CONTENTS

The Genesis of Shirley Recreation Ground
A.G.K. Leonard

‘The eccentric and reverend Mr Smith’:
the Reverend Herbert Smith, 1800-1876
Richard Preston

A remnant of Georgian whimsy amidst Southampton’s suburbia
Christine Clearkin

Delmar Bicker-Caarten, Champion of ‘Outcast’ Southampton
John Edgar Mann

John Monckton (1715 – 1799), Southampton Surgeon
Mary South

Rose Foster … A Remarkable Little Lady
A.G.K. Leonard

Social action and social crisis in late Victorian Southampton
J.F.M. Brinkman
SOUTHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY FORUM

Southampton Local History Forum is sponsored by Southampton Library Services. Membership is free and is open to everyone interested in the history of the city and its neighbourhood. A programme of evening meetings is arranged for the third Thursday of each month (August and December excepted) between 7.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. An informal research group meets on the first or second Monday of each month (August excepted) between 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. Anyone interested in joining the Forum should contact David Hollingworth, Special Collections Library, Civic Centre, Southampton, SO14 7LW (telephone 023 8083 2205).

The articles in this journal are written by members of the Forum, to whom thanks are due. Contributions from members to future editions are always welcome.

© Except as otherwise noted, copyright in all contributions remains with the authors.
A.G.K. Leonard

The Genesis of Shirley Recreation Ground

The genesis of Shirley Recreation Ground – now known as St. James’ Park – is to be found in the minutes of the meeting of the Public Lands and Markets Committee of Southampton Borough Council held on 22 February 1907, when it considered ‘a letter from Alderman Cawte J.P. respecting the provision of a Public Park at Shirley and suggesting a suitable site for the purpose’.

This was referred to a sub-committee, which Alderman Cawte was invited to attend. It met at the site on 22 March and reported that ‘having inspected the gravel pit near Shirley Church […] (it) resolved upon the motion of Alderman Cawte, seconded by Councillor Lewis, to recommend that a sum of £1,000 be offered for the land for the purpose of a Recreation Ground.’ Its report was endorsed by the full committee, although Councillors Beavis and Line voted against it.

The amount offered was then a considerable sum, worth about a hundred times as much in today’s money. The land in question was six acres, shown as ‘Nursery’ on the 1867 Ordnance Survey map. It was one of the areas from which gravel had been dug out – primarily for purposes of highway maintenance.

The Shirley Local Board of Health, established in 1853, was the highway authority; to keep unmade roads, lanes and paths in passable condition, it required large quantities of gravel on a regular basis for seasonal operations involving digging it out in the summer, then carting and spreading it out in the autumn and winter. Loose gravel surfaces needed frequent attention, particularly to counter the effects of storm water dispersal and deepening wheel ruts.

The highways and other community functions undertaken by the Shirley Local Board of Health in 1853-1895 are surveyed in the booklet ‘Shirley Nuisances and Services’ by A.G.K. Leonard, published in 2003 by Southampton City Council – available from Central and Shirley Libraries.

Councillors and Aldermen

Henry Cawte (1852-1930) actively identified himself with Shirley through half a century. Born at Twyford, he served his apprenticeship in Winchester, then spent the years 1872-1880 gaining experience on his own account in the United States, before returning to marry and settle in Shirley. There he developed a family business as an enterprising building contractor, whose projects included the Infirmary at Shirley Warren, Western District Schools and the Harbour Board Offices.

He joined the Borough Council in 1895, topping the poll as one of Shirley’s first councillors following its incorporation into the borough that year. Cllr Cawte became Sheriff in 1904 and Mayor in 1905: the following year he was elected an Alderman, serving until he retired in 1920. A magistrate from 1905, he was also active in various trade and welfare associations and at St. James’ Church, where he was people’s warden for 28 years until retiring in 1923 – to be succeeded by his son Charles.

Henry Cawte was widely respected as a man of business ability and integrity. Politically a dedicated Conservative, he displayed shrewd judgement and independence of mind, always ready to serve the people of Shirley.

To end duplication, Union Road, Freemantle, was renamed as Cawte Road in 1903. Thomas Lewis Way is a recent City Council commemoration of the man who seconded Alderman Cawte’s motion in March 1907.

‘Tommy’ Lewis (1873-1962) was elected for St. Mary’s ward in 1901 as Southampton’s first Labour councillor. He remained a Council
member for nearly sixty years, as an Alderman from 1929, and became its Leader in 1945 when his party gained control. He was likewise a long-serving member and later chairman of the Harbour Board, besides serving as a magistrate for many years. He also worked busily as a trade union organiser and as national president of the British Seafarers Union.

Elected at his fifth attempt, he became Southampton’s first Labour M.P. in 1929. He lost his seat in 1931 but returned to Parliament in 1945; he retired in 1950, at 76, but remained active in local government until just before his death at the age of 88.

William Beavis, who followed his father as a councillor and alderman, was elected to the Council in 1900; made an alderman in 1911, he served until his death in 1924, aged 65.

Himself an enthusiastic swimmer, he was chairman of the Baths Committee for 21 years. In business he was partner, later principal, in the firm of Haddon & Beavis, High Street shipping agents and coal merchants.

He is remembered for the annual ‘Beavis Treats’ provided for local schoolchildren from 1920 with the income from his £10,000 gift made to the Corporation in thankfulness for the Victory and Peace of 1918.

**Purchase**

The opposition of councillors like Beavis presaged marked differences of opinion about the desirability of a recreation ground for Shirley and the expenditure involved in providing one.

At the Council meeting on 24 April, Mr E.A. Young presented ‘a memorial containing 1,300 signatures from residents and rate payers in Shirley District in favour of the provision of a Recreation Ground.’ The Council deferred consideration until its next meeting on 8 May, in conjunction with the notice of motion on the agenda in the name of Alderman Cawte.

It was then resubmitted by the Town Clerk, who also read a letter from the secretary of the Shirley Conservative Association forwarding a resolution approving the proposed purchase of land for a Recreation Ground.

Alderman Cawte formally moved that ‘the recommendation of the Public Lands & Markets Committee meeting of 22 March to offer £1,000 for purchase of certain land at Shirley for the purpose of a Recreation Ground be adopted.’ This was eventually carried by a vote of 23-13, indicative of some cross-party divisions on the contentious issue.

The report of the Council debate on this issue occupied nearly two close-printed columns in the following Saturday’s issue of the Southampton Times, the local weekly published at one (old) penny.

Alderman Cawte referred to ‘the crowded population at Shirley, where there were now 20,000 people and in a very few years there would be 30,000. There was no piece of ground where the children (nearly 1,000 at three schools) could go to play away from the roads. He remarked on how well off the older parts of the town were in respect of parks and open spaces and reminded the Council that Shirley ratepayers helped to pay for these advantages, although they were too far away to enjoy them … he hoped the Council would act fairly towards Shirley.’

His seconder, Councillor Weston, ‘considered it was true economy to purchase six acres of land for £1,000 and if a recreation ground for Freemantle could be secured on the same conditions he would hold up both hands in favour of it.’

Alderman Gayton hoped that ‘the syndicate of gentlemen who owned this land would have had a kindly feeling towards the inhabitants of Shirley and the district, seeing that the land was useless to them for building and they had taken out of it all they could get, by making a present to the Corporation of the land. He argued that the nearness of the Common made a recreation
ground unnecessary for Shirley – a view later echoed by other speakers.

Cllr Hamilton thought that ‘it was not enough to say that a recreation ground would cost £1,000 because a great deal of extra expense would be necessary to make a proper ground. He suggested that recreative accommodation might be provided by a large playground attached to the proposed new schools at Shirley.’

Several other members spoke in favour of the proposed land purchase. Cllr Park recalled that the Council had paid £6,000 for a gravel pit at Bitterne, while Cllr Etheridge ‘considered members representing the older parts of the town by opposing the proposal showed they were intensely selfish.’ Cllr Pitt elicited the fact that not all the gravel had been extracted from the pit and that if the Council purchased the ground they would be entitled to any gravel remaining there. It was also said that the tenants of the land were obliged by their lease to level it before they gave up possession.

Other members advocated economy in Council expenditure, fearing purchase would involve future maintenance costs that would increase the rates. Cllr Lewis foresaw further development at Shirley and thought they would soon have difficulty in securing open space there if they did not adopt the present proposal. After more members had spoken for and against, a recorded vote was taken in favour. ‘The result was received with applause.’

Following this vote, application was duly made to the Local Government Board for sanction to borrow £1,000 for purchase of the land. ‘Having considered the matter from a financial standpoint,’ the Council’s Finance Committee resolved in June that ‘it saw no objection to the proposed expenditure, subject to loan sanction being first obtained.’ Two councillors dissented.

Meanwhile, the Council meeting of 22 May had been informed that the owner was willing to accept the sum of £1,000 offered for the land. His solicitors Messrs Goater & Blatch facilitated progress of the sale by providing a draft contract.

At its next meeting on 28 June the Public Lands and Markets Committee received a report from the Town Clerk saying that he had consulted Counsel about the restrictive covenants contained in an indenture of 1851 limiting use to pasture, arable or garden land, with no building whatsoever to be erected thereon. Notwithstanding these restrictions, he advised that the Corporation could buy the land for its statutory purposes, under the provisions of the Public Health Act 1875 and ‘lay out, plant, improve and maintain’ it ‘for the purpose of being used as pleasure grounds.’

In October the Committee was duly notified that the Local Government Board had given sanction ‘to the borrowing of the sum of £1,000 for the purchase of land situated between St. James Road and Wordsworth Road, Shirley, for the purpose of public walks and pleasure grounds.’

**Layout**

Purchase having been achieved comparatively speedily, the laying out of the ground proved to be a more prolonged process.

The Distress Committee took an interest in the project and in January 1908 asked that ‘in the event of extra labour being required in the digging out of gravel from this ground, application be made to the Labour Bureau for such labour.’ The Public Lands and Markets Committee meanwhile ‘directed the Borough Engineer to remove such gravel as he may require, the committee to be credited with the value of the material removed, and to employ one of the men engaged on the roads in the District in levelling the land, an allowance to be made to the Distress Committee in respect of the labour of excavating and screening the gravel.’

In January the Committee ordered a bar or fence to be placed across the entrance but in June it received a letter from Dr. W.W. McKeith, concerned about ‘the condition of this ground for children.’ Following the Borough Engineer’s
At its meeting on 27 November 1908 the Borough Engineer submitted plans for laying out the ground; these were referred to a subcommittee, which met on 6 January 1909. Next day the full Committee approved its report and the plans, directing the Borough Engineer ‘to continue the work of levelling the ground and making up the banks surrounding it […] also that the footway leading from a site opposite Shirley Church to Stratton Road be closed.’ The Borough Engineer was authorised to ‘make good the fence around Shirley Recreation Ground at a cost not exceeding £20.’

At its next meeting, on 28 February, the Committee decided that ‘the work of levelling be continued as far as possible and the laying out of the ground be deferred until the Autumn.’

Before then, the Council again took a direct interest in the matter. At its meeting on 9 June 1909, upon the motion of the Sheriff, Councillor Weston, it resolved ‘that the Public Lands and Markets Committee be asked to place 8 park seats in the Recreation Ground at Shirley forthwith.’ The Council then went on to adopt a further resolution moved by Councillor Wood, ‘that the whole matter of laying out the Recreation Ground at Shirley be referred to the Public Lands and Markets Committee to report again.’

Meanwhile, Cllr Wood had secured the agreement of the Committee to the Southampton Town Band playing there on a Wednesday evening, 8 August, the performance being transferred from the Common. (A request for bandsmen in uniform to travel by ‘car’ at workmen’s rates was unkindly turned down by the Tramways Committee.)

In September, the Shirley Ward Conservative Association sent a letter to the Committee ‘expressing the opinion that no path should be allowed across the ground after the land had been properly laid out.’

When the Borough Council met on 24 November Councillors Weston and Wood unsuccessfully moved that the Committee ‘be forthwith requested to complete the Shirley Recreation Ground.’ Mr Weston said ‘there was no rhyme or reason in leaving the place as it was; it was a disgrace to all concerned.’ Instead of this, the Council adopted an amendment from Aldermen Hollis and Hutchins that ‘the whole matter be referred to the Public Lands and Markets Committee to consider and report upon, Councillor Weston to be added to the committee for the consideration of this special matter.’

Shirley Recreation Ground was becoming a ‘special matter’, the subject of an on-going mini-saga … It was again considered by the Public Lands and Markets Committee, meeting on the last day of 1909, with the Mayor, Alderman Sharp, taking the chair. The Borough Engineer ‘was directed to report on the cost of levelling the ground and the carrying out of other necessary works.’

The Mayor also presided at the Committee’s next meeting, on 28 January 1910, when ‘the Borough Engineer reported that he estimated the cost of levelling the Recreation Ground at Shirley and the carrying out of certain works in connection therewith in accordance with the plan submitted at £450.’

Councillors Weston and Wood proposed that application be made to the Local Government Board for sanction to borrow the sum of £1,000 ‘for carrying out the scheme now submitted by the Borough Engineer and for completing the layout of the Recreation Ground.’ Upon a show of hands, this motion was lost and the Committee adopted the Mayor’s proposal ‘that the sum of £450 be expended […] in accordance with the scheme submitted by the Borough Engineer.’

