited to take part in a photographic project to record graffiti in Romsey Abbey and make a visual inventory of the fabric of the church. Romsey Abbey is a notable example of Romanesque (Norman) architecture which has been modified during the following centuries. Over the years there have been many guides to the Abbey but they paid little attention to work carried out during the 19th century. Delving through the LTVAS archives in Romsey Town Hall basement I found a typescript of the recollections of a 19th-century sexton at Romsey Abbey.

His name was James Major and he was sexton/verger at Romsey Abbey from 1839. He was born in Romsey on 21st October 1806, and was christened at Romsey Abbey. He married Mary Burlington from Mottisfont in Romsey Abbey 2 December 1832.

James and Mary Major appear in the 1851 census which shows them living in The Hundred at an unspecified address. In 1864 they died within a few days of each other. On 5th March 1864 they were both buried at Botley Road Cemetery after a funeral service conducted at the Abbey by the Rev. Edward Berthon. So, James Major's connection with Romsey Abbey was lifelong.



That would be the sum total of his life history: just another unremarked 19th-century working man, had it not been that in 1862 someone at the abbey, possibly Berthon, had asked him to write some notes about his time there when he was the verger.

The manuscript he produced in his own inimitable style has been preserved in the Hampshire Record Office in a small bound volume. A transcription of his notes was produced by the late Pat Genge, a member of LTVAS. Here are a few extracts of his notes which give a flavour of his story with his own idiosyncratic spelling. The history begins

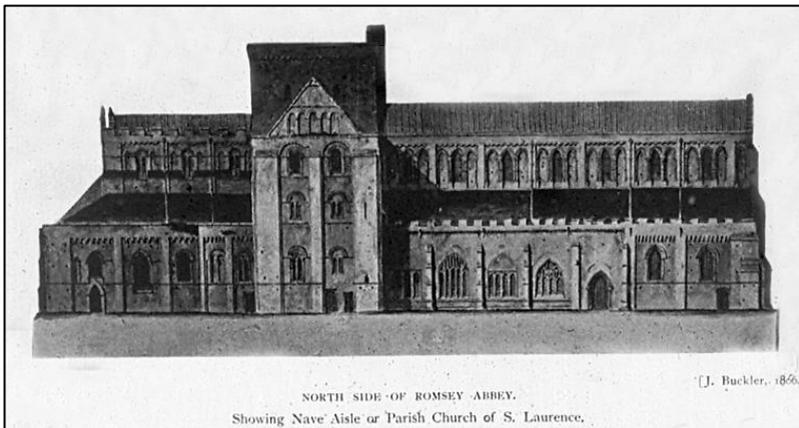
The little history that I have learnt of Romsey Abbey. From its early Pierod up to this Present with its resorations and its insurtions I will indevor to explain....

Mr Major had, in the course of his duties as verger and sexton, been able to carry out excavations both outside and inside the Abbey. A man of limited

education but immense curiosity, he had an exceptional understanding of the archaeological history of the Abbey. In 1845 ninety-five members of the Royal Archaeological Institute, who were holding their summer meeting at Winchester, visited Romsey Abbey and James Major had been invited to tell them of the discoveries he had made in and around the Abbey.

...in the presence of the arcuological society in 1845, there was 93 of them gentlemen visited Romsey Abby. And in proving still more of the Facts it was a momentry thought I removed a stone in the wall under the window of the ambuleraty to find if the Fresco painting continued witch I discovered 20 years ago. I was sucesful in doing it..... the Marquis of Northampton presented me with the Glossery of arcitect witch is a verry valuable book to me.

This reference is to a 300 page tome - *The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture*, written by the Marquis of Northampton who was the President of the Royal Archaeological Institute.



*View of the north side of Romsey Abbey
showing features explained by John Major to his visitors
(see also illustrations on page 35)*

Prior to the dissolution of the monasteries Romsey parish church was in the unusual position of being within the walls of the Abbey church. The parish church was located in the north aisle of the nave and had been extended northwards into the north transept and the churchyard. When the entire Abbey church was purchased from the crown for £100 in 1544, the extension was no longer needed and was demolished. At that time, too, extensive modifications had been started to take account of the changing form of religious practices in the centuries after the Reformation.

He took the visitors to look at the north side of the Abbey, where James Major related how he found the long demolished north porch which would not be replaced until the beginning of the 20th century.

In digging graves 30 feet north of the West door I have found remnants of the foundation of the old Porch which is in every respect corresponds with the porch of Saulsbury Cathedral.

He then led them to the north-east door which had by then been blocked

....The first door going into the East End was insured, 1624, one of the most unsightly doors in the Abby. The window over it is an insurrection...

James Major went on to point out other features. Regarding the east windows he wrote:

... I caught the attention of the Marquess of Northampton to acquaint him of what my discovery had been by cleaning of (f) the mortar.

Mr Major then reported on the white-washing and how it gave the interior of the Abbey the appearance of a chalk pit

It appears that many years rolled by without anything of material work been done in the old Abby, but whitewashing and mutilation. It is well known by some of our Parishners that in Hard Frosty weather Bricklayers would make an application to the overseers of the parish for relief when they could not do any work for the Frost. The overseers would send them to the Church wardens to know if there was any work to be done at the old Abby Church, accordingly the Ch. Wardens would set them to white wash the walls and colloms for 2 or 3 months in the winter season and that is how the church rate was expended..... I was reading of Bloxham Gothic work and from so doing I fancied some Fine Molding and carving might be found. The North door that leads into the Chancel was the first arch that I cleaned and after taking 5 Barrows of mortar, oyster shells and tile shreds from it, I was inclined to progress further. And with the consent of the Vicar and Churchwardens..... I continued my work in cleaning up to 1844..... No one can describe the state the Abby was in before the restoration began. It had in my opinion more the appearance of a chalk pit than windows in it than anything.

James Major was instrumental in discovering many of the features which had been hidden by changes in usage over the 300 years between the dissolution of the monasteries and the early part of the 19th century.

His death notice in the local paper, then the *Romsey Register*, which bears all the hallmarks of Berthon's prose, gives a fulsome account of the life of 'Sexton Major', recounting how he was 'a model of his vocation' and 'proud custodian of the grand old church', how he sedulously applied himself to the study of

ecclesiastical architecture so that over time he became the Abbey's Complete Expositor. On one occasion he suggested hypotheses to the Marquis of Northampton and members of the members of the Royal Archaeological Institute '*with a modesty which became his position and a sagacity which won their admiration*'. This must have been an exceptionally memorable visit because the members had a whip round which raised over £70 for the restoration fund.

James Major was the perfect curtain raiser for Edward Lyon Berthon (Vicar of Romsey 1860-92). They actually overlapped for some four years until Major's death in 1864 and in that time each developed considerable respect for the other.

Born on 20th February 1813, Edward Lyon Berthon was the 10th child of Peter Berthon, shipowner. According to Berthon he was descended from the Marquis of Chatellérault, a Huguenot who fled France in 1685 following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes which had, for a while, granted religious tolerance. (In fact, although the Earl of Arran was created the Duc de Chattellérault in 1543, there does not appear to have been a Marquis since the medieval period. A descendant of the Earl of Arran the 12th Duke of Hamilton – was roughly contemporary with Berthon but no connection with him has been established.)

Edward Berthon's father, Peter Berthon, was a successful businessman supplying provisions to the British army during the Peninsular war. The family suffered disastrous losses when a convoy sank off Portugal, and was reduced to comparative poverty for some time.

Edward went to a series of third-rate boarding schools which sought to instil a classical education in a boy who was more practically minded. He was rescued by a new headmaster during his last year at school and was able to train as a surgeon for 5 years in Liverpool although he seems never to have practised.

