

BASINGSTOKE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWS LETTER

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CALENDAR

Thursday, 2nd December

EXCAVATIONS AT ST MARY'S ABBEY, WINCHESTER
by Annie Robinson, Joint meeting with the
Hampshire Field Club, 7.30 pm, Willis Museum
(NOT Chute House)

Thursday, 16th December

SOCIAL EVENING at The Barn, Church Cottage,
7.30 pm

Thursday, 6th January

BASINGSTOKE'S OPEN FIELD SYSTEM by Derek
Spruce, Chute House, 7.30 pm

Friday, 14th January

'Coins as an aid to Archaeology' by R. Merson
(North East Hants Archaeological Society, 7.30 pm,
General Assembly Rooms, Royal Aircraft Establish-
ment, Farnborough)

Monday, 17th January

'Northington Grange' by Dr Geddes, Recital Room,
Peter Symonds College, Winchester, 8 pm

Friday, 21st January

'The Early Christian Church', the first of three
illustrated talks by Geoff Hoare (North East Hants
Archaeological Society, 7.30 pm, General Assembly
Rooms, Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough)

SUBSCRIPTIONS 1982-3

There are still subscriptions due for this year from some long-standing members, and it may be that there is some confusion over which year's subscription has been paid. The subscription year began on 1st May, so if your Newsletter carries an asterisk on the front page, please check with the Treasurer, Sarah Duckworth (phone Basingstoke 22904).

EXCAVATIONS AT ST MARY'S ABBEY, WINCHESTER

Our December lecture by Annie Robinson (of King Alfred's College, Winchester) will be a joint meeting with the Hampshire Field Club. Please remember that on this occasion it will be held at the Willis Museum, New St (NOT Chute House) at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 2nd December. Those of us who visited St Mary's Abbey (Nunaminster) on 11th August have had a foretaste of Annie Robinson's enthusiasm and expertise and are looking forward to her lecture. During the excavation of the Abbey some fascinating details were uncovered of its construction and of its numerous burials. We shall be interested to hear Annie's fuller account of the excavation, now that a certain amount of post-excavation work has been done.

SOCIAL EVENING

Once again our Christmas Social event will be held in Church Cottage from 7.30 pm to 11 pm on Thursday, 16th December. Your Committee is planning a short entertainment on historical lines and members who would like to dress up for the occasion are invited to attend in the guise of Historical Personages so that others can guess who they represent. No compulsion, of course.

We also once again invite members to bring, for 'Links with the Past', any old or unusual items that can be laid out on a table for members to observe and discuss. Then, later in the evening, people who have brought objects will be asked to say a few words about them.

Betty Walters has agreed to organise the catering and would like to hear well beforehand what people plan to bring for this. Traditionally we enjoy a good spread when members bring various items of food, and anyone who wishes to claim back the cost of ingredients must feel free to do so. PLEASE RING BETTY NOW (Basingstoke 20533). And in any case, please let Betty know beforehand if you plan to come so that she can adjust the catering to the right number - THIS IS IMPORTANT!

The cost will be £2 for adults, £1 for children.

BASINGSTOKE'S OPEN FIELD SYSTEM

Our own member, Derek Spruce, will give the January lecture (back at Chute House again) at 7.30 pm on Thursday, 6th January. Derek is well known to many of us also as a lecturer for the WEA and the IEA, with his recent series of lectures on 'Nineteenth-century Basingstoke' and his current lectures at Hook on 'Towns and Villages of North-East Hampshire'. Next

term he will be giving two short courses on 'The History of Odiham' at the new Environmental Studies Centre there.

Derek's interest in the subject of the Open Fields system arose from his dissertation for a higher degree course; now he proposes to look at the Open Field system of Basingstoke in the light of the country-wide scheme. One point he stresses is the effect on this system of the ownership of the manor. Unlike many other towns where the lord of the manor was in effect an 'absentee landlord', the men of Basingstoke were their own 'lords of the manor' (those who attended our reconstructed medieval Court Leet last Christmas will remember the bailiffs, constable, jury, affeerors, etc. - all local people). Did this make Basingstoke's Open Fields system different from that elsewhere?

FIELD-WALKING

A reminder that volunteers are still needed for Field-walking, which will take place every Sunday from 9.30 am to 12.30, until further notice (weather permitting). Meet outside Worting Church, and bring wellies! The latest report is of worked flint over an area where two barrows are known. If you would like more details, ring Eric Robinson (Basingstoke 28503)

VOICES OF BASINGSTOKE 1400 - 1600 BY ANNE HAWKER

Members who came to the November lecture were able to see a poster based on a very striking cover for this book, but I am afraid we shall have to wait until 1983 to see the book itself. The delay has been caused because the illustrator broke his wrist - but he has recovered now and is producing some first-rate drawings. We now intend to publish the book in March.