This was reported to the February meeting of the Council’s Finance Committee, which agreed ‘to concur in the expenditure’, but matters still progressed slowly. Nothing more is recorded until the Council meeting on 27 July 1910, when Councillors Ryder and Wood moved that
the Borough Engineer ‘be instructed to forthwith carry out the improvements at the Shirley Recreation Ground, as sanctioned by the Council.’ To this, the Mayor moved an amendment that application be made to the Local Government Board for sanction to borrow £450 to carry out the works envisaged. This was carried upon a show of hands, the votes not being recorded.

Receipt of loan sanction was reported in November – although in the reduced sum of £389, because the Board had deducted £61, ‘which had been added in the event of work being carried out by unemployed labour.’ Evidently the Recreation Ground was not to be regarded as a job-creation project … although it had come to occupy many man-hours of Council, committee and administrative time.

The next step was taken at the Public Lands and Markets Committee meeting on 4 January 1911, when Councillor Kimber – newly elected for the Highfield ward in November – proposed that ‘tenders be invited for the laying out of Shirley Recreation Ground.’ This was duly carried, after rejection of Cllr Line’s amendment that the work should be carried out by direct labour.

(Alderman Sir Sidney Kimber included reference to this meeting in his volume of reminiscences ‘Thirty-eight Years of Public Life in Southampton, 1910-1948’, published in 1949; see page 17.)

On 24 February 1911 three tenders were reported to the Committee ‘for the whole of the proposed works in levelling, forming terraces and filling in banks in accordance with the plan, specifications and conditions prepared by the Borough Engineer.’ It was resolved to accept the lowest, that of F. Osman & Co., at £480 – except for the portion relating to the provision and laying of turfs to terraces and slopes (this presumably to be undertaken by the Council’s own labour force).

At the same meeting the Committee resolved to apply for loan sanction of £365, the estimated cost of providing and fixing iron railings and seats. On 30 June it considered nine tenders received for supply and delivery of wrought iron fencing, gates and six garden seats. It accepted the third lowest, that of the local firm of W. Dibben & Sons, in the sum of £170 - £5 less than the the lowest from a Workington company.

The Committee also received a letter from the National Telephone Company about removing its pole from the centre of the Recreation Ground and replacing it with two new poles on the north and south sides of the ground. In July, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman met the Company’s representative on site and agreed arrangements … including an annual rental charge of 5 shillings for each pole.

There are no further references to the Shirley Recreation Ground in committee and Council minutes over the ensuing 18 months, so it would seem that all the proposed work on the ground had been carried out, without the need for further discussion. As there does not seem to have been any formal opening ceremony, it is likely that local people simply extended their use of the area and enjoyed its newly created amenities as they became available.

In January 1913 the subject of planting trees in the Recreation Ground was raised by the Public Lands and Markets Committee. A sub-committee met on the site on 23 January and recommended that ‘ornamental trees be planted on each side of the main entrance at the end of each flight and beds of variegated shrubs be planted at the NE and SW corners of the Ground.’

It was also agreed that ‘trees be planted along the banks encircling the grounds at a distance of 30 yards apart, the selection of the trees to be left to Alderman Oakley and the Superintendent.’ Another decision was that ‘the gravel path be continued around the ground and that the entrance opposite Didcot Road be removed southward to a site opposite Stratton Road.’ Committee business at the meeting on 28 February included a resolution that ‘provision of a small iron fence for protection of shrubs at
Shirley Recreation Ground be referred to the Chairman (Alderman Sharp) and Alderman Oakley with power to act.’

With these matters settled, little more is recorded about the Recreation Ground, which by then must have become established and appreciated as a community amenity – as evidenced by the only other Committee decision of 1913. This was taken at its June meeting when it granted permission for the Shirley Church Parade on behalf of local charities to take place there on 20 July.

Footnote

Stratton Road was originally Station Road, the Borough Council having renamed it in 1903 because this had become obsolete and misleading. With Didcot and Newbury Roads, it is often thought to have been associated with the abortive plans of the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway in the 1880s but in fact it predates this assumed connection by some thirty years. Shown as such on the 1867 Ordnance Survey map (reproduced at page 2 of the booklet ‘Shirley Nuisances and Services’), Station Road was originally named from the old police station fronting it near its junction with what was then Albert Street – renamed Victor Street in 1901. (Police) Station Road was one of the score of streets on which the Shirley Local Board of Health erected painted slate name panels in 1859.
Richard Preston

‘The eccentric and reverend Mr Smith’: the Reverend Herbert Smith, 1800-1876

Few nineteenth-century clergymen can have lived such a full and varied life as the Reverend Herbert Smith, and yet be so little remembered by later generations. In this short essay, I hope to begin his rehabilitation.

Herbert Smith was by birth a member of the establishment. He was the third and youngest son of the Reverend Charles Smith, sometime scholar of Winchester College (admitted 1768), fellow of New College, Oxford (1776-1792), rector of St Mary Aldermanbury in the City of London and rector of St James, Southrepps in Norfolk, where Herbert was baptised on 20 July 1800. One of his elder brothers, Robert, was also a clergyman. The City connection is significant, for Herbert was nephew to Samuel Smith (1755-1793), principal of the banking house of Samuel Smith of Aldermanbury, treasurer of the Levant Company and a director of the East India Company. Herbert himself worked for a time in one of the large mercantile houses in London. He later, as we shall see, made a good marriage.

Herbert Smith was only two years old when his father died, and the family moved to Southampton. Here three years later Herbert entered King Edward VI Grammar School, a contemporary of James Henry Hurdis, later a renowned engraver (as an aside, the copy of Smith’s ‘Winchester political economy papers on ecclesiastical, military, and social reform’ in Winchester Local Studies Library was presented to Charlotte Hurdis, his widow). In later life, Smith remembered the discipline and scholastic obedience of the school, enforced by the rod and cane. The family worshipped in Holy Rood Church. In Michaelmas Term 1822, Herbert matriculated at Caius College, Cambridge, and proceeded to BA in 1827. Whilst an undergraduate, between November 1824 and April 1825, Smith attended a series of lectures at the University of St Andrew’s on Moral Philosophy and Political Economy by the Reverend Dr Thomas Chalmers, an inspirational teacher and minister. It altered Smith’s view of the world, revealing to him that social and economic issues could be analysed with mathematical precision. The certainty of political economy, fused with an unshakable truth of the Bible, became his two shibboleths. In June 1826, when his residence at Cambridge ended but before graduation, the young enthusiast went to work in the large but then much neglected parish of Egham in Surrey, where within a year he had established schools for 300 children, built school houses for the master and mistress and obtained grants from George IV.

Herbert Smith was ordained a deacon in the Church of England on 20 January 1828 at the first ordination of the new bishop of Winchester, Charles Richard Sumner, a day after his enthronement. He was licensed as curate to the Reverend Thomas Clarke in the parish of Micheldever with East Stratton as his principal cure, and took up residence in the parsonage house there. The patron of the living of East Stratton was Sir Thomas Baring, member of one of the greatest banking firms in Europe and owner of the 10,000-acre Stratton Park, inside whose boundaries the church lay (figure 1). To William Cobbett (Rural rides, August 1823), ‘The Barings are now the great men in Hampshire.’ Three months after coming into his new parish, Smith married Cassandra Cecil Chamberlayne, born in Plymouth of an eminent naval family. Her father was Admiral Charles Chamberlayne and her first cousins included Admiral Sir Charles Hamilton and Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Hamilton. Her great uncle was James, third Duke of Chandos. In the beginning it looked so promising: an energetic young priest, well-connected, with a new wife
Figure 1. Stratton Park and church. Source: J P Neale, ‘Views of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland’, volume 2, 1819. Print in Winchester Local Studies Library: also accessible via: www.hantsphere.org.uk
who shared his parish work, an influential patron and at the start of a new episcopacy. He quickly found an issue which propelled him into national recognition: Lord’s Day Observance. Southampton to London coaches daily used Bradley Farm within the parish as a changing place for horses, denying the stable-keepers and ostlers who worked there the opportunity to attend divine worship on Sunday. Smith took up their cause, ultimately brokering a short-lived agreement between the 23 coach proprietors on the Portsmouth and Southampton roads, including Benjamin Horne and the Chaplins, voluntarily to suspend Sunday services. Part of his published correspondence was used as evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Observance of the Lord’s-day in 1832.

This minor triumph, however, could not disguise the disaster of his curacy, for within seven years Smith had been ejected from the parish. In February 1835, Sumner wrote to his brother-in-law the Reverend William Wilson, vicar of Holy Rood and rural dean, what even at this early stage could be his epitaph. ‘Mr Herbert Smith is a pious man, but I think he is physically incapacitated from professing duty. You are doubtless aware of the alternate excitement and depression to which he is subject, and of the serious evil to which his diseased state of mind led at Stratton.’ (SRO D/S 1/1/31). Our view of events comes almost exclusively from three letters written, and published, in May 1839 by Smith to those who had been his bishop, patron and vicar. As a churchman of the old school, Smith abhorred the divisive Evangelical beliefs of this trinity. The regime in East Stratton showed ‘the most deplorable ignorance of, and prejudice against, current Church principles…; it was little better than a system of Dissent under the name of Church.’ He deplored Clarke’s failure to instruct the Church catechism in the parish schools (the school mistress was professedly a Baptist), the way in which the Lord’s supper was administered at Easter, his rejection of the doctrine of general redemption and his performance of the baptism service, which Smith considered to be against the Rubric.

Thomas Baring was condemned as an overbearing patron, bringing the whole parish into abject dependence on himself or, vicariously, his steward. He wound up the Friendly Visiting Society, established in 1831 with Smith as superintendent, when he perceived his interests to be threatened. Smith himself was excluded from meetings of the vestry and given notice to quit the parsonage house (where he lived rent-free) after condemning their proceedings as improper and illegal. There was a religious dimension as well, for Baring actively interfered in the ministry of the parish. It is instructive that when William Cobbett visited Micheldever (Political register, 4 August 1832) he characterized the patron as rector and the vicar as curate.

The real sticking point for Smith was the way in which he was dismissed. It was the vicar who, in November 1833, shut him out of the pulpit at East Stratton at one day’s notice. Smith believed he was still curate until the bishop revoked his licence, and this Sumner never did. To resign was to accept that the continuance in office of any curate depended on the approval of his parishioners or on the will of the parson, whereas the law made him subject alone to the bishop. Smith held out until April 1834, renting a house in the parish to maintain residence, but finally, worn out with anxiety and his health failing entirely, he accepted force majeure. So began a vendetta against that ‘nest of vipers’ whom Smith believed had deprived him of his life’s work. There were two key targets. The Reverend Alexander Robert Charles Dallas, bishop’s chaplain and recipient of the lucrative living of Wonston from Sumner’s hands in 1828, had manipulated the East Stratton affair for Sumner and had procured the vacant curacy, at double the stipend, for his cousin and brother-in-law Charles Dallas. The Reverend Henry Carey, curate to another of Sumner’s chaplains Philip Jacob, rector of Crawley, fulfilled most of Smith’s duties during the interregnum (‘employed to prevent me from discharging my duties’). For decades, Alexander Dallas and Philip Jacob were effectively stalked in their own parishes, Dallas even being confronted by Smith in his own rectory and denounced as a
Pharisee. Henry Carey became a closer victim. On the day in April 1853 that he ‘read himself in’ as rector of All Saints in Southampton, stating that he subscribed to the thirty-nine articles of Anglican doctrine, who should confront him in the vestry with a fistful of pamphlets protesting the appointment but Herbert Smith.

For the next twenty-five years, Smith used the full panoply of propaganda to try to regain his curacy. Endless pamphlets were published, press advertisements taken on the anniversary of his ejectment, appeals made at bishop's visitations, appeals for an enquiry and a dogged insistence on styling himself ‘Curate of Stratton’. Direct action to seize the pulpit led to three spells in Winchester Gaol as Smith refused to give magistrates an undertaking that he would commit no further breaches of the peace in pursuit of his right. In 1848 he was arraigned before Hampshire Michaelmas Sessions in the Grand Jury Room at Winchester, charged uniquely under the Religious Toleration Act of 1688. Ever the publicist, Smith appeared in the dock in full canonical dress, with the bishop, subpoenaed to give evidence, sitting throughout in the public gallery. Six years later Smith preached an open air sermon outside the door of the chapel to a congregation of one: the chapelwarden, there to ensure that Smith did not enter the building. On one Sunday afternoon in March 1855, Smith simply entered the empty chapel half an hour before the service was due to start, strode into the vestry, put on the surplice and mounted the reading desk. Twice more before 1860 he was removed by police, deployed by the then patron Sir Francis Baring, from the public path leading to the chapel. Such myopic insistence on his assumed right speaks volumes for the mental state of the erstwhile curate.