When he was 21 years old he married Miss Margaret Preston and they went off to Italy on a coach tour. After being used for a number of holidays the coach was sold to an Italian Cardinal three years later. During his honeymoon he began to work out ideas for naval inventions for the developing steamship industry.

His inventions caught the attention of Prince Albert and he was invited to talk about them with the Prince and Queen Victoria but they were never taken up by the Admiralty.

At the age of 28 Berthon took a degree at Magdelene College and took Holy Orders but still continued with his engineering interests, especially in the naval sphere. In fact, while serving as Vicar of Holy Trinity, Fareham, he began his major work on collapsible boats for use as space-saving life-boats on

increasingly large steamships. But it was during his time as Vicar of Romsey (1860-92) that this became a commercial enterprise with the collapsible boats coming to have a multitude of uses. The Berthon boatyard, established in 1877, was centred on the area bounded by the Holbrook stream, Portersbridge Street and Latimer Street.



*Photograph of Rev. Edward Berthon, c1862
as James Major would have known him*

Berthon devoted a chapter about his work on Romsey Abbey in his autobiography, *A Retrospect of Eight Decades*, published shortly after his death in 1899. An essay, published by Judy Walker of LTVAS, also brings together details of much of the work undertaken by Berthon at the Abbey. On behalf of the Abbey, she later wrote a full account of its history, *Romsey Abbey Through the Centuries*, published by Pendragon Press, 1993.

Changes had frequently been made to the Abbey church, some for liturgical reasons, others for improving both acoustics and temperature. Various engravings of the Abbey, interior and exterior, show some of these changes, especially those made shortly before Berthon's arrival.



Galleries and hanging curtains, introduced in attempts to keep the congregation warm and able to hear, had been mostly removed or replaced before Berthon's arrival.

With the encouragement of Lord Palmerston in the early 1860s, Berthon removed two huge doors that closed off the choir aisles and introduced Gurney stoves to improve the heating.

Berthon's first major work was the renewal of the north transept roof using boatbuilding techniques to produce laminated beams, for which he personally carved and gilded the roof bosses and the decorative detail on the cornices. The work cost half that of similar operations by the Church commissioners on the chancel roof.

In 1872 Berthon (twenty-seven years after James Major) in his turn addressed the Royal Archaeological Institute during their summer visit to Southampton. Their Annual Report tells us how they took the train to Romsey for a tour of the Abbey prior to a trip to see Portchester Castle later in the afternoon. His own manuscript notes are kept at the Hampshire Record Office (10M58/PZ36). His spelling and grammar are better than Major's but his handwriting is somewhat more difficult to decipher. His talk included a description of the Abbey and some of his archaeological discoveries.

Berthon was eager to impress his distinguished audience and opened his talk with a few flourishes and demonstrated his historical knowledge:

It is strange that one of the finest Romanesque churches not only in England but on the continent should retain no record of its builders. Unless a very remarkable capital in the south choir aisle are represented is a crowned figure holding a pyramid the emblem of a church this probably indicates Edward the Elder another seated figure also crowned may do duty for Edgar a third head is represented in the angle of a kind of chevron on which is inscribed "Robertus me fecit" and to the right of this again Robertus tute consul. It has been surmised

that tutelary consul was the architect presiding genius of the structure but we read in Sandfall that Robert the natural son of Henry I was created consul or Earl of Gloucester

This theory seems not to have gained much traction with the members and has not become the accepted narrative of the history of the Abbey.

He too, was not averse to poking about in the graveyard and expanded on James Major's ideas about the Lady Chapel.

But the most curious part of this was the eastern termination as it existed before the days of Lady Chapels, it was not as some of the worthy predecessors of the present Archaeological Soc decided at their visit 25 years ago apsidical but rectangular, nothing was really known about it until six years ago when owing to the certification of burials I was able to make many explorations in the surroundings of the church. Beneath the floor of the Lady Chapel which is exactly level with the retrochoir I found two steps lower an older floor and the concrete foundations of a smaller building, it was 30 feet N & S and 21 internally, in the Eastern direction it was entered by two Norman archways opposite to each of which there would be an altar and the duality of the arches and windows of the eastern end indicates or rather confirms the double dedication of the church to St Mary the Virgin and St Ethelfleda.....

Berthon clearly was not impressed by the recycled Perpendicular windows, and subsequently replaced two of them but never tackled the others.

All along the outer wall of the N aisle are portions of Perpendicular windows which have been stuck into a once open collonading in true churchwarden style. They are evidently fragments of another building. What are they and what tale do they tell?



New windows in a sort of 'Repro-Romanesque' style were built in place of the windows which had been put in the north aisle arches after the Reformation when the extension to the parish church was demolished. The 'spare' masonry and windows were erected in the garden of the vicarage (now the privately owned Folly House).

All those who have written about the church in this [19th] century and before but no-one cared give it as their certain conviction that the old parish church of St Leonard and St Lawrence of which there are many notices since the year 1322 adjoined the belfry, but I have been able to entirely to refute this opinion and place beyond the shadow of doubt the whereabouts and form of the parish church. It might well have shaken this erroneous opinion that the P'ch is said to be in the Minster and that part of the Abbey church is called the portion of St Lawrence

Berthon was claiming before his distinguished audience to have unequivocally established from an archaeological and an historical point of view, the actual location of the old parish church which was previously thought to have been a separate building to the north of the Abbey. He goes on to reinforce his argument for the layout of the parish church within the nun's church.

But there are other historic evidences of its position besides that of the Parochial Portion of St Lawrence as e.g. "that the Sacristan and Prioress should diligently keep the door between the parish church and the chapel of St Cross" and "the side door near the altar of holy should be shut and kept locked". It would appear that this chapel and altar of the Holy Cross were on the west side of the screen in the nave and that certain screens in the N side thereof separated it from the N side with a door in one of them and this N aisle was at an early date given up to the use of the laity, for Bishop Orton gave licence to celebrate Mass for the parishioners before the altar in the Minster". Again a commission was issued by William of Wykeham to enquire into the repair of the aisle or chapel of Romsey church then in dispute between the Convent and the parishioners" moreover the latter appeared to be increasing and clamorous for more room and now we read in the record of William of Wykeham" a letter addressed to the Abbess and a licence given March 15th 1372 to demolish a wall of the parish church to make it larger and obtain more space"

His notes seem to have been dashed off in something of a hurry and do not finish with any concluding remarks. Perhaps he felt that with his preaching experience he would be able to improvise his ending.

Lord Palmerston, until his death in 1865, had given Berthon much support and by this time his successor William Cooper-Temple was a patron. This enabled him to undertake some of his more ambitious projects, by being able to

approach rich sponsors when the Church commissioners were unwilling or unable to finance them.

Later he was instrumental in the removal of the high-backed pews and of the walls which filled in the arcade around the retro-choir, obstructing the view of the East windows.

The box pews and the blocked archways before their removal by the Rev. Berthon. The steps to the left led to the high pulpit.



Unfortunately, removal of the blocking of the archways revealed that the lower windows at the east end had been put in place in a botched way post Reformation when the redundant Lady chapels had been demolished. Berthon's attempts to get the Church Commissioners to pay for restoring the windows had been rejected. One window had been placed 21 inches too high and the other 10 inches. This had the effect of cutting off the view of the tops of the windows when seen through the Romanesque arches behind the altar. He then set about undercutting the stonework below the windows then lowering the window frames complete with glass by a system of screw jacks; an operation that took three hours for each frame. He then had new window heads cut to replace the work omitted in the 16th century.