This will give us time to put in a lot of work on publicity, and I should be very glad to hear from any members who have some time to spare and would be willing to help with this (phone Basingstoke 65439)

BARBARA APPLIN

MINI-BREAKS IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

The York Archaeological Trust has organised two 'Heritage Weekends' centred on York. Accommodation for both programmes is provided at the four-star Viking Hotel on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis. The first programme, Medieval York, comprises a lecture on Friday night, a Saturday walking tour of the City with lunch at St William's College (15th century) and a visit on Sunday to York Castle and the Castle Museum. The second programme, Abbeys of York and Yorkshire, consists of a Friday evening lecture, a coach tour on Saturday during which stops will be made at Kirkham Abbey (Augustinian), Old Malton Priory (Gilbertine), Rievaulx Abbey (Cistercian), Byland Abbey (Savignac/Cistercian) and, for lunch, the market town of Helmsley, and on Sunday visits to two Benedictine abbeys in York itself and to the Yorkshire Museum.

The guides for the weekends will be the staff and friends of the York Archaeological Trust and each programme will include an opportunity to discuss with the guides points arising out of the tours.

The cost of the Medieval York programme is £65 per person (inc. VAT) and of the Abbeys programme £69.50 per person (inc. VAT). The dates are 29th April - 1st May 1983 OR 13th - 15th May 1983 for the Abbeys programme and 4th - 6th February 1983 OR 11th - 13th February 1983 for the Medieval York programme. Demand for these mini-breaks is expected to be high and, since numbers are limited, early booking is advised. A deposit of £20 per person is required, the balance to be paid on the weekend of the visit. The Secretary (phone Basingstoke 770752) has a brochure which contains further details of the two programmes. This brochure is also available from the York Archaeological Trust, 3 Kings Court, Kings Square, York YO1 2LE (phone York (0904) 3242).

RUINED CHURCHES

Those of us who enjoy our parish churches and, when visiting them, are used to find them scrupulously clean, bright with flowers and polished brass, find it difficult to believe that they have not always been so.

I recently came upon a pamphlet of 1660, which describes the state of some of the churches in Winchester at the time of the Restoration.

Speaking of the parish church of St Swithun's, King's Gate, it says:

"How ruinous it was, and, for the quality of it and place of its standing, how unfit for the congregation of the city to meet in, is well-known to all that know anything of the state of it ... this church, which the Corporation are charged to let to one Robert Allen, his wife delivered of children at one end thereof, and a hogsty made of the other".

Some of the other churches are described as being untiled and without roofs; grass, nettles and weeds growing in them. The church of St Mary Kalendar:

"A ghastly sight of two ruined walls, lying open for butchers to empty therein the bellies of their killed beasts, and persons of all sorts to lay their excrements as to become little other than a jakes".

It also mentions that the church of St Clements was made a hogsty, and that the bones of the dead were thrown about the streets.

Such was the legacy of Cromwell's rule. It took many years for the damage, repeated in every part of England, to be repaired. Not until the new wealth generated by the Industrial Revolution financed the wave of church repair and rebuilding in Victorian times, were these ancient buildings restored to the condition in which we find them today.

ANDREW DUCKWORTH

PARIS GREEN AGAIN

A radio programme and an article in 'The New Scientist', followed by a short piece in the 'Daily Telegraph' for 14th October, have suggested a bizarre but accidental cause for the death of Napoleon. A physical chemist at Newcastle University, Dr David Jones, has suggested that it was arsenic given off by

the pigments on the wallpaper, together with the damp climate of St Helena, which poisoned Napoleon and several of his staff. Does this sound familiar? Remember John Oliver's note on "Paris Green" in our Newsletter no 73 for July this year, when he described the lethal quality of this pigment based on arsenic.

HAMPSHIRE FIELD CLUB - a note from our Secretary

Proceedings

Members who do not receive their own copies of the Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club may like to know that the following articles appear in the latest volume:

- "The excavation of four ring-ditches in Hampshire (Winnall Down, Easton Down, Graces Farm & Micheldever Wood)" by P. J. Fasham
- "Excavations at Bramdean 1973-7" by B. T. Perry
- "The Foundation of the Old Minster and the Status of Winchester in the 7th and 8th Centuries" by B.A.E. Yorke
- "The Pilgrims' Hall, Winchester" by J. Crook
- "Cardinal Beaufort's Almshouse of Noble Poverty at St Cross, Winchester" by G. Bellfield
- "The Itchen Navigation: A Lawyer's View of the Legal Issues" by A. Samuels

The Society's copy of the Proceedings is kept by our Hon. Librarian, Bob Mulla and may be borrowed. Contact Bob on Basingstoke 55450.