Smith was only in his mid-thirties, but had already been denied his chosen calling following his father's footsteps as a parish priest. Alternative employment for a clergyman outwith the diocesan system was limited, and often poorly paid. In 1835 he was appointed by the Board of Ordnance as chaplain at the Marchwood Magazine, which lay in a kind of spiritual wilderness over two miles from the nearest parish church (Eling). He resided with his family in rooms in the officers’ quarter at the paltry salary of £25 per annum: his predecessor received double having been given more parochial responsibilities in the neighbourhood by Sumner, responsibilities denied to Smith. Nevertheless, Smith tried to expand his work. He campaigned for a new church for Marchwood, serving the Magazines, the village and surrounding scattered communities, five years before the youthful lord of the manor, H.F.K. Holloway, built the present, much over-budget, cathedral-like St John’s. Smith also experimented with temperance reform, selling malt without the imposition of Malt Tax to enable local people to brew small beer at home, without recourse to beer shops. The appointment ended in 1845.

In March 1837, Smith received a second non-diocesan post, as chaplain to the New Forest Union Workhouse, an appointment solely in the gift of the Board of Guardians, at a ‘trifling’ £50 per annum. As with the Magazines, the workhouse, at Ashurst, lay sufficiently far from the parish church (again, Eling) to justify the appointment of a dedicated clergyman. Ostensibly, Smith’s attention to the work was assiduous, as his ‘Account of a union chaplaincy, containing extracts from the chaplain’s book’, published in 1839, shows. However, the script written at East Stratton was reworked. He fell out with the Board of Guardians, who twice removed him from office, in December 1839 (subsequently re-elected) and in spring 1842. He refused to accept the regulations of the workhouse. A test case came in his distribution of tobacco to the men’s ward (typically, together with tracts on the evils of smoking), in direct contravention of the rules. He usurped the authority of the Guardians, especially as we shall see shortly in his advocacy of alternatives to the workhouse. He complained that the Guardians were slack in their attendance to workhouse affairs. He refused to accept the mediation of the Poor Law Commissioners in London. Again, as at East Stratton, he simply refused to go, as resignation
would be tantamount to admitting that the charges brought by the Board were true. For two years, he soldiered on despite a complete breakdown of relations with the Guardians, until ill health caused him to accept the inevitable.

Smith never wanted to be a workhouse chaplain, but his experiences in the New Forest opened up fresh chapters in his life. He took to heart the plight of the deserving aged poor who, after decent, God-fearing lives, had to eke out their final years in the repressive, prison-like atmosphere of the poor house. His solution, first formulated in 1838, was the creation of a National Almshouses Society, funded by private bounty, almsgiving at church, parliamentary grants and a form of social insurance. A model constitution was drawn up, management of the almshouses shared by clergy and laity. Meetings were organized in London, and petitions to both Houses of Parliament prepared. The New Forest offered a stage on which to give substance to his vision. Immediately after his re-election to the chaplaincy, he memorialized the Commissioners of Woods and Forest to grant part of their extensive New Forest landholdings for the building of almshouses at Longdown to accommodate fifty inmates, together with a chapel (to serve the almshouses and surrounding district) and warden’s house. The young Southampton architect William Hinves was employed to draw up plans (figure 2). In anticipation of royal patronage, they were to be styled ‘Queen Victoria’s Alms Houses’. The trenching of the ground was to be entrusted to able-bodied men in the workhouse, in the same way that Clement Hoare had recently used unemployed labour to transform a barren plot of land on Shirley Common into a vineyard.

It soon became clear that the scheme attracted no support, and within a few months Smith had transferred his attention to a site in Shirley, close to St James’s Church (and incidentally not far from Hoare’s vineyard). The proposed almshouses were originally to house fifty inmates, with 32 separate apartments in a building 100 feet long by 100 feet wide, although the specifications were later scaled down. There was to be no separate warden’s lodgings and, with a district church close by, no separate chapel. New designs were commissioned from William Hinves, who had earlier designed St James’s Church, and contracts for building solicited in July 1840. The revised building was completed in April 1841, commemorated by Mr Skelton’s lithographic sketch (figure 3). Even though located in the poor law union of South Stoneham, the inmates were to come primarily from the New Forest workhouse, living rent-free, their accommodation paid for by the transference of their poor relief.

It was an immensely bold, even reckless, scheme. Smith borrowed the £2000 required (£320 for the land; £1300 for the main building; £250 for outbuildings, fencing and garden; £106 for advertising [sic]) at 4% before having any commitment of financial support. Finance was a major stumbling block. An initial public appeal raised just over £53, with only one contribution over £10, and this despite door-to-door collections by Smith himself. Desperate circumstances required desperate remedies. Perhaps the shopkeepers of Southampton could rise two hours earlier in the morning and close two hours earlier in the evening, donating the saving of gas and candle-light to the project? A major blow came when the Poor Law Commissioners refused to sanction the transference of poor relief between unions. Smith himself was forced to further expense by personally paying the costs of some of the inmates. What saved the project was the administrative nicety that Southampton, as a pre-existing union, was exempt from the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and thereby lay outside the control of the Commissioners. The rents of Southampton inhabitants could be paid directly to the almshouse. At a stroke, the Shirley homes lost their New Forest nexus, and were occupied by the aged from Southampton and the South Stoneham Union. The Shirley Asylum had, in its first incarnation, a life of about two years. All twelve of its rooms were occupied, largely with widows between the ages of 55 and 77. The financial uncertainties, the coldness of potential supporters and the sheer hard work, however, took its toll on Herbert
Figure 2. Design for almshouses and chapel at Longdown, in the parish of Eling. Lithograph by T H Skelton, 1840 Reproduced by permission of Hampshire Record Office (TOP108/2/1(L))
Figure 3. Shirley Asylum for the Deserving and Aged Poor. Lithograph by Thomas Skelton, 1841. Print in Winchester Local Studies Library: also accessible via www.hantspere.org.uk
Smith, and in mid-1842 he suffered a complete mental breakdown. A committee of twelve clergymen from Southampton and Millbrook took over the running of the Asylum, but without the energy of its founder it had closed by early 1843.

Given Smith’s mental instability, such a breakdown is understandable. His condition was worsened by the unremitting zeal with which he pursued, often simultaneously, a multitude of other causes. Twice, in June 1838 and December 1839, he travelled to London to bring court cases against the proprietors of the *Weekly Dispatch, John Bull* and *Observer* for selling their newspapers on the Sabbath, actions that the Society for the Better Observance of the Sabbath had declined to take. Acting as his own counsel, Smith lost both cases. He commonly attended temperance rallies and meetings, being one of those pelted with mud near the bottom of East Street during the Temperance Festival of July 1841. He established a coffee house for the poor in Southampton, supplying tea, coffee and soup. As a political economist who believed that the price of labour depends on demand and supply like any other marketable commodity, Smith supported emigration of ‘surplus’ labour to the colonies. He advocated County Emigration Societies. He founded the Labourers’ Friend Society in Southampton, taking rooms at 13 French Street for the reception of clothes, books and money to give to those about to emigrate. On one occasion, in April 1842, a dinner was given to 24 emigrants on the eve of their departure for Gravesend to set sail for New Zealand on the *Sir Charles Foster*. The men were supplied with tools for their trade and the women with linen and other necessities for the voyage. During the turbulent days of 1842, Smith attended meetings of both the Complete Suffrage Union and Chartists. In April, at the Long Rooms Chartist meeting to elect two delegates to the National Convention, he followed on the platform Ruffy Ridley (‘rough-and-ready’), who a few weeks later was to ride on horseback at the head of the procession to present the Chartist petition to Parliament. Smith declared himself to the cheering meeting in favour of THE CHARTER AND THE BIBLE.

Attendance at such meetings was probably less an expression of political radicalism than a way to give public utterance to his views on social matters. There was not a meeting he attended at which Smith did not court favour for his almshouses. If there were no such meetings, he engineered his own. He called a public meeting at the Long Rooms in April 1842 to expound on his asylums for the poor. In order to attract an audience larger than that he alone could command, he opened up the floor. There followed arguably the most bizarre public meeting Southampton has known. Apart from Smith himself, there was Samuel Bartlett, a Chartist lecturer, James Rigby, Deputy Governor of the Owenite community at Queenwood and the Reverend Dr Milton (‘inglorious Milton’), a mountebank of the first order: moustachioed ex-missionary, Original Baptist, Chief Rechabite, fraudulent proponent of the ‘New Sailor’s Home’ and agent for Morison’s Vegetable Universal Medicine, who was to re-emerge in Australia in 1854 holding gospel tea meetings (‘tea and salvation’). The extent to which Herbert had been unbalanced by the events of 1842 is suggested by his final letter to the Poor Law Commissioners on 6 April, praying for support for the Shirley Asylum: ‘I wish I could persuade you, as the Poor Law Commissioners, Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, and all the Members of both Houses of Parliament … to engage a special train by the Southampton Railroad, and come and see the Shirley Asylum for the Deserving Aged and Infirm Poor. Her Majesty and Prince Albert, with their known kind consideration for the Poor, might also be induced to condescend to accompany the Peers and Commons of the Realm. Why should not her Majesty and the Peers and Commons of the Realm come to Southampton to please the people, as it is well known they kindly go to Epsom and Ascot Races?…’

Smith continued to live quietly in the barracks at Marchwood until his appointment ended. Attempts were made to sell the former asylum
property in 1844 and early 1845 for continued use as a charitable institution, for conversion into a manufactory or brewery, for division into three houses or with the 24 rooms being let separately. It proved impossible to sell, and in January 1846 Smith moved his family into the property, renamed Norfolk House. Smith became a local benefactor in Shirley. He was appointed a vice-president of the Shirley Literary, Scientific and Book Society. In autumn 1846 he established an industrial school as an adjunct to the Shirley National School, training boys in the cultivation of the soil by spade. In the severe winter that followed, unemployed men were set to work producing firewood and making bricks, the £100 expended being found by Smith himself. In their zeal, however, earth was removed not only from Smith’s own land but also from the public highway. Thomas Brainsby, a local grocer, took a court case for restraint of trade against Smith for blocking up access to his shop. Punitive damages were awarded to the defendant, against which Herbert unsuccessfully appealed to the Home Secretary.

Denied a calling inside the organized church, Smith devoted his energies to reaching those in the community who themselves lay outside the formal structure of the Church of England. He argued for the restoration of the order of deacon to its original purpose of pastoral care and visiting, and in April 1847 proposed that Norfolk House be converted into a college for preparing candidates for the office. The burgeoning use of non-ordained scripture readers was denounced on the grounds that only ordained ministers had authority to preach scripture. Later that year he formed his own society for Southampton, the Church of England Town Mission, in direct opposition to the newly-formed Southampton Auxiliary to the Town Missionary and Scripture Readers’ Society, a joint venture by Anglicans and Dissenters. Smith’s mission had effectively a membership of one. This was followed in the 1850s by the English Free Church Mission for the Parish of Millbrook, to bring the Bible to the heathen of the district. The work was made more pressing in the mid-1850s by the creation of the new estate at Freemantle, consequent on the sale of the 142-acre Freemantle estate on the death of Sir George Hewett. The rapid and unregulated sale of lots through freehold land societies saw an influx of clerks, artisans and tradesmen, the population reaching an estimated 1200 by November 1855. The editor of the *Brighton Herald*, visiting Freemantle in 1855, spoke of a chaos of bricks and mortar.

The diocesan authorities acted speedily in response. By the end of 1855, Freemantle had been created an ecclesiastical district, arrangements made to buy a plot of land for a district church, a subscription launched and a pastor, the Reverend Abraham Sedgwick, appointed by the bishop. Herbert Smith had reacted even quicker. Before any diocesan appeal had been made, Smith began to erect a mission church, dedicated to St Stephen, the first deacon, to be a pattern for other home mission churches. Smith, calling himself ‘Clergyman of Freemantle’, was to perform divine service gratuitously. A ‘rectory’ was provided, in Amwell Bury on Freemantle Cliff, to which Smith moved his family in November 1855 as Norfolk House became too expensive to maintain (that same month he appeared before Southampton County Court for the non-payment of a bill of £1.17.6). The mission, however, ended in failure. In March 1857 Smith demolished what one critic had called his ‘proposed shed’: a ludicrous erection, consisting of a few wooden railings, posts and bricks, according to the unimpressed *Hampshire Independent*.

Smith’s attitude to the diocesan church at Freemantle was mixed. He was happy to lend his support, on the proviso that it was not financed by pew rents. He gave £5 to the subscription list. He praised the financial intervention of Miss Hewett, ‘a second Deborah [who] rose as a Mother in Israel’. He approved the original ‘beautiful’ architectural plans of William Hinves and Alfred Bedborough, although the Incorporated Church Building Society, who grant-aided the building, later rejected these. What Smith, however, could not stomach was the absorption of the new district into the Evangelical web. Sedgwick was seen as
yet another of Sumner’s Evangelical appointees, joining those at Wonston, Crawley, Alton, Buriton, Fawley and, within Southampton, St Mary and All Saints. In August 1857, Herbert made such a scene at the evening tea meeting following the opening by Archdeacon Wigram of the new schoolroom, which through the use of sliding doors between the boy’ and girls’ classes converted into a temporary church, that he had to be removed by the county police.