Two Views of the East End of Romsey Abbey showing the lower windows before (left) and after (right) Berthon's work

During the 1880s Berthon turned towards the Tractarian or Oxford Movement, with religious practices moving towards the High End of the Church of England which led towards changes in the layout of the Abbey. Berthon at around this point decided to adopt High Anglican garb. We can perhaps speculate that his attraction to more traditional forms of worship and his interest in the fabric of the church saved it from being converted into the more contemporary fashion of the Gothic revival.

The medieval encaustic tiles on the chancel floor were raised and reset using a technique devised by Berthon at a cost of 38 shillings compared with an alternative solution which would have cost £140 (multiply by at least 100 for current comparisons). The organ could then be removed to the chancel from the north transept and the choir reorganised on the lines of the Oxford Movement. This allowed ceremonial and ritual to replace the extensive homilies, sermons and biblical readings which had been the custom since the 17th century.



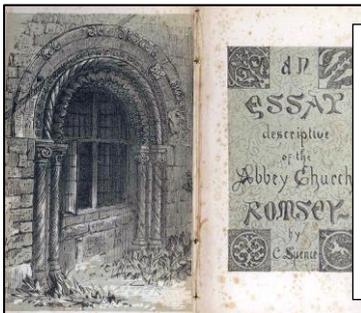
Berthon wearing a biretta

Some medieval carvings had been found tucked away in the roof space of the Abbey and Berthon incorporated them into a screen. This screen was erected between the crossing and the choir as a memorial to Berthon's wife who had died in March 1865. The screen was subsequently moved to its present position along the inner side of the north aisle and facing the north transept



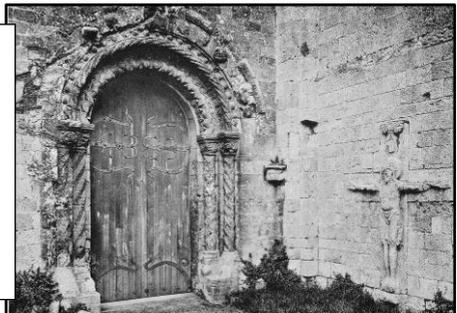
The interior was altered after the removal of the galleries and the completion of the change from the Reformation 'preaching church' to a more liturgical model with chancel screen dividing the chancel from the congregation. After his retirement in 1892, the Rev. Berthon continued to haunt the Abbey.

Another of Berthon's projects was to restore the abbess's door which had been changed at some stage into a window.



c1850s (left)

After Berthon's Work (right)



The Abbess's Door as a Window

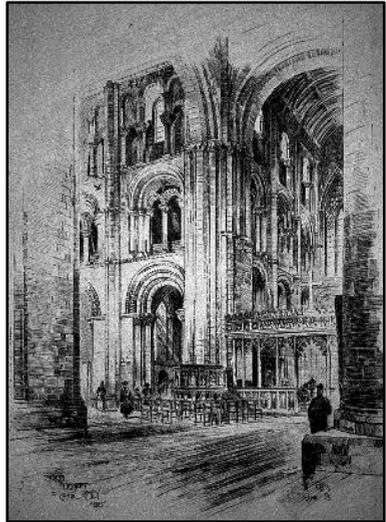
The Abbess's Doorway restored

A contemporary engraving has a figure below the column on the right - Berthon in his formal attire.

A later innovation by Berthon was the construction of the choir stalls in the crossing. These were made in the carpenter's shop in the Berthon Boatyard. The figures echo, but do not reproduce, those of the old Rood screen but with later additions to include Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. There is a story that there used to be a list of those who were represented by the carvings but someone in



an over zealous fit of tidiness binned it, and no-one now knows who they all are. Berthon's own likeness was included in the pantheon of the great and the good that had been associated with Romsey Abbey.



Berthon died in 1899 and, since the Abbey graveyard was no longer in use, he was buried modestly in the Botley Road Cemetery. A more fitting memorial was, of course, the stained glass window in the Abbey (see page 2).

Berthon was able by virtue of his position and his relationships with benefactors to restore features of the building that Major had in his time brought to light and has given us much of the Abbey as we see it today.



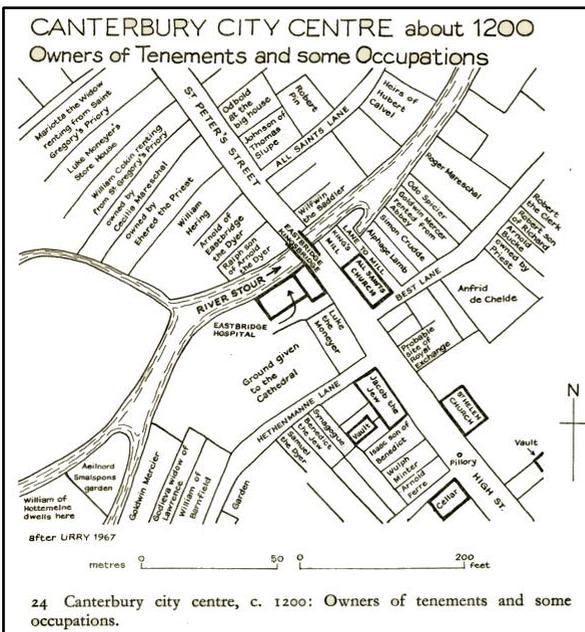
Berthon lying in state in Romsey Abbey appropriately framed by the screen that was a memorial to his wife and showing, in the background, the matching lower east windows

A Romsey Historical Gazetteer

by Roger Leech

I have been much enjoying the Monday morning Zoom meetings of Romsey Local History Society, hosted by Mary Harris. A few weeks ago we were looking at the history of buildings in the Market Place and, responding to a question from Mary, I revived a suggestion first made by our late member Ted Mason some years ago. Ted was very interested in the history of Middlebridge Street, and taking an interest in my own work in Bristol, had proposed back in December 2004 that we should embark on a similar historical gazetteer for the town of Romsey. A small group was convened by Phoebe Merrick, but we were all very busy people, and the idea was gradually dropped, though I would like to think that Ted's enthusiasm for *Middlebridge Street on Show* was one result.

My proposal originated in an interest in medieval towns first fostered by another now sadly deceased friend. Mick Aston, later of *Time Team* fame, worked with me in the 1970s to produce *Historic Towns in Somerset*, and had then recently published with his friend James Bond *The Landscape of Towns*. It was ironic that Mick ended up leading a TV programme focussed on excavation, for he argued in this book and his better known *Landscape Archaeology* that much of the information gained from expensive excavation could be obtained for much less effort through field survey and documentary research. Mick was a great source of knowledge for what to read and introduced me to several important publications reconstructing medieval townscapes from documents, notably Walter Urry's *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, Salter's surveys of Oxford and the work then in progress by Derek Keene on Winchester, which led to the publication of his massive two-part *Survey of Winchester*.



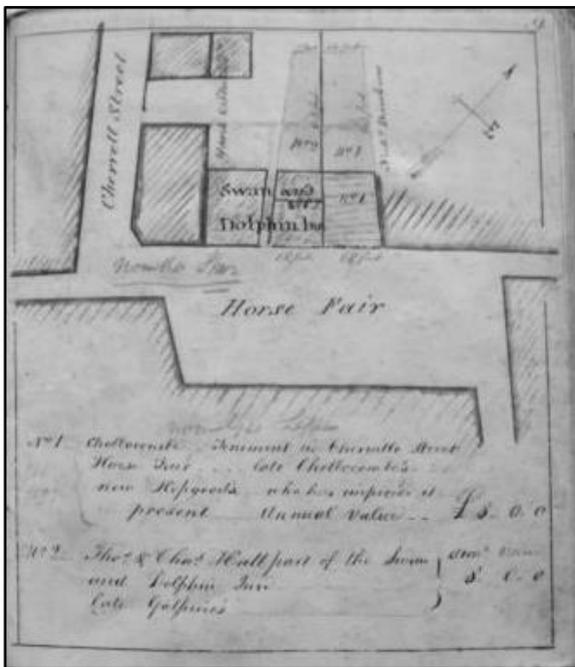
Left: Mick Aston's redrawing of one of Urry's plans of Canterbury – we might hope to do the same for Romsey c.1500 and other dates.