Historical Buildings Section

The newly-formed Historic Buildings Section of the Field Club has sent us the following details of its programme:

- Monday, 17th January 1983 at 8 pm in the Recital Room, Peter Symonds' College, Winchester: "Northington Grange" by Dr Geddes
- Thursday, 10th February 1983 at 7.30 pm at King John's House, Romsey: "Hampshire Churches and their furnishings" by Peter Blakesley

THE FUSS ABOUT MAIDEN ACRE

(Anne Hawker's researches in the County Record Office have by no means stopped while Voices of Basingstoke is prepared for publication, and she has sent in this account of her discoveries in a rather later period)

Since I have seen (though I have not actually taken notes of them all) the documents that concern the town of Basingstoke from 1386 to around 1680 and have been deposited by the Borough Council in the Hampshire County Record Office in Winchester, I have now begun a fresh approach. I propose to go through the other papers which have been sent to the County Record Office at various times by the Willis Museum. These are not in such strict order, so that in one bundle there may be for instance (8M62/69):

- (a) a plan of Kempshott & Southwood Estate 1831
- (b) abstract of title to the Bell

- (c) Court Records of Sherborne St John 1706 - 1771
- (d) Licence to Charles Viney (of the Swan) to sell liquor 1870
- (e) Messuages in Chapel Street

It can be seen that this is quite a motley collection and all the bundles I have seen so far are like this.

8M62/101 with the general title 'Concerning Queen Mary's School' records that in 1856 the Liten with Chapel ruins school room and buildings with Maiden Acre was sold to the Burial Board for £510.

Presumably following this, there were some cuttings from the local paper reporting a lot of fuss that had been caused by the sale of "Maiden Acre", which was the northernmost strip of the cemetery, now running along the allotment fence at the south end of the allotments along Burgess Road. This Maiden Acre is supposed to have been a common playground for boys of the Chapel School and those of the Town, and when the school moved down to Worthing Road and got a playground of its own, the boys of the school apparently had to fight off everyone else who assumed they could continue to play games in the school's playground, even when it was a new one.

Accompanying these cuttings was a very nice plan entitled, with many flourishes of the pen, "Plan of Forty very desirable Freehold Building Sites - the property of J. B. Soper Esq - to be sold by auction at the Black Boy Tavern on Monday, 5th July 1869". These plots were along both sides of Burgess Road, the west side of Vyne Road up to Richmond Road, and the east side of Sherborne Road, up to and past the end of Richmond Road. As I live in Burgess Road, I found this fascinating, and rather sad, for the plots were not developed as the owner had hoped, being in fact divided so that the ten plots on the north side became twenty, of which mine is one. The south side of the road is now allotments. Burgess Road is also marked as "Lime Avenue" - there are still a few lime trees left. Cromwell and Richmond Road were marked to be "Chestnut Avenues", but I don't think there any of those trees left there now.

South View House and its park, which stretched from approximately where Phoenix Park Terrace is now, to where I imagine Queen Mary Avenue appeared later, is in beautiful detail and shows paddock, orchard, park, house and kitchen garden, complete with trees, paths and flower beds. It does not show the well into which the bulldozer fell when the flats, now on the site, were built a few years ago.

On the site of the park are now the houses up to Soper Grove, the Post Office, another row of houses, and also, I suppose, Phoenix Park Terrace. The back wall of the garden is still there, and beyond it is a small row of houses called Fencott Place. These were put up, according to Mr Willis, by a Mr Fencott, who had had a disagreement with Mr Soper, and wished to spite him by reducing the value of his lovely big South View House, since these houses were tiny and would probably have been occupied by rather poor families.