Domestic life in the Smith household disintegrated during the mid-1850s. The 1851 census shows an apparently model family at Norfolk House: Herbert, his wife Cassandra, daughter Margaret and unmarried brother-in-law, Captain John Chamberlayne RN. It is an illusion. The brothers-in-law were within two years at each other’s throats, literally and drawing blood. We only have Smith’s accounts (in letters he wrote, and published, to Chamberlayne’s solicitors, Coxwell and Bassett, in July 1858). He blamed their client, who, ‘having spent the chief part of his days in riotous living – in idleness, drunkenness and profligacy – is full of malice and envy against me, whose days have been very differently employed.’ The captain eventually moved out to Berkeley Lodge, in Anglesey Road, Shirley, initially to be with his son-in-law Charles Harcourt Smith, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy who had commanded the gunboat Insolent during the Crimean War, taking with him Herbert’s wife and daughter. A court order in July 1858 banned Herbert from trespass on Chamberlayne’s property, but one night in March 1859 he forced an entry into Berkeley Lodge through a small window. By mischance, Smith found himself in a locked china cabinet and, unable to make an exit, was discovered in the closet the next morning. At the subsequent trial, Smith defended himself with such violent irrationality that the magistrates ordered a medical examination into the state of his mind. John Chamberlayne died in February 1861, and the subsequent census reveals Cassandra a patient in a private lunatic asylum in Alton (Westbrook House). She died there thirteen years later. One consequence of the family breakdown was that Herbert moved to Winchester, there to live in a succession of humble lodgings in Sussex Street, Newburgh Street and Gladstone Terrace. It was a time of personal poverty. In September 1859 he approached Winchester City Bench for advice on the recovery of a quantity of shirting he had entrusted to Miss Fanny Mootham (characterized as a protégé of his) to make up. She had decamped without returning either the linen or the made-up clothes.

Formerly, Smith had lived in country parishes or on the urban fringe. He was now in the claustrophobic atmosphere of a garrison town and cathedral city. He identified with the underclass of Winchester, metamorphosing into the Poor Man’s Advocate, the Working Man’s Friend, the Labourers’ Friend, the Soldiers’ Friend, the Prisoners’ Friend, the Political Economist of Winchester and an advocate of an individualistic Christian Socialism. As soon as he arrived in the city, he took rooms at Mr Sayers in Upper High Street as campaign headquarters, which also served as the Sabbath Emancipation Office. He confronted the ‘social evils’ of the city, particularly the twin spectres of drunkenness and prostitution so prevalent in a garrison town with troop numbers swelled by the Russian War. He urged the local clergy to visit the lower parts of the city, the courts and alleys, where they would find many as ignorant and degraded as any heathen or savage. He proposed that coal stores in Newburgh Street, close to his lodgings, be converted into a church so that Christians of every denomination may unite in the practical piety of the Book of Common Prayer. He campaigned for the rights of the wives, widows, children and orphans of soldiers, supporting the planned new married quarters in the barracks. As an interim measure, he had suggested that property in Upper High Street be purchased to create immediate family accommodation. He organized and paid for lavish peace celebrations for the benefit of military families. He campaigned on behalf of prostitutes, whom he saw equally as victims of life in a garrison town. He attended meetings called by Josephine Butler for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act, which was held to formalize prostitution. He supported the
Winchester Refuge for Fallen Women in Minster Street, an outlier of the County Female Penitentiary in Southampton of which he had been a committee member since 1835. He campaigned for better food for the poor, supporting the Winchester Society of Vegetarians (he styled himself ‘a disciple of Soyer’) and improvements to the market. He campaigned for the better education of the children of the poor, advocating a Children’s Friend Society and an industrial school in North Walls.

Residence in Winchester not only brought Smith into the turmoil of city life. It also opened up the hinterland of central Hampshire to his ministrations. John Wesley may have travelled on horseback to follow his calling. Herbert Smith walked. We have seen how East Stratton and the parishes of those he held responsible for his unjust treatment now lay within a day’s walk. So also was a new audience for his pamphlets, which even in the 1850s were counted in thousands. Morgan Featherstone, a pedestrian himself, recorded a meeting with Smith (described in ‘A march through Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire’, published in the Northern Times, 28 June 1856). ‘A few miles from Winchester, an old gentleman with an ecclesiastical cravat, his hands filled with pamphlets, came up, and offering his tracts, addressed us. After looking at him a moment or two, I recognised the speaker as a philanthropic, but eccentric, Protestant Clergyman [who] now traverses every town and village for miles round Winchester, distributing tracts on Political Economy and Church Reform.’ They walked in company the eighteen miles to the Hospital of St Cross. To reach a more widespread audience, Smith established a weekly penny paper in 1860, the Hants Examiner (the British Library holds a run between 12 May and 3 November). Its remit was the entertainment, instruction and benefit of the thousands of the working classes of Hampshire. Its chief sale was expected to be at local markets, or through local agents. Smith may have resided in Winchester, but he lived a peripatetic life. He was in Southampton as much as he was in the county town. As we have seen, his work at Freemantle continued after he ceased to be resident in the district. As late as April 1858, he argued that the Elmfield estate, to be sold on the death of Miss Hewett, should be purchased by the diocese to create a new church for the inhabitants of Hill and Four Posts, with the relocation of the Female Penitentiary and the Refuge for Fallen Women from their cramped town quarters to this new site.

It was hard for Smith to find weaknesses in the Evangelical monopoly in Winchester, although this was not through want of trying. In the dying months of Sumner’s episcopacy he was excluded from the cathedral and summoned before the city magistrates for leaving anti-Evangelical cards on seats there. Southampton, however, was freer, more liberal, and his most notorious and public denunciations against the Evangelicals were made in that town. Let one example out of many suffice. The Southampton Auxiliary of the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics (the parent society was the child of the Reverend Alexander Dallas) met in the Victoria Rooms in February 1859. In the midst of the proceedings, Herbert Smith stood up and demanded to be heard. The Chairman (Archdeacon Wigram) refused. An altercation followed:

Mr Smith: Then it is most unfair. You, Mr Archdeacon, are as much a pope as the Pope of Rome (hisses, ‘turn him out’, and confusion). The Chairman asked Mr Smith to desist and restore order, or they must send for a policeman to turn him out.
Mr Smith: Send for the police, then, and turn me out. It’s the two factions. As it has been previously said, it is a fight for the popedom between Mr Archdeacon and the Rev Herbert Smith (laughter). You, Mr Archdeacon, and all your party, are trying to ruin the Church of England, and I, as a clergyman of the Church of England, protest against the unfair manner of conducting these controversial meetings (‘cracked’ and laughter). Several attempts were made to induce Mr Smith to withdraw, but he persisted in his interruptions for a considerable time, ultimately retiring, to the apparent gratification of every one.
Joseph Wigram was no menial opponent. He was a son-in-law of Peter Arkwright of Willersley, Derbyshire (third generation of the Arkwright dynasty of Masson Mills) and a future bishop of Rochester.

Smith was increasingly a pariah within Southampton. Yet there was one issue that did much to redeem him to contemporaries. The campaign to reform the pre-Reformation almshouses of God’s House Hospital benefited greatly from Smith’s adept use of ‘the furnace of newspaper discussion’, his pamphlets and his direct intervention with the Fellows of Queen’s College, Oxford (the landowners) and the Government Inspector of Charities, all at a personal expenditure of over £200. A successful conclusion in 1860 saw the rebuilding of the hospital and increases in the allowances to the eight aged inmates. And this without the need to go to law, in contrast to the ruinous legal disputes which accompanied the reform of the Hospital of St Cross and St John’s Hospital in Winchester. An illustration of the almshouses by T G Hart was displayed at the 1897 ‘Ancient Southampton’ exhibition. The caption reads: ‘Alms Houses of God’s House, taken down 1860 and now rebuilt, and the funds to the inmates increased. Great interest was taken in this matter by the Rev Herbert Smith, who has lost his gown – for why I know not, though he is a singular person.’ Smith, incidentally, was never defrocked, but it is interesting that at least some thought he was. Smith continued to fight for the hospital long after the first battle had been won, arguing, partly successfully, for the constant residence of a clergyman in the hospital and the performance of divine service in the English language (it also served as a Huguenot chapel) twice every Sunday in its chapel.

The God’s House campaign melded in well with the resurrection of the Shirley Homes for the Aged. As we have seen, the original project foundered in early 1843. Shortly after the Smith ménage left Norfolk House, the almshouses were reopened, giving rent-free accommodation to 24 poor, respectable and aged women. As initially propounded, in January 1856, the management was to be placed under a committee of twelve parochial clergymen and twelve laymen. As so often before, the actual management and subvention of the scheme fell solely on Herbert Smith, at a cost he could ill afford of £80 per annum. Towards the end of his life, Smith wrote regretfully of the failure of any minister of any denomination, with the exception of Basil Wilberforce, rector of St Mary’s, ever to visit the homes.

Herbert Smith left Winchester in 1873 to become a lodger at 5 Upper Portland Terrace, Southampton. His landlord was Alfred George Dane, a foreman at the High Street outfitters shop of James Cocks. Herbert did not mature with age. He was if anything even more confrontational, opinionated and hyperactive than he had been in earlier life. He continued to rise at 5am, sometimes earlier. He remained active, organizing an open meeting at the Victoria Rooms to consider all aspects of church reform within a few weeks of his death. The forthrightness with which Smith confronted those with whom he disagreed, even at the most emotionally-charged public meetings, never faltered. He disputed toe-to-toe with the republican Charles Bradlaugh on the merits of kingship, proclaiming George III as one of the best kings that ever existed. He stood up at a packed meeting called to petition for the abolition of income tax to propose an amendment (not seconded) for its continuance. He told a volatile meeting of striking shipwrights that it was their duty to uphold to the utmost the landed gentry, the capitalist and the employers of labour (cries of ‘sit down’). In old age Smith found a new conduit to express his views. The proprietors (Rayners, husband and later widow) of the Southampton Observer threw open their weekly correspondence column to Smith, allowing him to publish unfettered what he called his weekly sermons. He inveighed against the Godless people of Southampton with a vocabulary of impressive richness: fools, hypocrites, self-righteous, ignorant, irreligious, proud, pompous, ‘little men and women engrossed in money and dissipation’, untoward, disrespectful, tyrannical, oppressive, unjust, adulterous, licentious,
profligate, ‘corrupt, corrupt, corrupt’, Southampton itself an abomination of abominations. Truly he was ‘that well-known agitator and tormentor.’

Don Quixote perhaps, but Smith did not just fight old battles. New enemies were eagerly confronted. The appointment to the see of Winchester in late 1869 of Samuel Wilberforce signalled the rise of High Church, or Ritualistic, principles within the diocese. The complexion of Southampton’s clergy underwent a sea-change within five years as at every new appointment High Church priests replaced Evangelical pastors. By 1875, Smith believed the Reverend John Bullen of St Matthew’s to be the only Evangelical minister remaining in Southampton. Smith, the former anti-Evangelical, reinvented himself as ‘The Son of Thunder’ (a reference to the apostles James and John), before whom the new schismatics must shudder and tremble. The Times, 9 July 1872, reported a confrontation with the extreme Anglo-Catholic Francis Maundy Gregory, vicar of St Michael’s, at the reopening of the church after alteration. ‘The Rev Herbert Smith … had taken his seat in the centre aisle, and on the entrance of the vicar he rose and said he felt it to be his bounden duty to expose him. ‘What’, said Mr Smith, ‘is to be done with you who set at defiance the authority of the bishop and churchwardens? People ought to leave the church.’ The vicar endeavoured to remove Mr Smith, but he, notwithstanding a great disparity of age between the two, resisted stoutly, and a policeman was sent for and came. ‘You’, said the rev gentleman, ‘represent the Queen, and I will accompany you directly’, and he then left the church’.

For most of his life, Smith had remained neutral in party politics. In the early 1870s, he entered into the political arena, taking a position which drew both from the reforming tendencies of modern, Peelite Conservatism and old Toryism, allied to the financial probity of political economy. The Clerical Disabilities Act of 1870 gave clergymen the notional right to stand for Parliament. Smith sought to exercise that right during the dog days of Gladstone’s first administration when rumours of the dissolution of parliament were rife. He announced himself as the clerical candidate for the borough, urging electors to divide their votes between himself and Sir Frederick Perkins, the Liberal candidate (‘Perkins and Smith for ever!!!’). He refused to canvass, believing the Ballot Act made that irrelevant. When a snap election was called, in January 1874, Smith retreated and did not stand. Nevertheless, he continued to be found on Conservative platforms, and endorsed the Southampton Working Men’s Conservative Association on its formation.

Smith may have withdrawn from the Parliamentary election, but within two months he did face the Southampton electorate, standing at the first triennial re-election of the School Board. Created under the Education Act of 1870, the Board was an elected body enforcing school attendance and levying local school rates. To many clergymen, as to Smith, it was anathema: state interference in the family, bureaucratic, expensive, denying the church its traditional role. He did all in his power to denounce the Board and to support those parents taken to court for non-compliance. At the election, Smith stood as one of three independent candidates against a phalanx of six churchmen and six dissenters. He came bottom of the poll, with 194 votes from the 2791 burgesses who voted.