The Survey of Romsey Project which I have proposed to the group has as its first part what might be named the Romsey Historical Gazetteer. I

have modelled our proposed approach on what Derek Keene wrote for the Winchester Survey, the format of which I followed for my own Bristol surveys, which can be downloaded without charge from the Bristol Record Society website. For Romsey, I hope that we can follow Keene in including a biographical register, of value to historians as well as anyone tracing their Romsey ancestors.

As a group, Society members are already concentrating on the Market Place, while individuals are researching several Romsey streets, including Cherville Street, The Horsefair, Portersbridge Street and Church Street. Volunteers for most of the other streets are still awaited. A key document for our use is the published *Winchester College Muniments Volume II Estates* by Sheila Himsworth which contains some 72 pages of closely printed text summarising the contents of the many title deeds and leases relating to Winchester College's possessions in Romsey. Critical to our study are the abuttals in these documents – who lived next door to each property, so that each document often provides information on the occupancy of three adjacent properties. For establishing where each property was located, we have the name of the street as given in the document, the 1910 map drawn for the Inland Revenue's valuation of all properties in England compiled c.1911, and a number of manuscript plans in the Winchester College archives, such as that of c.1810 which shows The Swan and Dolphin in The Horsefair, the inn today known as The Star:

Close examination of this plan shows that only the eastern half of the inn (N^o 2) belonged to Winchester College, along with the house to the east (N^o 1), now no.11 The Horsefair. Returning to the other documents we can read that in the time of Edward I (1272-1307) the two houses now The Star and No11 were then the one tenement in Cherville Street between a tenement of Richard le Bat on the east and a tenement of William Rolf on the west, granted by Adam Poun to Christine, widow of Hugh de Bedewynde dit Poun,



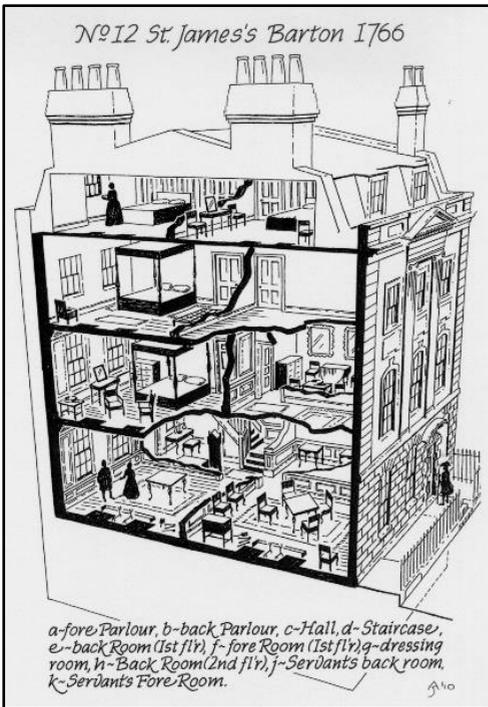
and John son of the said Hugh and Cristine. This then tells us that the house to the east, formerly nos.7 and 9, but now reunited as one dwelling, was in c1272-1307 the house of Richard le Bat; also that the western part of The Star, was then the house of William Rolf.



Properties in The Horsefair, their predecessors detailed in a deed c1272-1307

The value of such information to the archaeologist is often providing a context to the structures, many artifacts, environmental and other data, typically

recovered from an urban excavation. To the architectural historian such information can sometimes be linked to the data contained within a probate inventory such as was often compiled in centuries gone by to record the contents of a deceased person's home. In this example from Bristol, the architectural illustrator, Jill Atherton, produced the drawing (left) to show very precisely the room names and contents of a merchant's town house in 1766:



Perhaps our project will enable similar reconstructions for some Romsey houses.

It is my hope that all this information will ultimately be downloadable from the Society's website, and that some of the more committed members might work towards using this for a book, 'Romsey: Streets and Buildings' or similar. This could include the historical gazetteer, which, unlike Keene's, could extend selectively to the present day, and would include brief entries for the buildings - to be completed by a group of the most active researchers, with contributions from members visiting the Hampshire Record Office, once it is again open.

The website and the book could also include photography which Roy Romsey has offered to undertake (see his website for marvellous photography of the stained glass windows in Romsey Abbey). The local U3A group are interested in looking at historic buildings and could also contribute through their research and recording. Chapters would be on aspects of Romsey's past, as understood from the property histories and buildings, much the same range of topics as covered by Keene for Winchester, and as contributed by the various LTVAS members for the publication *Middlebridge Street on Show*. A final chapter could be on 'Romsey Remembered', looking at the recent history of the buildings and their occupants - its formulation would be a focus for future Monday morning meetings.

If you would like to research one of Romsey's historic streets as part of this project, please contact Mary Harris at romsey.history@gmail.com or R.Leech@soton.ac.uk,



Articles on our website:

The above article will shortly be posted on our website. Other articles currently there include:

- 16 Latimer Street
- Topsy Turvy at RAODs (Romsey Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society)
- Swing Riots in Timsbury

The People of Abbey Walk

by Barbara Burbridge

Background

In our Spring 2020 newsletter there was an article by Janet Cairney about the medieval face jug that was found during the 1972 excavation on a Church Street 'temporary' car park; and this face jug is now on display in *King John's House*. It is also our Society's logo. Janet's article was followed by a summary of the three excavations that took place there in 1972, 1985 and 1989, the last of these preceding the building of Abbey Walk.



The 'Temporary' Car Park, site of excavations in 1972, 1985 and 1989

Now it is time to look at the people who, over centuries, owned, leased or lived in the properties that once stood on this important part of Romsey. Occasionally, there are also glimpses of the neighbours to north and south. This human story of Abbey Walk emerged from historical research carried out in 1989 by Phoebe Merrick and myself as members of the LTVAS Group. The study was undertaken at the request of Frank Green who then led the now defunct *Test Valley Archaeological Trust* in the three-month excavation prior to the building of the present complex.

Introduction

The evidence for the history of this site is intermittent and often tantalising but is much more informative than that for the average Romsey property. This is because the site became the town property of the manor of South Wells that once straddled the parishes of Romsey Extra and Nursling.

From the 13th to the 20th century the manor of South Wells had just three major owners – the Benedictine nunnery of Romsey, the Dean and Canons of St George's Chapel, Windsor, and finally Lord Palmerston of Broadlands and his successors. For a comparatively short period of just over 100 years it was in the possession of private individuals.

In the days before the introduction of the Land Registry in 1925, each owner needed as many past documents as possible to authenticate title rights. It is from this rather haphazard collection of deeds that it is possible to tease out some sequence of owners, lessees and occupiers, albeit with many gaps.

The Owners

The Abbess of Romsey Abbey was the first known owner, a status for which the earliest record is 1294. There is nothing to suggest how long the site had belonged to the Abbess and it is necessary to look to the archaeologists to discover something of the story prior to the end of the 13th century.

Inevitably, the archaeology in this area north of the Market Place has only emerged in localised excavations as opportunity has arisen. Three successive excavations on the Abbey Walk site - for which the spell as a 'temporary' car park lasted some 15 years – have provided the best evidence to date. And it seems that this section of street front was only developed in the mid-13th century - which may account for the lack of documentary evidence before 1294. Although the archaeological work produced artefacts from the Roman and Saxon eras, these finds are thought to have been related to agriculture; the remains of a late-Saxon building, set well back from the street front, may have been a granary as extensive quantities of charred rye seeds were found in its vicinity.