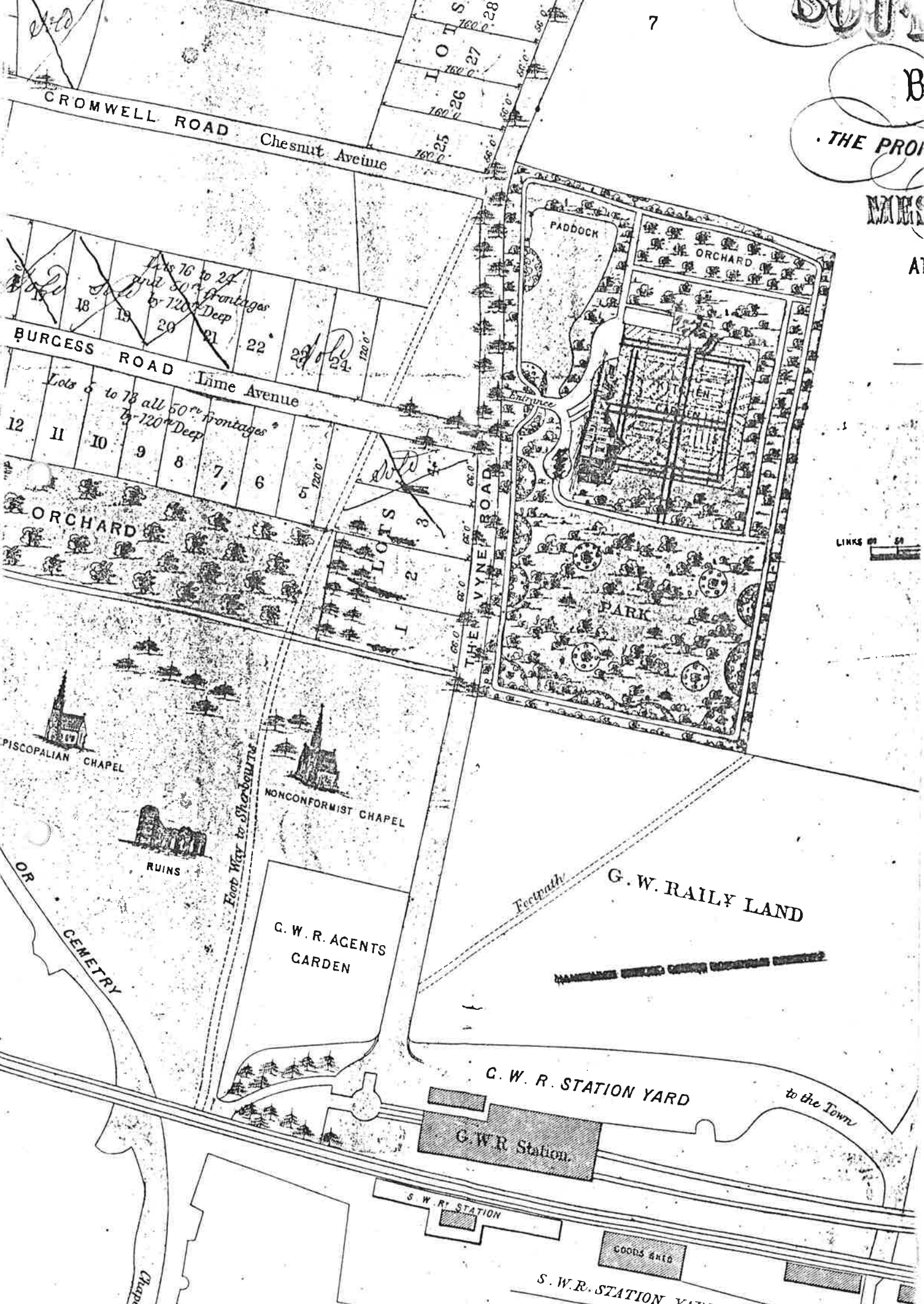
At the bottom of the Plan is a sweet little picture of the type of house that could have been built on the frontage of 50 feet, 120 feet deep. It has a couple of gables with Gothic fretwork, wrought iron spikes on the gables, some vaguely Tudor chimneys, an ecclesiastical porch, and a conservatory at the side.

I am sorry that the plots were divided and mine did not turn out like that!

ANNE HAWKER

500
B
THE PROJ
MES
A

7



CROMWELL ROAD
Chesnut Avenue

LOTS
25
26
27
28

BURGESS ROAD
Lime Avenue

Lots 6 to 18 all 50' frontages to 120' Deep

Lots 16 to 24 and 50' frontages to 120' Deep

LOTS
1
2
3

THE VYNE ROAD

Paddock

ORCHARD

PARK

LINKS 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

PISCOPALIAN CHAPEL

NONCONFORMIST CHAPEL

RUINS

CEMETRY

Foot Way to Stoneville

G. W. R. AGENTS GARDEN

Footpath

G. W. R. RAILY LAND

G. W. R. STATION YARD

G. W. R. Station

to the Town

S. W. R. STATION

GOODS SHED

S. W. R. STATION YARD

8

QUEEN'S SCHOOL, BASINGSTOKE.