This apparent succession of misery and failure does not fully describe Smith’s final years, for he took comfort in what, given his earlier life, seems a strange refuge. He became the first clergyman in Southampton to become a member of the Ancient Order of Foresters, joining in January 1873 Court Concord (with which Perkins was also associated). Management of the Order rotated annually, and for 1874/75 it was vested in Southampton. Smith was appointed the first High Chaplain. At the Foresters’ Grand Festival in August 1875, dressed in the black gown with white bands of office, he sat in an open carriage pulled by a pair of fine grey horses as part of the mile-long procession through the town: had not the coachman been later than ordered he would
have been in the leading coach! Part of his duties was to attend Foresters’ meetings – banquets with much carousing and drinking of toasts – in company with the High Chief Ranger. The convivial nature of Forestry aside, the appeal to Smith was as a mutual self-help society, providing for old age and supporting widows and orphans. It was the same impulse that had led him in the 1850s actively to support the provision of Penny Banks in Southampton and Winchester and the establishment of the Florenic Benevolent Society in Winchester, encouraging tradesmen to put aside a florin a month.

Herbert Smith died on 2 June 1876 in his lodgings in Upper Portland Terrace. He was buried in Southampton cemetery beside his wife and brother-in-law, more harmoniously we trust than in life. Just two mourners, Henry Palk, his doctor, and Charles Binstead of Portsmouth, his solicitor, followed the coffin. Mr Atkins of the Hampshire Bank, an old friend, joined them at the grave along with several poor widows, not as the *Southampton Observer* initially reported from the Shirley Homes but from Basil Wilberforce’s Home for Widows in the town. There is a deep poignancy here. Smith was virtually penniless at his death having been saved from the sobriquet of ‘clerical bankrupt’ two years earlier by advertising for a 6-month loan of £100 at the exorbitant interest of 10%. At probate he left his daughter, Margaret Ann, then living in Highgate Road, Middlesex, less than £100 in effects. Although cash poor Smith still held the freehold of the Shirley Almshouses, which also passed to his daughter. These were sold to become, after the addition of two new wings, the Barlow and Ellyett Homes, which flourish today.

Few men can have revealed less of their personal and private life than Herbert Smith. His is a life without footnotes. In his early life we see him through the eyes of a hostile press. To the *Hampshire Independent*, 14 December 1839, he was ‘this reverend and ascetic gentleman’, the Intruder-General into other people’s affairs, an obstreperous parson, showing cold, heartless and unholy indifference. ‘He carries no personal weight in this part of the country, for though we believe him to be one whose character is untainted, he is known to have a crookedness of mind that unfit him for any useful purpose. A more crotchety being never existed. He is made up of whims, fancies, and religion. Dissatisfied and discontented himself, he must be poking in other people’s affairs …’ This is very different to the image of the septuagenarian Smith that comes through the pages of the *Southampton Observer*. Thirty five years later he is carousing with the Foresters, attending social clubs, giving renditions to all who would listen of his ‘old and favourite song’ ‘Cock-a-doodle-doo’, saying grace at dinners of the Licensed Victuallers’ Friendly Society (a temperance man to the end, but never a teetotaller) and pestered by eager children for copies of the pamphlets, poems and songs from the leather case he always carried around. In Smith’s own words, a peculiar ministry. But perhaps we should not be surprised at this bipolarity, for it is this vacillation between extremes that is the strongest trait of this deeply driven man.
Christine Clearkin

A remnant of Georgian whimsy amidst Southampton’s suburbia

Hemmed in by modern buildings, 324 Portswood Road stands as an architectural oddity, a stuccoed castle in the style of Strawberry Hill gothic. It is the last remnant of a property built by Lt General Giles Stibbert in the late 1770s at the height of Southampton’s popularity as a spa town. Castle Lodge, as it is now known, guarded the northern entrance to the grounds of Portswood House. Now itself protected by Grade II listing, the building is described as a:

Fortress’ lodge on square plan with corner towers. Two storeys stuccoed. Front to road with blocked central pointed door. Upper floor with quatrefoil window, upper floor of towers with small pointed windows, the right-hand one replaced by a sash. The corner towers which project slightly have a band which is continued across the centre. Battlemented parapet to centre. Sham top floor to towers with small round window and battlements. Chimney stack rises above pediment on front wall. South front similar, but with central pointed door with hood mould. Ground floor of towers with pointed window each. Upper floor of towers with quatrefoil windows. Central window with three pointed lights.

The land on which Portswood House once stood extended from the River Itchen to what is now Portswood Road, and from Bevois Mount in the south to Castle Lodge in the north. The land had originally belonged to St Denys Priory and was sold off at the dissolution of the monasteries, passing through various hands until it was bought, together with the title Lord of the

1 http://www.southampton.gov.uk/Images/Listed%20Buildings%20Descriptions_tcm46-161809.pdf page 90 of 129, Portswood Road, 324

Manor of Portswood, by Lt General Stibbert. Stibbert, a career officer in the Army, was ultimately appointed Commander-in-Chief, Bengal, by the East India Company, first in 1777-79, and again in 1783-85. Perhaps it was on the strength of his enhanced status and salary that he decided to buy the Manor of Portswood in 1778 and build himself a seat near to the fashionable spa and bathing resort of

3 ‘Commander-in-Chief, India’, Wikipedia. Commanders in Chief given in temporal order, with Lt Gen Giles Stibbert featuring at 17 (officiating) from 16 October 1777 and again at 19 (reappointed) from 27 April 1783.
Southampton with its favourable climate. Other retired East India men, who had made considerable fortunes, also built themselves properties on elevated sites around Southampton at that time. The architect engaged by Stibbert to build Portswood House was a certain Mr Crunden, possibly the same John Crunden who made his name in the large-scale development of the West End of London around Oxford Street. Portswood House itself stood roughly on the site of the present day Spring Crescent and Lawn Road. The area further down the slope, now reclaimed land and occupied by the Dukes Road and Empress Road industrial estate, was river bed in the late eighteenth century.

Stibbert’s name appears briefly in the annals of history with the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first Governor General of India, the East India Company’s most senior representative in that country, on the grounds of cruelty and corruption. Edmund Burke, MP, in his speech for the prosecution in 1788, said: That the disobedience and breach of trust of which the said Warren Hastings was guilty in this transaction is highly aggravated by the following circumstances connected with it. That from the death of Sir John Clavering to the arrival of Sir Eyre Coote in Bengal the provisional command of the army had devolved to and been vested in Brigadier General Giles Stibbert, the eldest officer on that establishment. That in this capacity, and, as the said Warren Hastings has declared, ‘standing no way distinguished from the other officers in the army, but by his accidental succession to the first place on the list’, he, the said Giles Stibbert, had, by the recommendation and procurement of the said Warren Hastings, received and enjoyed a salary and other allowances, to the amount of £13,854 12s per annum. That Sir Eyre Coote, soon after his arrival, represented to the board [of the East India Company] that a considerable part of those allowances, amounting to £8,220 10s per annum, ought to devolve to himself, as commander-in-chief of the Company’s forces in India, and, stating that the said Giles Stibbert could no longer be considered as commander-in-chief under the Presidency of Fort William, made a formal demand of the same. That the said Warren Hastings, instead of reducing the allowances of the said Giles Stibbert to the establishment at which they stood during General Clavering’s command, and for the continuance of which after Sir Eyre Coote’s arrival there could be no pretence, continued the allowances of £13,854 12s per annum to the said Giles Stibbert ….

---

4 Patterson, A Temple, *History of Southampton, 1700-1914. An Oligarchy in Decline, 1700-1835*, Vol 1, Southampton University Press, 1975, p 44. ‘Among the newcomers were a number of retired naval and military officers, who established themselves in town houses, especially those newly built Above Bar, or in the case of a few of the wealthier such as Mordaunt or Stibbert, in the immediate neighbourhood of the town. These tended to associate together and to look down upon the merchants and tradesmen among the previous inhabitants, so that there came into existence what was resentfully called a “gentleman’s party”, taking as yet no part in municipal government and indeed rather contemnptive of it, but asserting its control over the fashionable social life of the place.’


6 *Occasional Notes by Townsman* (E A Mitchell) features appeared regularly in the *Echo* newspaper during the 1930s, published as a book in 1938. ‘Story of two

---


No sooner was Portswood House built than duties in India necessitated Stibbert’s return. Baker’s Southampton Guide of 1781 records:

At the back of Bevois Mount is a most elegant house built by Colonel [sic] Stibbert, now rented and occupied by Sir Thomas Rumbold. Everything is entirely new and highly finished, in the most refined taste. The shrubberies through which serpentine walks lead you all around a beautiful lawn are perhaps superior in variety, in choice, and fine growth, to any in the county. At the bottom of the river Itching [sic] forms a kind of bay, skirted on almost all sides with verdant fields, and hanging woods, in which river are kept many yachts, and pleasing boats: you also have a view of the dock at Chapel and Northam, where men of war are built: it is upon the whole a delightful place.9

Skelton’s Southampton Guide 1802 refers again to the property:

About two miles from Southampton on the Portsmouth road, a superb and elegant building was erected by general Stibbert in 1776, now enlarged and much improved. The general has a good collection of paintings by the old as well as modern masters. As the house stands on an eminence, it is one of the most healthy and agreeable situations we know, and commands the most excellent prospects the imagination can conceive …. There are excellent gardens and the most extensive shrubberies in England, well stocked with the greatest variety of exotics.10

More is learned about the grounds of Portswood House through a ‘Draft of Deputation for killing Game on the Manor of Portswood’, dated 29 August 1787 and witnessed by Jonathan Wilkinson of Portswood, Yeoman, now in the possession of Southampton City Archives.11

Know all men by these present that I Giles Stibbert of within the Liberties of the Town and Co of Southton Esq. Lord of the Manor of Portswood in the Parish of South Stoneham with the Liberties of the Town and Co aforesaid do hereby nominate authorize and appoint Daniel Taylor of the Town and Co of Southton aforesaid Bricklayer to be my Gamekeeper of and within my Manor of Portswood aforesaid with full power licence and Authority to kill any Hare Pheasant Partridge or any other Game whatsoever in and upon my aforesaid Manor for my sole and immediate Benefit and also to take and seize all such Gunn Bars Greyhounds selling Dogs Lurcher or other Dogs to kill Hares or Conies Ferrets & Trammells Lowbells Hayes or other nets Hare pipes snares or other Engines for the taking and killing of Conies Hares Pheasants Partridges or other Game or within the Precints of my aforesaid Manor of Portswood shall be used by any person or Persons whomsoever who by law are prohibited to have the same.

Sir Thomas Rumbold (1742-1811), mentioned in Baker’s Guide of 1781, became his first recorded tenant.12 Rumbold himself finds a niche in history in as much that he too had held high office in the service of the East India Company from 1778-80 as Governor of Madras. 13 The National Portrait Gallery has a satirical portrait of him by James Gillray, dated January 1783, entitled ‘The nabob rumbled or a Lord Advocates amusement’. 14 A Parliamentary prosecution was brought against Rumbold in

9 Baker’s Southampton Guide, 1781, pp 30-31
10 Skelton’s Southampton Guide, 1802, p 49
11 Southampton City Archives, Record Number D/PM Box1/46/4
12 Baker’s Southampton Guide, 1781, p 30
14 National Portrait Gallery – www.npg.org.uk, Record Number NPG D12317. The full title of the work is ‘The nabob rumbled or a Lord Advocates amusement’ (Captain Rumbold; Sir Thomas Rumbold; Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville)
1783 because it was widely reported that he had made £750,000 in his two years as Governor of Madras, and furthermore soon after he resigned from office the province dissolved into a war thought to have been provoked by his policies. The prosecution, however, failed due to legal technicalities.\textsuperscript{15}

It would seem that General Stibbert cannot long have enjoyed his new property at Portswood House, for he subsequently drew up two 99 year leases. The first was to Henry Caiger, Tanner of the Parish of South Stoneham, with a rent of £1 5s per annum and dated 1 May 1789.\textsuperscript{16} The second was to Richard Waller Esq of Bevis Hill at an annual rent of £6 16s 6d and dated 9 December 1796.\textsuperscript{17} This second lease, in contrast to the first, included a clause stating that all the timber from the estate remained the property of General Stibbert. France had, of course, declared war on Britain in 1793\textsuperscript{18} and with this in mind Stibbert must have recognised the value of the timber on his land for use in building warships.