It is thought that in early medieval times the Abbey had strong links with the Church Street area as a whole but did not immediately view it as prime land for development. As archaeologists have dated the first two buildings on the street front of Abbey Walk to the 13th-century, the date would imply that these buildings were constructed during the ownership of the Abbess. She and her senior officials would have been responsible for them. Interestingly, the date of these properties coincides with the building of *King John's House* further towards the Market Place. Perhaps there is a clue here about early ownership of *King John's House* and a suggestion that the Abbey owned a truly large acreage of open cultivated land around Church Street before deciding that building development would be more profitable.

In fact, this seems to be the start of a building boom in Romsey. The earliest permanent building on the edge of the market place – as opposed to stalls – potentially dates to the 13th or early-14th century, while Cherville Street was also being developed in this period. A good connection between the two via an evolving Church Street was obviously advantageous. Does all this reflect the beginning of Romsey's economic success which was centred on a medieval cloth-finishing industry with profitable European links?

But less than a century after that 1294 document naming the Abbess, ownership of the Abbey Walk site seems to have been in the hands of the first of a chain of individual owners who held the property until the late 1400s. In 1367 a quit claim names Sir John Ebemdon as the owner. Before moving on from the Abbess, however, there is room for one speculation – or maybe self-indulgence.

Perhaps one of the medieval buildings on the Abbey Walk site was the subject of a grant from the Abbess to a certain William Valentyn. It was certainly on the east side of Church Street (which then only extended from the Market Place to the Portersbridge Street junction) as its curtilage was described as running back to the Holbrook Stream that still runs at the far end of properties along Church Street east. The Abbess granted a lease for three lives, naming William's wife, Edith, and then his daughter, Lucy, as the second and third beneficiaries. It must be wondered, though, just how long those three lives lasted. For the date of the grant was 1347 and within the year the Abbess, Joan lcthe, along with many nuns, priests and Abbey officials, had perished in the 'Black Death' sweeping the land. There is no record of how the townspeople fared but their losses must have been comparable. Did the Valentyns survive or perish?

And this devastation - from which the Abbey seems never to have truly recovered - may account for the transfer of the manor into private hands within 20 years. Unfortunately, further details of individual owners in the 14th century are missing but in the 15th century three generations of the prominent Greenfield family were in possession, though it is uncertain whether they occupied the manor or not.

John Greenfield the elder may have occupied the manor, living to 'a great age'. But his son, John the younger, was clerk in the counting house of Henry VI, MP for Melcombe Regis, Steward of Odiham and Constable of Winchester – so it is difficult to know where he made his chief residence. His daughter, Agnes, married John Hammond, who was Recorder of Winchester from 1467. The Hammonds, with justification as endorsed by witnesses, considered that the manor had passed to them.

But another Greenfield by the name of Thomas now entered the story. In 1474 he was in the retinue of Richard, Duke of Gloucester. A document of 1482 shows that he passed the manor to Richard, probably for money, perhaps for royal favour or a mixture of both. Whatever Thomas Greenfield's motive, he may have felt rewarded by the knighthood he received. And either then or during the Duke's brief reign as Richard III, the property was transferred to St George's Chapel, Windsor, as part of Richard's wider endowment to that Chapel. Whatever the legalities and uncertainties behind the transfer made by Thomas Greenfield, royal power now trumped any claims of mere gentry.

The Dean and Chapter of St George's Chapel remained as owners of the manor of South Wells for nearly 400 years. But their interest in it was purely as a source of revenue, and this came from leasing the whole manor to major lessees. In turn, these lessees clearly sub-leased the Abbey Walk tenements, now numbering three. There was just one interruption to the tenure of St George's Chapel and that was when the Commonwealth Act of Parliament

dissolved the royal chapels, only for Charles II to reinstate St George's Chapel and restore its possessions at his restoration in 1660.

In 1860, the entire manor, including the Abbey Walk tenements, was sold to Lord Palmerston. This Church Street site continued to be part of the Broadlands estate until 1962 when Lord Mountbatten sold it to Hampshire County Council.

The Manor & Its Major Lessees

One of the first of the major lessees of the South Wells manor was none other than the former owner, the Abbess of Romsey, who in 1513 leased the manor for 45 years. But, before she could have full use of this term, the threat of the nunnery's dissolution hung over her head so that in 1536 she tried to save something from the situation by granting the residue of the lease to John Uttoft and his wife Bridget. After the dissolution in 1539 the couple managed to secure the lease for a further 50 years but the lease must have been surrendered or seized before completion of the term. For, in 1561, the Dean and Canons of St George's Chapel granted a lease of 81 years to James Paggett of Poulton, Wiltshire, and to his son-in-law, William Paulet, followed by Samuel Dunche of Baddesley. A branch of the illustrious Knollys family then dominated the scene from the mid-17th century and throughout most of the 18th century.

Towards the end of the 18th century, the Barker Mill family of Mottisfont became the major lessees of the manor. Their collection of documents contains an incomplete set of sub-leases relating to the Abbey Walk site.

Abbey Walk & Its Immediate Neighbours

It is only in the late 16th century that documentary evidence reveals that by then there were three tenements on the Abbey Walk site. And it is only at this point that there is a definite link between them and the manor of South Wells, which was centred on Grove Place and the Skidmore area. Were these Church Street houses always part of the manor; or were they perhaps added when the Abbess granted the manor on a long lease in 1536?

For clarity, the three tenements on the Abbey Walk site may, for confirmation purposes, be sometimes identified as plots 1, 2 and 3. 1583 is the year when the first names of sub-tenants appear for these Abbey Walk tenements. It is when James Paget of Grove Place (the manorial house for South Wells) granted the sub-lease of an Abbey Walk tenement to a widow, named as Ales Pregnell. The house itself is the most northerly of the three (plot 1) and is referred to as *The Christopher*. As was the custom in identifying a property, her neighbours to north and south were named. So, to the south (in plot 2) was Morris Maville but to the north the information relates to a property immediately beyond Abbey Walk with the neighbour there called Ambrose West.

Then, in 1603, William Paulett of Paultons granted the centre tenement (plot 2) to Joseph Harrison with plot 1 being in the tenure of Thomas Hesse. So far it

has not been possible to know whether the people involved were investing for further sub-letting or actually in occupation. But now the deed relates that the neighbour to the south of Joseph Harrison was Philipp Arnall 'who dwelleth here' (plot 3) with the orchard of Roger Hyde, gent, to the east of his house. We also discover that Joseph Harrison had to wait on the expiration of Morris Maville's lease, that when he did take possession of the property he might enjoy its garden and backside plus one acre of meadow in Street Mead at Greatbridge. This meadow adjunct was helpful in identifying the property in subsequent documents.

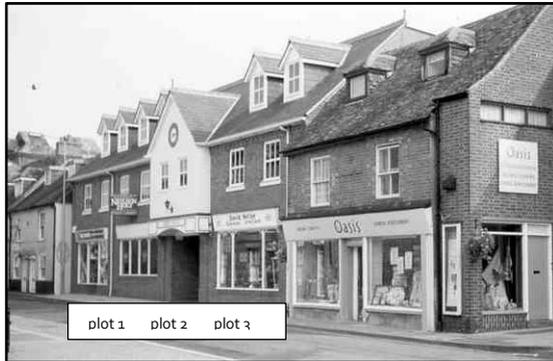
There is one strange feature regarding the northernmost of the three properties as described in the 1603 grant. When it had been granted to Ales Pregnell, widow, in 1583 it was 'known as the *Christopher*'. Now in the tenure of Thomas Hesse it is described as 'sometime known as the *George*'. The George and the Christopher were the names of two of Romsey's more notable medieval guilds or brotherhoods, the George Guild being the wealthier with its own chantry in Romsey Abbey. Presumably, the northern property (plot 1) had changed hands at some early point, the *Christopher* name being cited when the property was the subject of the grant and the *George* name persisting when the house was mentioned as the northern neighbour of the central property. Two separate sets of documents clearly carried separate descriptions that were copied without question over many years.