NOTICE

An assembly of persons having met on two occasions this week for the purpose of asserting a right which it is presumed they believed, although erroneously, to exist, namely, of using the grounds of the above School for the purposes of recreation in lieu of a spot called the "Maiden Acre," near Holy Ghost Chapel, formerly the private property of the Trustees of the School, and now and for upwards of Twenty-two years past the property of the Burial Board,

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Trustees of the School cannot permit a recurrence of these trespasses, and any person found on the ground will be removed, or if committing injury or damage to the property will be treated as a wilful and malicious Trespasser and apprehended accordingly.

BY ORDER.

JOHN BURGESS SOPER

Following Anne Hawker's note, it might be interesting to add a few words about the man who was selling the plots she described. John Burgess Soper was an eminent businessman whose name is remembered in Soper's Grove and Burgess Road. In the 1851 census of Basingstoke he was recorded as Engineer and Gunmaker in the Market Place, employing one apprentice and two men. The census records that he was born in Padworth, Berks and was 30 years old; his wife, Ann, was 41 and came from Durham. His daughters Sarah Ann and Betsey Mary Murray were 8 and 6 and had been born in Chelsea and Balham. So the family seems to have moved around, and apparently they continued to.

In 1851 J B Soper evidently lived in a house in the Market Place, as his wife and daughters are also recorded at that address. The Archer Davis map of Basingstoke in 1851 shows no sign of South View House. Anne's records seem to imply that he lived in South View House in 1869 (did he build it?) but I have not yet been able to find exact proof - the next step seems to be to consult later censuses and directories, but does anyone know? His business apparently flourished at least in the sixties, as billheads of 1876 in the County Museum Service illustrate the products of his 'Basingstoke Ironmongery Workhouse' including the Medieval Gate he made for the Basingstoke Industrial Exhibition in 1860.

The house in Vyne Road facing the end of Soper Grove is known locally as 'Soper's Castle', and a photograph in the Town Gallery at the Willis Museum shows its windows broken during the Salvation Army riots of 1881. The museum label quotes from George Woodman's diary that on March 20th brewers led an angry mob who attacked John Burgess Soper and other eminent townsmen as they walked with the Salvation Army, and that on November 1st the mob 'went to South View and tried to break in at Mr ... and set fire to the place but were unsuccessful ... the mob smashed every window'. The reference to South View here seems to be the area and 'Soper's Castle', not South View House.

When Baigent and Millard published their History of Basingstoke in 1889 John Burgess Soper was Mayor.

BARBARA APPLIN

A TRIP TO PARADISE

It was a dismal damp day in October when four of us, Mary Oliver, Barbara Applin, Joan Merryweather and myself, piled into Mary's car and headed south down the A 33. The road was busy. Cars and lorries thundered by. We arrived at Winchester and turned off into the city. Cars parked everywhere. The traffic lights wouldn't let us go where we wanted to. At last we turned off the road, through a narrow gateway and into a different world - the world of Winchester College!

The official excuse for the trip was to see an exhibition on Virgil in the Fellows' Library at the College, but we saw far more.

We were met by a quiet gentleman, Mr Yeats Edwards, the Fellows' Librarian, who took us up a stone spiral stairway, which reminded some of us of bellringing days, into a high room packed full of books. Here he explained the libraries of the College, and showed us a few items including a set of chained books and a Register of Donors from 1543 to 1866. He also showed us, with great pride, photos of the Queen's visit to the College during

the 600 years celebrations.

From there to have a look at the Fellows' Library - Paradise for me! The Library is spread over a number of rooms. In the first, Mr Yeats Edwards showed us a first edition copy of Johnson's Dictionary, a 'Bugges' Bible and many other valuable and interesting books. He also told us of the problems of cataloguing such a collection of books, as the normal Library Catalogue System would not work there. It took him six years to sort out the basic catalogue, and even now, ten years after he started, he is still trying to sort out the cross references. From that room to another where there were more books and also some undergoing repair. Back through the first high room and down the stairs to the Virgil exhibition. Here he left us for a while as we absorbed the books before us. When he returned, he took us into a strong room where they keep the most precious of their books. These books and manuscripts include such treasures as a twelfth century life of Thomas à Becket, an early fifteenth century Book of Hours, a set of Madrigals once belonging to Queen Elizabeth I, a Jane Austen manuscript and many others. I could have quite happily hibernated there for the rest of the winter.

But unfortunately our time was up, we had to go. Back out to the courtyard, into the car, and the return to twentieth century traffic and a drear, drizzly October day. But I for one shall always remember a trip to an apparently timeless place of peace and tranquility.

LAURA LEACH

POT WASHING

Although we had hoped to begin sessions again at the Willis museum, arrangements have not yet been completed. We hope to announce dates at our next meeting, but in the meantime anyone interested should ring Peter Heath (Basingstoke 27713)

NB Don't forget to ring
Betty Walters! (page 2,
Social Evening)