In 1809 Stibbert died\textsuperscript{19} and the estate passed to his son, Colonel Thomas Stibbert.\textsuperscript{20} The property was briefly let to a Mr Tompkins before it was sold to W S Wakeford, who in turn sold it to William Baring in 1813. In 1834 George Jones, a builder and developer, bought the estate and began parcelling up the land for building plots.\textsuperscript{21} The coup de grace came in 1839 when the railway line was built through the grounds, and by 1851 the property was in the care of only a gardener, his wife and a 13 year old girl servant.\textsuperscript{22} Portswood House was demolished in 1852.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Lease for 99 years by Giles Stibbert esq of Portswood House, Lord of the manor of Portswood to Richard Waller esq of Bevis Hill (Hampshire Record Office, N° 47M48/42)}
\end{center}

There is a postscript to this story. Thomas Stibbert (1770-1846), who like his father was a career officer in the Army, rose to the rank of Colonel in the Coldstream Guards. While living in Malta he married Maria Rachele Candia Cafaggi, a native of Florence.\textsuperscript{24} Thomas lies buried in the English cemetery at Florence, together with his elder daughter, Hermione.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{itemize}
\item 15 Dictionary of National Biography – www.oxforddnb.com. Entry for Sir Thomas Rumbold, pp 5 and 6 of 7. ‘Parliamentary prosecution had failed to be successful against Clive a decade earlier, failed against Sir Thomas Rumbold in 1783, and would eventually also fail in the case of Warren Hastings’s impeachment a decade later. Many reasons can be assigned for this failure, of which the difficulty of producing evidence, as was the case with the parliamentary proceedings against Clive and Hastings, was that the publicity they generated raised a public and political consciousness about the need for reforms in India.’
\item 16 Hampshire County Record Office, Record Number 47M48/42
\item 17 Hampshire County Record Office, Record Number 5M54/93
\item 18 David Thomson, \textit{Europe Since Napoleon}, Pelican, 1957, Paperback reprint 1973, p 37
\item 19 Jessica Vale and Adrian Rance, \textit{op cit}. His will resides in the Public Records Office, prob 1/1493
\item 20 ‘Frederick Stibbert and his Armoury’, www.p ric e.L utoko.ac.jp/arc/stibbert/content/m arco_e.html. This online article by Simona Di Marco of the Stibbert Museum describes the three generations of the family from General Giles Stibbert, his son Colonel Thomas Stibbert to his son Frederick Stibbert, the bachelor heir of the family fortune.
\item 21 Jessica Vale and Adrian Rance, \textit{op cit}.
\item 22 AGK Leonard, \textit{Stories of Southampton Streets}, Paul Cave Publications, 1984, p 42
\item 23 Jessica Vale and Adrian Rance, \textit{op cit}.
\item 24 www.lineone.net/-aldosliema/rs.htm, p 39 of 46, ‘Thomas Stibbert, 21+, bachelor, resident in Malta, late of the Coldstream Guards, married 15th October 1842 to Maria Rachele Candia Cafaggi, 21+, spinster, from Florence, Italy’. There is a problem with the year of marriage as in much that Stibbert’s eldest son, Frederick, was born in 1838, and Stibbert himself is styled bachelor.
\item 25 The Protestant Cemetery of Florence: called the English Cemetery, www.Florin.ms/cemetery4.html, pages 25 and
\end{itemize}
His son, Frederick (1838-1906), was heir to both his estate and that of his uncle, making him a very wealthy man indeed. He never married but devoted himself to collecting antiquities, and on his death he bequeathed to Florence what was then, and still remains, the world’s largest museum of antique armour. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Villa Stibbert was even on the itinerary of Grand Tourists on account of its extraordinary collection.

Finally, to return to Castle Lodge, it is once again a private dwelling, but during its lifetime it has seen service as a blacksmith’s forge, a car sales business, an interiors and storage business, and offices. In the late 1980s the building structure was said to have been in danger of collapse and the City Council, with the support of Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, successfully applied for Grade II listing and then threatened to buy the property compulsorily in order to ensure its future. The owner, a car salesman, refused to sell but agreed to carry out the repairs in return for permission to rent out the building. Ironically, the City Council itself had once mooted the destruction of the building at the time that the route of the ‘Portswood Link’ road (now Thomas Lewis Way) was under consideration. Thus, a whimsical architectural oddity on the side of a busy suburban road and hemmed in by modern buildings, has somehow survived nearly 230 years. It is the unexpected witness to both an early phase of the expanding British Empire, and to the decline of Southampton as a spa resort before the advent of the railway brought about the development of the town as a major port.

My thanks go to the staff at Cobbett Road Library, the Local Studies Collection at the Central Library, the Museums Collections Centre and the Hampshire Record Office for their assistance in researching and illustrating this article.

---


Following the entries for Hermione and Thomas Stibbert detailed above, there is a short biographical paragraph about Thomas and Frederick Stibbert: ‘A colonel in the British army, he [Thomas] was staying in Florence when his son Frederick (1838-1906), who would make Florence his second home, was born. At Villa Davanzati, in Montughi, Frederick was to invest his learning and his wealth to bring to life the largest museum of antique arms in the world, and then to donate it to the city.’ ‘Frederick Stibbert and his Armoury’, www.picure.Lu- tokyo.ac.jp/arc/stibbert/content/marco_e.html gives biographical details Frederick’s life.


Select Bibliography

A Traveller’s Companion to Florence, Introduced by Harold Acton and Edited by Edward Chaney, Constable & Robinson Ltd, 1986, 2002

Baker’s Southampton Guide, 1781


Leonard. AGK, Stories of Southampton Streets, Paul Cave Publications, 1984

Occasional Notes by Townsman (E A Mitchell), 1938.

Patterson, A Temple, History of Southampton, 1700-1914, An Oligarchy in Decline, 1700-1835, Vol 1, Southampton University Press, 1975

Skelton’s Southampton Guide, 1802


Archival records

‘Draft of Deputation for killing Game on the Manor of Portswood’, dated 29 August 1787,

Southampton City Archives, Record Number D/PM Box1/46/4

‘Lease for 3 lives or 99 years of messuage, garden and orchard at Portswood’, Hampshire County Record Office, Record Number 47M48/42

‘Lease for 99 years by Giles Stibbert esq of Portswood House, Lord of the manor of Portswood to Richard Waller esq of Bevis Hill of a messuage and dwelling house within the manor of Portswood, Hampshire County Record Office, Record Number 5M54/93

Last Will and Testament of Lt General Giles Stibbert, Public Record Office, Record Number prob 11/1493

Newspapers

Southern Evening Echo

On-line resources


www.southampton.gov.uk/leisure/local-history-and-heritage/heritage-conservation
Delmar Bicker-Caarten, Champion of ‘Outcast’ Southampton

In the closing years of the nineteenth century, a now long forgotten tub thumper took up the cause of the poorest of the poor and, in the columns of *The Southampton Times*, lambasted the civic fathers for their lack of concern at the conditions ‘downtown’, particularly in the Simnel Street area.

On November 8, 1890, the paper published a letter from this man, local radical Delmar Bicker-Caarten, under the title ‘The Exceeding Bitter Cry of Outcast Southampton’, in which he described just how bad things were in the, ‘small, close, dirty and evil-smelling streets with their tumbledown houses, closely packed with human beings, with no provision for decency or cleanliness, dismal, wretched, squalid and hideous beyond words to express’. He is appalled by the tribes of children, ‘hungry, dirty, barefooted and wild, utterly neglected, growing up to swell the ranks of crime and pauperism’.

Bicker-Caarten, it’s interesting to note, was a commercial traveller by profession and obviously as adept at putting across a cause as he probably was at promoting a product. What was the point, he asked the council, of spending money on waterworks and sewage works, if fever dens, ‘abodes of misery and darkness’, were left to spread diseases through the town?’
On May 17, 1893, he answered his critics in a Fabian lecture called ‘Objections to Socialism, with a light sketch of a probable socialistic development’. According to a note in the published lecture, it was delivered one morning ‘in the Avenue’.

Bicker-Caarten, who would only be satisfied by the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, called for due reward for labour, equality of opportunity, and other then unachieved goals. The lecture, he claimed, showed how Socialism could be brought about in a reasonable and gradual manner without injustice to any class and without disturbance of present relationships. He had no time for bloody revolution.

Another critic who took up the Bicker-Caarten cause in the local press was a Liberal councillor, Edward Gayton. He too was appalled by the, ‘filthy pestilential slums’, where whole families lived in one room, the occupants eking out a precarious living as hawkers, rag-pickers, flower-sellers and the like. As many as 70 or 80 people shared one lavatory and one water tap.

The editorial staff of The Southampton Times, spurred by the revelations of Bicker-Caarten and Gayton, ran a series of articles on ‘Southampton Slums and their Inhabitants’. With reform in the air things slowly began to change and by the turn of the century a brighter picture of life in the ‘abyss’ was forming. St. Michael’s municipal lodging house (since pulled down) was opened in 1899 and new housing built by 1903.

What a contrast between the area today, with its neat and tasteful houses, and the medievalist wooden hovels of the nineties (Simnel Street was only five feet eight inches wide at its narrowest point). Needless to say, people were warned about going down to this brutal neighbourhood at night, particularly Saturday night when there was a great deal of violence.

In 1895 there was an inquiry into an application under the Housing of the Working Classes Act to clear away the offensive dwellings. A new dawn was breaking and doubtless Delmar Bicker-Caarten watched it with pride.

He obviously made his mark on Southampton. In 1894 the Southern Referee included a poem about the forthcoming battle between the Saints and their Freemantle rivals, the Magpies,

To the speeches of Bicker-Caarten
No more any interest clings
The bookies no longer offer
To lay on the sport of kings
But all on this semi-final
Are willing to plank their tin
For who can answer the question
Will Saints or Magpies win?

Bicker-Caarten lived for a time with his family at 4 Upper Chamberlayne Place, Cranbury Avenue. The house is still there, divided into flats. He later moved to 2 Forest View and is listed in Kelly’s directory as late as 1916/17. He died in 1928 in Amersham, aged 74.
Mary South

John Monckton (1715 – 1799) Southampton Surgeon

The youngest of five surviving children, John Monckton was born in 1715 at Liskeard in Cornwall, where his father Charles served both as Rector for the Parish and Headmaster of the Grammar School. Originating from Brenchley in Kent, the family came from a long tradition of clergymen and both John’s brothers (Charles and Jonathan) went into the Church as well.

Within months of John’s birth the family left Cornwall and travelled to Alverstoke, in Hampshire. This seems to be a strange move for Charles Snr to make, leaving a double income and moving such a distance to take up what was described in the Bishop’s Visitation ten years later as a ‘very poor living of £35 per annum’. Whatever the reasons, the two Charles’, father and son, ministered to the two parishes of Alverstoke and Gosport, as well as preaching at the private churches of Southwick and Boarhunt.

It was here at Gosport that Grace, the eldest child, married Henry O’Neill and then moved to Romsey; Jonathan (the fourth child) went to university and then to his first parish; Charles Jr took up his own living at Easton (near Winchester) taking sister Rebecca with him, as housekeeper, and John became apprenticed to an army surgeon / apothecary in Gosport. Throughout their lives the siblings remained in contact, through visits and letters to one another and by practical support when it was needed. Thus we find John accepting Grace’s son, Henry, as an apprentice and relying on him to supply medicine for many years to come. Similarly, when Jonathan’s son (another Jonathan) had problems finishing his apprenticeship with a surgeon / apothecary in Kent he came to John, in Southampton, to complete his training.

With this strong sense of family continuity (his parents enjoyed a long married life together) it must have come as a shock to John when his young wife of seven months died in 1740, just one month after his father.

He had finished his seven year apprenticeship in 1738 and received his Bishop’s License to practise in the same year, continuing to work in the Gosport area apparently with the army and eventually with the large numbers of French prisoners of war, held at Portchester Castle. Eventually 800 of these were transferred to Southampton and crammed into the woolhouse. It seems possible that John came to Southampton with these prisoners in 1740 and took over the lease of the woolhouse, after the death of the previous lessee, John Ayres.

Ayres had been ordered to make a compound for the prisoners to enjoy some fresh air, but had never complied with the order. Now, John did just that and had an exercise area fenced off for the prisoners, around the woolhouse. They were suffering from typhus and dysentery. The Corporation acted swiftly when the prisoners went on view, demanding they be removed from the town or, at the very least, be locked up, out of sight again. Perhaps it was as a reaction to this treatment of the prisoners, but as soon as he had lived in the town for the obligatory seven years in 1748, John became a Junior Bailiff - possibly hoping to change things from the inside of local government.

Whatever his motives, he always seemed to be working for the ‘underdogs’ of the town, giving them the benefit of the doubt and using the system to their advantage. When his servants stole from his spirit store, it was the local people who told him what was happening; he paid for a woman’s husband to be released from the debtor’s prison; he used the poor law system by sending sick seamen home so their mothers or wives could claim an allowance for nursing their son / husband; he tested the literacy and numeracy of the poor house children before they started apprenticeships; he gave a woman
inmate a position as a servant in his house and fought for her unpaid salary from her previous employer. The impression is of a man trusted and accessible to the local people - a genuine public servant.

Nonetheless, he also knew that status was important and used the Monckton coat of arms on his stationery. This may well have been useful in his dealings with Dr Speed, Henry Hartley, Sir Yelverton Peyton, Rev Richard Mant and others from the Corporation. Dr Speed was a close neighbour and in 1751 John took over the lease of Speed’s ‘Great Mansion’ behind Holy Rood church. The site gave him the opportunity to have his own surgery and shop, library, gardens, and several tenements, as well as the old Holy Rood rectory to rent out.

It would have been in this surgery that he carried out the dissection on John Collins in 1768. Collins was sentenced to be hanged for murdering his wife, but the sentence also included dissection. The belief being that total destruction of the body ensured the soul would go to hell, thus increasing the severity of the death sentence. Later, in 1784/5 during his second term of office as Mayor, he became associated with two notorious happenings in the town’s legal history.

Returning home in late October 1784, in a single horse chaise with one of his three daughters, they were held up by a highwayman near the Cowherds. They had their watches and money stolen - John’s description of the thief has a modern resonance about it: ‘the man was shabbily dressed in a light coloured coat and red waistcoat. He rode a very bad horse’. John had been sworn in as Mayor only three weeks before and it is quite likely he was acting as coachman for his youngest daughter, Charlotte, on some errand prior to her wedding in mid-November.