As the story continues into the 17th century the documents concerning the Abbey Walk site are enriched by other evidence that shows Church Street, as a whole, being the centre of high-status tradesmen. Part of the appeal must have rested with the good supply of water with the Fishlake flowing in front of properties on Church Street west and the Holbrook behind those on Church Street east.

So, in 1623, the up-and-coming shoemaker, John Cox, received a grant from Samuel Dunche of Baddesley. John Cox probably took up residence in the property he leased, in this case the southernmost of the three, complete with a garden. Thomas Parsons had tenure of - and possibly occupied - the centre house, while Henry Prymes (or Prynnes) occupied present-day 25 Church Street (currently *Oasis Christian Centre*).

A gap of 33 years and suddenly, in 1656, a full picture emerges of a run of five properties – all three of the Abbey Walk houses and the adjacent ones at either end, the only time this occurs. And the common factor is John Cox who has clearly thrived as a shoemaker, now fully entitled to be described as a cordwainer, a high-class shoemaker using the best quality leather. For the grant to John Cox - this time from Thomas Knollys of Grove Place - now concerned two messuages. John Cox had not only the southernmost of the three houses but the northern one as well, still described as *The Christopher* and with one

acre of land in Eny Lane (a lost routeway south of Middlebridge Street). Inevitably, the houses are defined by naming the neighbours and the grant states that the central house (plot 2) was in the tenure or occupation of Robert Parsons while the 'outside' house to the north was in the tenure of Richard Walmer. Astonishingly, *Oasis* to the south was occupied by none other than John Cox who at some point had moved from the Abbey Walk south. Since it is still possible to see the timber structure of *Oasis*, there is the implicit suggestion that, by this time at least, the three 'Abbey Walk' houses were of lesser quality.



Abbey Walk & the Properties to North and South

Obviously, the two houses he held on the Abbey Walk site were an investment for John Cox. In fact, the inventory of his possessions made after his death in 1677 reveals that he had leased two further houses in Romsey as well as several areas of land on which he grew wheat, peas, hay and vetches. And in his will he actually named his four house tenants as Edward Gifford, Richard Sanders, John Henam and Nicholas Crouch. Two of these four men must have been the occupiers of his Abbey Walk houses, either side of Robert Parsons in the middle one.

By the time of his death John Cox could call himself a 'gentleman', perhaps indicating that he had retired but perhaps also reflecting his status within Romsey. In 1660, he was mayor and as such was the first citizen to take the oath of allegiance to the newly restored monarch, King Charles II. So, what sort of life was John Cox living?

His will and inventory offer some slight clues besides naming his tenants. The will records two surviving children – Mary, who was married to Thomas Burbank and had an unspecified number of children by him, and John junior. Sadly, it appears that young John was not capable of looking after himself. Income from specified properties was to be bequeathed to him for his natural life. The overseers of the will, 'my well-beloved friends' Edmond Young and Isaack

Knight, were also empowered to see that 'my son John Cox be well maintained during his life'.

John Cox also left five shillings to his servant maid and another five shillings to a James Jollef, though whether the latter was part of the household like the serving maid is not known. And then there was John's wife, referred to as his 'well-beloved wife' but strangely unnamed and dealt with rather brusquely. She was to have 'all the house goods that I had with her when I was married to her' - and two cows. Her role as 'well-beloved' wife is not convincing and she certainly did not feature as an executrix of the will. Instead, son-in-law Thomas Burbank was given the position of sole executor on behalf of the children he had with Mary.

And what was the home like in which this assortment of individuals lived? The inventory describes a hall, parlour, kitchen, buttery, kitchen chamber, hall chamber, parlour chamber, great chamber, cock loft, closet. This description does offer support to the idea that John Cox's chosen home was probably superior to his Abbey Walk leases.

This run of five houses in the mid-17th century is the only time such a complete set occurs and must reflect the way that John Cox dominated the Church Street scene for several decades. But there is consistency, too, regarding the centre tenement on the Abbey Walk site. In 1623 this was in the tenure of Thomas Parsons and 33 years later was recorded in the tenure or occupation of Robert Parsons, presumably the son of Thomas. In 1677, Robert Parsons still held the tenure which included a garden and backside plus one acre of meadow ground: there was still an orchard to the east, this time called Bates Orchard.

For the first time Robert Parsons was described as a clothier. This occupation offers a clue suggesting that Robert actually occupied his property since the archaeology revealed an industrial style hearth, constructed with stacked tiles,



a typical base for a copper for one of the many activities associated with cloth-dyeing. His neighbours to north and south stayed the same but this was the year of John Cox's death.

As the 17th century drew to a close, Robert Parsons continued to hold the centre property. In 1690 Robert Knollys of Grove Place granted

Abbey Walk's north property to William Rogers, a tailor, in consideration of the surrender of the lease granted by Thomas Knollys to John Cox deceased. As John Cox's inventory had detailed the years remaining on his leases, his

trustee, Thomas Burbank, must have held on to some of the leases after John's death.

As Robert Parsons remained in the centre tenement, a new name appeared in the neighbouring property to the north of the Abbey Walk site. This was that of Thomas Vokes whose will and inventory survive, just as did those of John Cox some twenty years earlier. So, it is known that Thomas Vokes was a cooper and, judging by the wealth of pail bottoms, laths and other coopering material listed in his inventory, was probably still active in his trade until his final illness. Indeed, he must have been comparatively young at his death for his only son, Richard, was a minor and property rent was to be used to complete his education. Richard was eventually to take possession of Thomas' dwelling house and to inherit other property after his mother's death.

There is quite a contrast between Thomas Vokes to the north of Abbey Walk and John Cox to the south of it. Not only did Thomas name his 'loving wife' as Ann but he made her joint executrix of his will along with their eldest daughter, Margaret, while he made sure that all his daughters were well provided for. Besides Margaret there were Alice, Mary and Sarah.

Recognising the worth of his loving wife, Ann, Thomas left her £10 and *'the little house att the North end of the house wherein I dwell that is from ye North end of the Frame of my dwelling house into ye North end of the said little house To hold for term of her life, Adviseing her to convert the same into a tenement for her own dwelling which may be done by turning the same and setting the same close up to the frame of my dwelling house towards the doeing wherof I give her the three Tymber peires of Oake one in my backside and two att Awbridge.*

Thomas Vokes may not have made the same impact as John Cox on Romsey's civic life but his personal life must have been a great deal more contented. And he valued his family such that the provisions made for each of them were very carefully thought out.

As the 18th century began, so there was a change in tenants. The first grant made in 1710 was that of Henry Knollys of Grove Place to Daniel Nicholas, cordwainer, and Meriam his wife. Meriam was named in her own right as relict and executrix of the late William Rogers, the previous tenant in plot 1 whose lease she had surrendered. The holding included a garden and backside and meadow ground in Eny Lane.

Either there was genuine uncertainty or there was some sloppy legal work as the neighbour north of Abbey Walk was given as 'now or late' Thomas Vokes, who had died in 1695, some 15 years earlier. And although a new name appeared in the centre house – Robert Newlands – his possession was also described as 'now or late'.