Later in his mayoralty, in 1785, he would be responsible for sending William Shawyer to the Assizes. Shawyer was the butler who stole silver from his employer, Mrs Bagenal. At this time there were 160 capital offences (the bloody list), but judges were given a discretionary use of the sentences - offenders may not actually have been hanged.

However, hellraiser clergyman Martin Madden (he wrote ‘Hark the Herald Angels’) spoke out against this practice. Judge Eyre took this up saying it was more humane in the long run to hang everyone so sentenced, because it acted as a greater deterrent and removed the possibility of re-offending. An experimental ‘clamp down’ carrying out the capital punishment for all the offences took place right through the Home Circuit throughout 1785. So William Shawyer may have been a victim of a nationwide crackdown on crime, hence the failure of the petition to save him. Instead, he became the last man to be publicly hanged in Southampton.

Although he served the Corporation for 50 years in a variety of offices: mayor, sheriff, junior and senior bailiffs, town coroner, visitor to the poorhouse, medical overseer to the poorhouse and prisons and one of the pavement commissioners, it was in his role as surgeon that John possibly had the greatest impact on the town. He was acknowledged as the town’s senior surgeon and as such, organised the
town’s resident surgeons to inoculate the poor against smallpox for free. Probably this was as a result of his ecclesiastical family background giving him his sense of responsibility to the less fortunate inhabitants. The inoculation service was ongoing, over a period of several years, probably through the poorhouse and hospitals. A woman in St Mary’s poorhouse asked if her child, who lived with its grandfather at Eling, could be allowed to participate in the next series of inoculations at the poorhouse. He agreed and a few weeks later the child was admitted to be inoculated and then returned to Eling.

It was against this background that an itinerant inoculator, Mr John Smith of Winchester, came to the town, in 1774, hoping to make some money for himself by inoculating the inhabitants - offering the ‘very reasonable rate of 2 gns per common servant’! An acrimonious exchange followed in the *Hampshire Chronicle* between the local surgeons and Mr Smith. Eventually under the auspices of the town Corporation, a full-scale mass inoculation of the poor was mounted. A door-to-door collection was carried out to raise funds to enable as many ‘deserving poor’ as possible to be inoculated by the charity. The surgeons were paid 5s 3d for each person they inoculated and resulted in some 400 people being treated. When further outbreaks of the disease occurred in 1778 and 1783 the Inoculation Committee swung into action again, with further mass inoculations for the poor, to protect them and the town from the disease.

For many years John had also been acting on behalf of the Admiralty, producing information about and treatment for sick seamen, when they returned to Southampton from their voyages. In 1794, shiploads of expeditionary soldiers were returned to the town. They had been confined on board ship for weeks and were suffering badly from typhus. Again, our man moved swiftly. Without ado, he paid to convert the empty sugar house into a temporary hospital for the sick soldiers and set about providing for their needs - including sending to his nephew, Henry O’Neil at Romsey, for medicines.

After the soldiers had departed, John ordered that all blankets and clothing used by them should be left in the sugar house and the building locked up. A wise precaution, as typhus is spread by the human body louse and some of the lice and eggs would have remained in the blankets. Unfortunately it was a bitterly cold winter and some of the local people broke into the sealed building and stole the blankets. Understandably the disease broke out amongst the town poor, with a resultant high death rate.

One of the last events in the town that John may have been involved with, or at least would have known about, was the disastrous demonstration fencing match between two renowned French exponents of the sport. Planned as part of the entertainment for the town’s fashionable visitors, the protagonists were Monsieur De Launay and the Chevalier d'Eon, a transvestite who fenced in female attire. Unfortunately the unthinkable happened and the Chevalier was wounded, not mortally but sufficiently to prevent him ever using a blade again. Whether John would have been called to attend, or was in the audience, is open to conjecture, but he would have certainly been aware of the incident, if only from a point of interest and/or courtesy to his position in the town.

Later in the same year, 1796, Jenner discovered vaccination, a totally safe alternative to inoculation, relying on the cowpox virus rather than the smallpox virus itself, to give immunity against the disease. The days of inoculation were numbered and the practice was outlawed in the 19th century. Nonetheless, in the hands of skilled operators inoculation had served Southampton well during the 18th century. It is entirely reasonable to believe that many people alive today in Southampton are here because their ancestors were saved from the scourge of smallpox by the inoculations carried out through the efforts of John Monckton.

The only surviving obituary of John Monckton was printed in the *Hampshire Chronicle* of 6 May 1799 and reported: ‘On Tuesday last died John Monckton Esq the oldest alderman of this town and an eminent surgeon and apothecary’. He was buried in Holy Rood, and any memorial there might have been was lost during the Blitz.
A.G.K. Leonard

Rose Foster … A Remarkable Little Lady

Current postcards of Trafalgar Square may now feature Marc Quinn’s eye-catching and controversial marble sculpture ‘Alison Lapper Pregnant’, which was initially due to occupy the plinth outside the National Gallery for 18 months following its unveiling on 15 September 2005.

Alison Lapper is noteworthy not only as the artist’s model but in her own right as artist and photographer and as a mother, notwithstanding her disability in being born without arms and with severely shortened legs – the result of a rare congenital malformation, medically termed phocomelia i.e. with limbs like a seal’s flippers.

Born in 1965, she has lifted herself from an institutional upbringing, through college and university to a First Class degree in Fine Art and painting professionally with a mouth-held brush. Her achievements were recognized in 2003 by award of the MBE for services to art.

Her spirited autobiography ‘My Life in My Hands’, recounts her assertion of independence, earning admiration for her talent and strength of purpose, powerfully articulated.

Alison Lapper has had to surmount barriers of prejudice and embarrassment but society today is generally better informed and more supportive towards people like her than was the case a century ago; then there were few opportunities for them to secure any sort of personal and financial independence other than by exhibiting themselves as circus and sideshow ‘freaks’.

Outstanding among them before and between the Wars was Rose Foster, recalled by postcards issued for publicity and income-earning purposes.

The first that came my way was published anonymously, cheaply printed in black and white, showing her smartly dressed, seated on a stool and smiling bravely at the camera – and the world. It was captioned ‘ROSE FOSTER. Age 26. Height 26 ins. Weight 5 st. 3 lbs. Born at Southampton’.

This example was posted from Blackburn on 21 July 1915, to Mrs. J. Parker, living at 41
Northcote Road, Portswood, Southampton, with the unremarkable message ‘Dear Louie, I am on my way home for a few days … Your loving sister Rose’.

I did not initially connect the writer of its firmly pencilled words with the subject of the postcard itself, thinking that the card emanated from someone who had bought it at a ‘freak and novelty show’ where the ‘little lady’ was being exhibited to a curious public.

Later, I acquired another of these cards, clearly signed on the back ‘Rose Foster’; this was distinctive enough to establish her as the writer of the first card.

This was afterwards complemented by another, an anonymous production, showing her cheerfully knitting, sitting beside a descriptive poster, most of which can be read under a magnifying glass:

ROSE FOSTER

Nature’s Strangest Mistake
The Eighth Wonder of the World (Alive)
Late Barnum & Bailey and Ringling Bros. Shows, America

Miss Rose Foster, aged 26 years, height 26 inches.
She is utterly devoid of either hands, arms, feet or fingers; she can read, write and knit, dress herself and adjust her own hair, put on her blouse and fasten it up behind, without the slightest aid whatsoever. She is very jovial, entertaining, musical and highly intellectual – knowledge she has gained during her eight consecutive seasons with the great Barnum and Bailey Show, during their European and World Tours.

Miss Foster was truly named by Dr. Ziebler of New York City, U.S.A., ‘Nature’s Strangest Mistake’. She is undoubtedly one of the most astonishing freaks in the world and on no less than four occasions she has appeared before Crowned Heads of Europe.

This little lady is only too pleased to answer any proper questions you care to put to her. You will find her very charming and quite a little lady to talk to. She is very healthy, always jolly and independent of everybody. She can get about anywhere without the least assistance. She is very domesticated and can attend to all her household duties.

The poster concludes with mention of her receiving a salary of 75 dollars per week and the availability of postcards bearing her original signature.

These she effected holding a pencil between the toes of her left foot, whereby she had obviously become quite an accomplished writer.

Her poster publicist had thus pressed matters too far when describing Rose as ‘utterly devoid of hands, arms, feet or fingers’. In a later account, reissued in 1920, printed at Boston, she informed patrons of a further American tour that,

I have two small stumps from my shoulders, measuring 9½ inches. On the left stump I have one finger, supposed to be a thumb, with no nail on it, and on the right, one little finger with nail but no bone…On my right thigh I have a foot measuring two inches, with two toes on it. On my left thigh I have a little larger foot, with four toes upon it, with which I can write, use scissors, or pick up pins from the floor and manage to crawl about.

I am grateful to Dr. Vanessa Toulmin of the National Fairground Archive at the University of Sheffield for kindly providing me with a copy of the leaflet sold for a quarter dollar to Americans interested in the ‘Life Story of Mermaidia’ – as Rose Foster was then being styled. In it she wrote,

I was born in a little village called Highfield, two miles out of Southampton, my parents being poor working people. I was their second baby, my sister being
one year and eleven months old [she later had another sister and two brothers, all perfectly normal]. My mother never knew the cause of my being born in this strange and curious way. There were a lot of rumours about that she had been frightened but this was not so.

Rose added that she had now ‘appeared before more than one hundred doctors, including the one attendant on the late Queen Victoria. They all pronounced me to be one of Dame Nature’s strangest and greatest mistakes’.

She told her ‘kind friends and patrons’ that she was born a big baby, weighing 7lbs, whose body itself was ‘truly formed’ – as confirmed when ‘subjected to the X-Rays’ at the Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton in 1918. She soon became adept at crawling around – there is no mention of any attempts to provide her with artificial limbs or aids.

**Family**

Highfield, where Rose Foster was born and grew up, was then a developing village outside Southampton, created a parish in its own right in 1847. Since the 1920s it has become a favoured residential suburb of the expanding city and the centre of one of its universities.

The Highfield parish registers, preserved in the City Archives, document her family background. They record the marriage on 9 January 1882 of Henry Foster Archibald – 22, bachelor, boot-maker – and Eliza Amy Blake, 18, spinster. She was the daughter of a local grocer, while the groom’s father was entered as ‘Henry Archibald, gentleman’, which may have meant no more than that he was retired.

Their first child was baptised Florence Louise Amy in January 1883. Their second, born on 8 October 1884, was christened Rosina Kate five days later; the annotations ‘privately’ and ‘received into congregation November 16, 1884’, suggested her unusual circumstances and the fear that she might not live for long.

In the event, notwithstanding her physical deficiencies, she was evidently a lively child, keen to help her young brother Lewis Bertram, born in February 1888, and responsive to her mother’s efforts to help her learn to feed and dress herself and later to read and write, using a pencil held between her toes.

The 1891 census listed the Foster family at 7 Crown Street, Highfield, part of which was occupied by Eliza’s father, James Blake, and his wife; he was then described as a market gardener. Their boot-maker son-in-law had by

On this postcard, issued without name of printer or photographer, Rose is shown knitting, flanked by a poster clear enough in focus to be read with the aid of a magnifying glass – as quoted in the article.
then given up using the surname Archibald, being listed as plain Henry Foster.

Later in the 1890s, he and his family moved away from Highfield, perhaps already starting their travels with their daughter Rosina – now usually called Rose. Life cannot have been easy for their parents, to whom little or no professional care or support would then have been available.

Public exhibition of a deformed girl as a ‘freak’ now seems demeaning and embarrassing, but a century ago it might have enabled her to gain a measure of independence and status, as a member of the fraternity of a major travelling circus or ‘museum of human curiosities’.

The poster written when Rose Foster was 26, i.e. in 1910, referred to ‘her eight consecutive seasons with the great Barnum and Bailey Show’. Ten years later, in her account sold to the American public, she wrote,

I have travelled extensively, visiting all the principal towns and cities in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, also South and North America, France, Brazil, Spain, Canada, Germany and Switzerland.

She went on to tell her American readers,

When I arrived at the age of 26 years I began to seek for myself a husband. I soon found the gentleman who I thought would make me a good partner in life. After courting him a little over five years, I became engaged to him. Everything was arranged for our marriage. Two days before the wedding he was taken ill with pneumonia and died. I had plenty of admirers but not one seemed to take his place. He was the jolliest dispositioned fellow I had ever come across.

Three years passed slowly away, when another Mr. W came my way. Feeling lonely and quiet, I accepted his offer. I courted him eight months, then we were married. So today I am proud to say I am a happy married woman. My husband is normal. He stands six feet in height and his weight is 175 lbs. She added that at 36, she herself weighed 73 lbs and her height was still 26 inches.

Her husband remains a shadowy figure, not further mentioned. He was presumably the man standing beside her in front of the large motorised caravan bearing her name, photographed in the 1920s at Bitterne, on the eastern side of Southampton.

The weekly newspaper for the travelling entertainment community, World’s Fair, published news of her travels from time to time. In 1924 it reported that she had an accident at Boscombe, where she fell out of a car and broke a foot.

She continued on the ‘showland’ scene, evidently enjoying increasing personal respect. In October 1932, World’s Fair published a photograph of her, captioned ‘Miss Rose Foster, the well known Novelty, celebrated her 48th birthday on October 8th. May she live long to enjoy her good health’.