Nevertheless, the name of Robert Newlands persists through the next two grants. The first of these – again in 1710 – granted the southern Abbey Walk tenement (plot 3) to Henry Smyth, cordwainer, complete with garden and backside and 'moiety of meadow in Eny Lane'. It is interesting to note the continuing presence of shoemakers/cordwainers in this part of Church Street. And although the grant confirmed the tenure of Robert Newlands in the centre building, the tenement south of Abbey Walk still bore echoes from the 17th century, stating that it was 'heretofore in the possession of John Cox And now or late in the possession of Thomas Burbank' (John Cox's son-in-law).

Similarly, in 1717, when the lease of Daniel Nicholas, cordwainer, was confirmed or renewed, the centre house to the south was still held by Robert Newlands, while Thomas Vokes was still described as the neighbour north of Abbey Walk some 22 years after his death.

The same failure to up-date information occurs in 1732 when Henry Knollys granted the centre house to Benjamin Newlands, one of the sons of Robert Newlands. Daniel Nicholas is still cited as tenant of the house on plot 1 – but, with a double throwback, this northernmost of the three properties is described as 'sometime known as *The George*' and 'late in the tenure of John Cox'. And the name echoes on in the south property where the cordwainer, Henry Smith, remained tenant in the property 'wherein John Cox lately dwelt then Abigail Saunders, widow'. The latter makes a surprise appearance as no other record of her survives.

A second grant in 1732 featured the south property (plot 3) with Henry Smith having his tenure renewed. Although Benjamin had taken on the centre house in this same year the grant further refers to the centre house being held by Robert Newlands deceased (Benjamin's father). And John Ventham is declared to continue as the neighbour south of Abbey Walk 'now and late belonging to Thomas Burbanke'.

The same casual copying on of details from earlier grants is shown in the 1745 renewed grant of the north Abbey Walk property to the same Daniel Nicholas, cordwainer. Thomas Vokes, now 50 years deceased is still cited as 'now or late' the holder of the property north of Abbey Walk, while, confusingly, the centre property is 'once of Robert Newlands and Benjamin Newlands, his son, now or late'. This repetition may well be meant to reinforce title claims but it becomes increasingly difficult to identify actual occupiers.

No further grants survive for another 58 years. Then in 1803 Sir Charles Mill of Mottisfont, major lessee, granted the tenure of the centre house to William Watts, a baker, who in turn sub-let to George Cole. In plot 3 to the south the neighbour was Godwin Seward (previously John Middleton) and to the north in plot 1 the neighbour was Philip Hibbs (who had succeeded a John Chilver).

The 1860 transfer of ownership of the manor of South Wells from Windsor to Broadlands resulted in an uneven split of past documents. There is an overlap of information for the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. Broadlands held an 1803 grant from Sir Charles Mill of Mottisfont to Josiah George of a tenement (plot 2) next to the house of John Martin (plot 3).

It should be noted that throughout all the decades from the Elizabethan era until the early 19th century there was no documentary evidence of any of the three houses being rebuilt or altered as they must have been from time to time. The archaeology indicates that the 13th-century houses were built without foundations, merely post-holes linked with timber groundsills laid on the bare earth. These timbers would have rotted, needing either regular replacement or, eventually, more permanent structures. It is likely that some brick elements were introduced since re-used bricks were used in the 19th-century ancillary buildings on plots 1 and 2.

And there is an excellent photographic record of a high-class residence that was erected on plot 3 at some point in the 18th century, probably nearer the end of that time-span. It was a building that survived into the mid-20th century, although by that time it had ceased to be a private residence. Unfortunately, the archaeology of this southern house (plot 3) was disappointing. An extensive deep cellar had destroyed any hopes of establishing the story of its predecessors. Incidentally, the archaeological evidence suggested that the street frontage had been cut back to its present line at some uncertain date and that parts of the medieval tenements are now under the pavement and street.

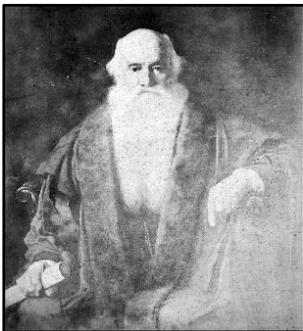
Then 1808 saw a seismic shift in the story of the Abbey Walk site as the long-established scene of three tenements came to an end. That year a grant from Sir Charles Mill of Mottisfont to Philip Hibbs featured a message consisting of two tenements with garden in Church Street, reciting *'since the granting of the leases considerable alterations had been made in the premises granted to Josiah George and Philip Hibbs [plots 1 and 2] by taking down the several messuages or tenements etc and by the erection of the buildings thereon then constituting the kitchen, wash house, stable, coach house, and other offices and outbuildings and the rooms over the same belonging and attached to the said message or tenement and mentioned and comprised in the lease of John Martin [plot 3]'*.



In 1815 William Sharp, papermill owner, leased from Sir Charles Mill 'all that message or dwelling house and garden with kitchen, wash house, stable, coach house, etc. then in the possession of Stephen Sharp, printer'. The Sharps were a successful family occupying some of the most distinguished

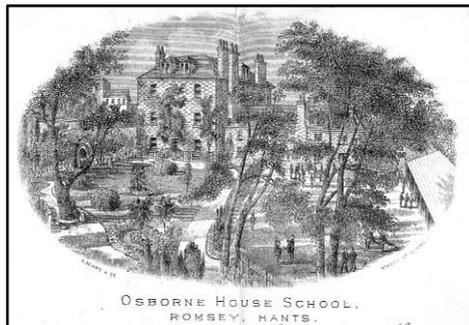
properties in Romsey – Abbotsford House in the Market Place, Ferndown House in Middlebridge Street and ‘Sharp’s House’ which was subsequently demolished to make way for the Corn Exchange. Various members of the family were bankers, upholsterers, auctioneers, solicitors and in the paper trade, all descended from an 18th-century ancestor. William Sharp’s Abbey Walk house was on a par with those of his relations, being described as ‘late three houses, now only one and described as much improved with 27 perches’. Perhaps, though, he was striving too hard to keep up with his fellow Sharps. Two years later he was obliged to mortgage his prestigious property.

Thomas Bradbury Winter, a surgeon and one of the two men who had held the mortgage taken out by William Sharp, became the leaseholder from about 1822 until 1851. He was succeeded by Sarah Devenish, a lady of independent means, but her tenure was short-lived.

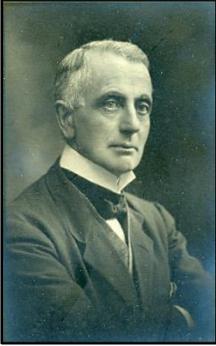


In 1854, John Frederick Osborne moved in and the complex became the Osborne House School, a private school for day and boarding pupils. Initially, it was intended to have girl pupils as well as boys, but Mrs Osborne’s health failed and the school became exclusively for boys. Strangely, Mr Osborne acted as agent for Imperial Fire and British Equitable Life Insurance Co. He also found time to be involved in local politics and was twice mayor of Romsey.

After Mr Osborne’s death in 1898, the school briefly became a private residence again with his daughter, Mrs Rosa Scott, in residence. But this was only for a few years. As the 20th century began Mrs Scott sold the lease to Mr William Summers who wished to re-open the school again, still keeping the name of Osborne House School.



*Osborne House School from the rear (letter heading)
Showing the lower ancillary buildings on plots 1 and 2*



Mr Summers was an impressive looking man, reputedly with startling blue eyes. Like John Frederick Osborne he also played a part in civic life, twice serving as mayor of Romsey Borough in the 1920s. He drew the school into his sense of community spirit, so that when the school was only a few years old pupils took part in Romsey's renowned Millenary Pageant of 1907.

The boys also took part in other aspects of town life, such as church parades. Some of the early pupils lost their lives in the First World War.

The school employed a cook/matron and produced a prospectus. There was boarding accommodation and sport figured prominently on the curriculum. Athletics and team sports took place on the Alma Road recreation ground and swimming in the designated stretch of the Fishlake that the Council leased until the Crosfield swimming pool opened in 1938.

Mr Summers died during the Second World War but the school buildings still had a purpose to fulfil. They were taken over for the use of the state schools which at that time were desperate for space. Many older Romsonians remember going there for school meals. Others remember illicitly entering the grounds to scump for apples in the orchard that still survived there.

This situation continued until the Romsey School was built in the late 1950s for secondary pupils. Once it had opened it relieved a bottleneck that made the use of Osborne House no longer necessary. By the 1960s the buildings had deteriorated so that it was demolished as unsafe for use, thus ending a centuries long story.

The caption on the newspaper image (right) is a sad epitaph to mark the end of a long history of the Abbey Walk site. It reads as follows:

'The rear of the ugly building (Osborne House), almost next door to the Post Office in Romsey, which disfigures Church Street. Its dilapidated state and overgrown garden are seen here. It is suggested that it could be pulled down and the site and the land behind it devoted to something useful – namely, a car park. Many business people in the town are disturbed by the present lack of car parking facilities in the town and complaints have been made that business is being lost from the town. The building is, in fact, not secure and anyone who so desires can gain an easy entrance.'





The black arrow indicates the street frontage of Abbey Walk in Church Street when it was the Osborne House School.



Rear view of Osborne House in happier times

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Further Information 1

The Abbey at the time of the Spanish flu epidemic, 1918-1919

by Liz Hallett

After a query about how the Abbey was disrupted in 1918-19 by the Spanish flu pandemic, I have been searching through the past parish magazines starting in 1918 and the first mention I have found of it came in November 1918, when the Vicar (A J Robertson) wrote:

'The Bishop urges us to sustained intercession, even in the hour of success [ie the ending of the war]. Is there not need of it by reason of another cause which has arisen ever since he penned his letter. Hitherto in all our distress we have been marvellously spared from the ravage of disease. We cannot say that now. Disease is in our midst and it is laying many low in death. We have learned to pray many of the petitions of our Litany during the war with an earnestness we never has before. May we now pray with a like fervour, 'from plague and pestilence, Good Lord, deliver us'.

Burials increased in number from what in 1917 and also in late 1921 ranged from 3-7. September 1918 listed 3; October, 4; November, 11, many of them among the middle aged; December, 12, also several of these in their 30s and 40s. January 1919 listed 8 names, February, 12, but thereafter the total generally returned to three or four each month. However, the summer months of 1918 had recorded around 10 burials, so it is perhaps the ages which give more indication of pandemic than the actual number of burials. In early 1919 the number of burials was variable, but 10 to 12 burials in some months were not an uncommon number over the years in normal times. The figures do not give striking evidence of a pandemic.

The clergy letters and the monthly intercessions surprisingly make no mention of the flu, all through 1918 and 1919. Through this period, however, the Vicar was busy begging support for funds to purchase the hall on the site of what is now the Church Rooms: (it is thanks to him that we now have this - subsequently rebuilt - amenity). He was also excited about the increased suffrage, particularly to include women. There was no concept of social distancing - he wrote in December

'I want to see the Sunday Schools crowded in the morning, and I want to see a large congregation in the Abbey in the afternoon, not only of

the Sunday School children but of elder children of the congregation too, who will attend either with or without their parents.'

And it was of course understandable that all the news and intercessions were full of thankfulness and gratitude for the ending of almost 4½ years of war.

Disease is at last mentioned in the August 1919 intercessions, but only in a general way: *'For the removal of famine and pestilence from all lands'*, and this phrase was repeated several times during following months. However, the pandemic had still not been mentioned in either the Vicar's letter or that of the Bishop, which was also printed every month. The hope was all for peace among the nations, making Britain a better place after the privations of the war and concerns for the finances of the parish. The Bishop several times expressed the need for the recruitment of more clergy.

I searched through the magazines from early 1918 until into 1921 and have come away with the impression that the massive Spanish flu epidemic passed Romsey by rather lightly. It certainly did not disrupt the life of the Abbey or St Swithun's, whose members were concerned throughout with the regular round of parish matters plus a number of other national and wider church events. There was nothing at that time like the changes that Covid-19 has brought and is still bringing to us all a hundred years later.



*Old Views of Church Road, looking north
The building on the right of first photo above (see close-up in second photo)
probably occupies the site of the parish belfry (demolished early 1600s)
This building was used as a garage by William Moody.*

Further Information 2

More about Church street names

by Barbara Burbridge

Yet another street name has emerged featuring the word 'church'. It still relates to the area bounded by Church Street in the east and Church Lane in the west.

The source this time is Rev. Henry Liveing's *Records of Romsey Abbey*, published in 1906. By the time of publication the Rev. Liveing had become Vicar of Hyde in Winchester but he had started his scholarly study of Romsey Abbey and its town during his time as curate there.

On page 115 of his book he refers to a document concerning Churchstile Street. In the early 1300s a chaplain named Walter de Netheravene granted a tenement there, together with 10s 0d annual rent, to Nicholas de Persshete (Spurshot). It is, incidentally, interesting to note that many of the properties to the west of Church Street have clerical connections.

Churchstile Street is probably the same as the Churchegatestret of some decades earlier, as recorded in the Winchester College Muniments. *Stile* and *gate* were interchangeable in medieval usage. Perhaps the name indicates that one end of street was barred to traffic, pedestrians passing into it by way of something like a 'kissing gate'. Its precise location, however, remains uncertain.

The description of the tenement in Churchegatestret is the more helpful in identifying its possible whereabouts as it refers to neighbours on the north and south. So, Churchegatestret/Churchstile Street ran north-south. Were these perhaps early names for the way we now know as Church Road where the parish belfry* once stood. If, as it is thought, Church Street was a new development in the 13th century, was the *stile* or *gate* installed to discourage traffic from using this route and directing it instead to go via Church Street – an early form of traffic control, now much in the news again.

**NOTE: In the 1940s William Moody, the last in a long line of gunsmiths and cutlers of Church Street, rented from the Abbey authorities the 'old belfry ground' for use as a garage. The adjacent dwellings were called Belfry Cottages.*



Colour tint view of Romsey Abbey, north side before Berthon's work on the nave windows and the later construction of the present north porch presented to Hon. Gerard Noel, vicar of Romsey 1841-1851



Medieval windows reconstructed as a folly in the garden of the vicarage (now Folly House)

Remembering Brenda Langdon

by Mary Harris

In December 2020 we lost another of our long serving committee members. Brenda Langdon had been membership secretary and responsible for distributing the newsletters since the 1990s and only resigned due to ill health in 2019.

She was a wonderful membership secretary as she had a phenomenal memory for people's faces and names. Having met someone Brenda always took the time to talk to them, find out about their background and family and always remembered them afterwards. She was a very supportive member of the committee and a good friend. Many of us will miss her greatly. When we heard the news of her death we passed the news on to members and received a number of replies which give a good indication of how much she was appreciated.



Christine Whittle, who worked alongside Brenda with membership records, said: "Brenda wasn't computer knowledgeable and for 10 years or so, I was glad to be able to maintain that side of the role she so needed to continue. She was easy to work with, communicating often through a wad of clear handwritten amendments and an excellent work ethos from her secretarial background. In the face of loss and adverse health she kept her lively mind and young at heart nature. She was inspiring and I'm truly glad to have known her."

Other comments included:

"I remember Brenda well and enjoyed chatting to her."

"She was always so welcoming and helpful."

"Brenda's enthusiasm and commitment to her membership role was a huge and a very important part of her life."

"Brenda's amazing memory, interest in people, news and world events was second to none."

"I had only met her once and she remembered me on my next visit to History meetings."