The description ‘novelty’ was by then preferred to ‘freak’, which had unfortunate and offensive connotations.

Earlier in 1932, Rose had arranged a special film show for her parents to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary.

Rose maintained her family connections. The previously mentioned postcard of 1915 was sent to her sister Louie, who had married John Frederick Parker. Between 1912 and 1917, they were living at 41 Northcote Road, Portswood – a suburb adjoining Highfield.

From about 1937 to 1960 they had their home nearby at 12 Belmont Road, where Rose evidently went to live with her sister after giving up touring with ‘Freak and Novelty Shows’. Her mother, Eliza Amy Foster, suffered a heart attack and stroke in 1946 and also came to live nearby at 12 Belmont Road, where Rose evidently went to live with her sister after giving up touring with ‘Freak and Novelty Shows’.
with her daughters at Belmont Road. She died there on 4 July 1952, aged 89.

In October 1954, World’s Fair gave front-page space to the news,

Miss Rose Foster, the well-known Showland novelty, celebrated her 70th birthday on Saturday. Although this was just a family celebration, flowers, cards and greetings were received from a wide circle of friends and she was visited by the Mayor and Mayoress of Southampton.

(This mayoral visit was not reported in the Southampton papers, presumably because it was a private one.)

The World’s Fair report added, ‘Miss Foster’s health has not been too good for the past two years, following a fall downstairs in which she injured her spine.’

No report of any 75th birthday celebration can be found, which suggests Rose Foster died some time before 1959, but no obituary or notice of death has yet been located for this remarkable ‘little lady’ who so bravely faced up to her physical handicaps.

Does any reader know more about her?

Thanks for help in locating various references to Rose Foster are due to David Whitehead of World’s Fair and Stephen Smith.

---

Rose Foster, possibly with her husband, and another couple, sitting outside her sizeable motor caravan, photographed in the early 1920s on the land off Bitterne Road, Southampton, called ‘The Hampshire’, which was a favourite stopping place for travelling fairs and ‘freak and novelty shows.’ The stylish living wagon (which has ‘Miss R. Foster’ painted on its door) was mounted on an adapted ex-US army World War I vehicle.
Social action and social crisis in late Victorian Southampton

One who strolls through this quarter of town, especially by night, must feel that below his ken are the awful deeps of an ocean teeming with life, but enshrouded in impenetrable mystery. As he catches here and there a glimpse of a face under the flickering, uncertain light of a lamp - the face perhaps of some woman, bloated by drink and distorted by passion - he may get a momentary shuddering sense of what humanity may sink to…

This extract from ‘An Autumn Evening in Whitechapel’, is a perfect example of the middle class view of the poor in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The poor were almost a different race, degenerate to the normal human race, an inevitable product of the process of industrialisation and urbanisation of the country. Froude commented on this inevitability in Oceana comparing the state of England with that of ancient Rome, where Horace ‘noted the growing degeneracy. He foretold the inevitable consequences’. Froude’s cautionary note on English society, in particular that of the residuum, the poor city inhabitants, reflects one of the key fears of the Victorian middle-classes in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Degeneracy, both mental and physical: immorality, crime, disease, prostitution, all were an inevitable symptom of the condition in which the poor were forced to live. That they were reduced to this was shocking enough but it was the fear that they may drag the respectable poor down with them or, worse still, rise up against the middle and upper classes that was the major concern of the day. These fears coincided with the rise in social action on both a local and national stage but the extent to which the one drove the other is difficult to assess.

The focus of this essay is the housing crisis of the 1890s and the debate that accompanied this social action. In looking at the language that formed this debate I propose to form an overall picture of the extent to which Stedman Jones’ argument that ‘the more predominant feeling was not guilt but fear’ applies to social action in Southampton during this period. The housing issue will form the central focus but it is important to note that this was not the only social issue in the period. As a port city Southampton was caught up in the dock strikes of the late 1880s and although this essay may touch briefly upon this there is insufficient space to investigate this in any detail.

The belief that the ‘residuum’, as opposed to the honest poor, were criminal, dangerous and immoral was nothing new. As early as the eighteenth century the view was being expressed widely and featured considerably in the debate on the New Poor Law. They found popular expression in the writings of novelists from Charles Dickens to George Gissing for whom poverty, crime and immorality seem to go hand-in-hand. But by the 1870s there existed, as Jose Harris described it, the ‘nightmare vision of social “degeneration” and inexorable racial decline’. Social theorists expressed the notion that this residuum was made up of ‘irredeemable social incompetents’ who should be separated from the honest poor so that they did not drag them down; criminologists advanced theories that ascribed criminality and immorality to inherited mental or physical pathology. These fears found popular outlet in a massive range of late Victorian literature from

---

1 Littel, Littel’s Living Age (November 3, 1888)
2 J.A. Froude, Oceana (1886)
3 Gareth Stedman Jones, Outcast London, (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2002)
popular fiction to government reports. Indeed, the reports on the Poor Laws commented that savages ‘lurked at the bottom of our civilisation’\(^5\), and if not brought under control would overthrow society.

These fears were fuelled by debate and events of the 1880s. Writers such as Engels wrote that, ‘the unemployed, losing patience, will take their fate into their own hands’, and revelations such as Andrew Mearns’s, ‘The Bitter Cry of Outcast London’ in October 1883, shocked the nation when he revealed the ‘vast mass of moral corruption, of heartbreaking misery and absolute godlessness […] concealed by the thinnest crust of civilisation and decency’\(^6\). To this document alone can be attributed much of the middle class sense of social crisis and its associated dangers. Its publication essentially frightened the public and as such drove the politicians to action. Mearn’s pamphlet highlighted the danger that the poor posed.

One of the saddest results of this overcrowding is the inevitable association of honest people with criminals […] Incest is common, and no forms of vice and sensuality causes surprise or attracts attention\(^7\).

These fears found spectacular expression in the autumn of 1888 when the brutal murder of six prostitutes by Jack the Ripper in the East End of London shocked the nation. The outcry and debate that surrounded the case ‘condensed the vague fears of the West End about the brutality, immorality, and destructiveness of the East End into one mysterious entity’\(^8\). Despite the likelihood that the Ripper was in fact from a far more well-to-do background, the debate drew a clear link between the horrific crimes and the condition in which the poor lived. Even scientific journals such as The Lancet stated that the poverty, overcrowding and poor sanitation ‘renders more probable the conception and execution of such crimes as those that now absorb the public attention’\(^9\). Similarly, public fears were all too evident during the London Dock strikes one noticeable aspect of which was the rush to contribute to the Mansion House fund, which led Morris to comment that although the generosity may stem in part from people’s consciences it was, ‘partly also, I think, from fear’\(^10\). This fear stemmed to a great extent from the belief in the susceptibility of the poor to socialist subversion, a subversion that would fulfil the long held fear that the poor would ‘burst their barriers at last and declare open and violent war against law and order and property’.

Charles Booth’s extensive survey of London did little to lessen this fear even though Booth himself noted that the conditions of the poor had improved and that if his survey had been carried out fifty years earlier it would have revealed, ‘a greater proportion of depravity and misery than now exists’\(^11\). His notes on the Life and Labour of the People in London are full of such comments that highlight these fears, immorality appearing to be a particular favourite of Booth’s, describing overcrowding as the ‘main cause of drink & vice’, that there existed ‘a good deal of sexual immorality – incest’ and ‘nothing can surpass scenes of Bank Holiday immorality & indecency’. In his analysis of the reasons behind pauperism the main factors are consistently drink, vice and immorality, and, he makes the distinction of those who are paupers through ‘association and heredity’. This latter point seems to be associated with the degeneration argument.

Although Booth notes that only a percentage of paupers are affected by drink, a statement that several historians have latched on to in their arguments, he goes on to point out that a closer inspection ‘might disclose a greater connection

\(^{5}\) quoted in Harris, *Private Lives* p.242
\(^{8}\) Robert F. Haggard, *Jack the Ripper as the Threat of Outcast London*.

\(^{9}\) *The Lancet* (October 6, 1888)
\(^{10}\) William Morris, *Political Writings*, quoted in A824 study guide (Open University, 2004)
than here appears between pauperism and the public-house’. In an interview with the Rev A. Osborne Jay of Holy Trinity, Shoreditch he notes that ‘Father J is convinced that for many of these people there was no alternative between crime and the workhouse: they are an absolutely degenerate lot morally and physically’. However, despite this language it is important to note that Booth himself disagreed that the poor were a threat noting that the criminal class constituted only 1.5 percent of the population and that the poor were ‘a disgrace but not a danger’.

But such reassurances did little to quash the belief. The social novel perpetuated such beliefs. A prime example being Arthur Morrison’s *The Child of the Jago* (1896) in which he follows young Dicky Perrott’s inevitable decline into brutality and crime. His description of why Mrs Parrott doesn’t fit in with the other inhabitants of the Jago is almost a summary of the middle class fears of the poor: drunkenness, brutality and irreligion,

She was never drunk, she never quarrelled, she did not gossip freely. Also her husband beat her but rarely, and then not with a chair nor a poker. Justly irritated by such superiorities as these, the women of the Jago were ill-disposed to brook another: which was, that Hannah Perrott had been married in church.

What was new in the debate was the belief that the race as a whole was degenerating. This had particular implications in terms of the future of the Empire as Arnold White noted in 1886 ‘Distress in London is not the distress of a great city, it is the distress of a great empire’. This new cause for alarm had been inspired by the report that thousands of volunteers for service in the Boer War were found to be physically unfit. Popular opinion stated that this was a result of the unhealthy conditions of urban and industrial life. The discovery that the condition of the poor was far more likely due to the fact that this was the first time men had been examined in such numbers but whatever the reason it led to a flood of debate and ‘scientific’ theories on the state of the race. This belief found its’ clearest expression in the debate surrounding the Physical Deterioration inquiry of 1904.

As already mentioned, these fears of the poor were on the whole nothing new. What was new was the popular expression of these fears in middle class debate as well as a corresponding action in the promotion of morals, cleanliness and temperance. The reasons for this coincide, and are often attributed to, the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. One strand of the debate that followed its publication was that religion and morality would be undermined. Historians such as Himmelfarb argue that what in fact happened was for morality to become a surrogate for religion. George Eliot summed up this chain of events, stating, ‘I now believe in nothing, but I do not the less believe in morality’.

This change in debate can also be placed in the socio-economic debate of the mid-1800s. Agricultural decline, economic depression and urban migration meant that the outcast poor, respectable working classes and middle classes were in closer contact than ever before as both urban and industrial congestion increased. In essence, it wasn’t so much that the poor had changed but that the middle classes were brought into contact with them. It has also been argued that this developing concern with moral matters was specifically middle-class and that the purpose was to instil these into the poor for social control. Himmelfarb and others have argued against this, pointing out that the poor themselves had their own morals and values. Whether or not the poor did have their own values and morals is not in the remit of this project, but the important point to take from this argument is that if these fears were as popular as the literature suggests then by instilling their

---

12 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1st series Poverty 1, p.39  
14 Arnold White, *The Problems of a Great City* (1886)  
own values, the middle classes felt that the danger could be allayed.

The historian A.S Wohl commenting on Andrew Mearn’s *Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, noted that, ‘Suddenly, almost overnight, it seemed, England awoke to the grim facts of the slums’, to which I would add, not in Southampton apparently! Southampton in the late Victorian and Edwardian period was by no means a hotbed of social debate and action and was far removed from the civic gospel that had so characterised Birmingham’s social progress. By contrast, Southampton was led, not by the Unitarian industrialists who dominated northern politics, but by shopkeepers intent on policies of economy and self-help. A tight grip on the public purse strings was their sign of success rather than a nationally renowned civic programme. Southampton certainly lacked some of the problems that industrialisation had brought to the cities of the north such as Birmingham and Manchester and the consequent pressure for social reform was certainly less. As a journalist commenting on the housing problems in 1890 described it,

> The fresh sea breezes sweep over it continually. There is no dense pall of smoke hanging over it, as in some manufacturing towns and the great metropolis.\(^\text{16}\)

Yet, like these cities, Southampton had grown at a considerable rate in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1851 the population stood at approximately 48,000. By 1891, attracted by the growth of the docks, it had more than doubled to 114,279. Perhaps more significantly, in the central parish of St. Mary, which directly surrounded the dockyards, the population had jumped from 21,250 in 1851 to more than 41,000. With it came the social problems that afflicted nearly every population centre that had seen a similar influx of the poor looking for work as the surrounding rural economy declined. The areas nearest the docks quickly became overcrowded and by the 1890s the population density averaged 441.4 persons per acre, higher than some of the worst areas of London.

Perhaps the most significant piece of social action and debate in Southampton was that surrounding the issue of slum housing in the early 1890s. It is also the most telling in terms of the language behind the debate, exhibiting many of the middle class’ social fears including disease, immorality and crime.

---

16 Southampton Times, (Dec 20, 1890)
the *Southampton Times* entitled, ‘The Exceeding Bitter Cry of Outcast Southampton’\(^\text{17}\) he drew to the public’s attention in stark terms the conditions in which the poor of their town existed. The very title would have immediately set the tone for the public, jumping on the bandwagon of Andrew Mearns’ famous exposé of poverty in London, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*\(^\text{18}\) which had shocked the nation some seven years earlier. More telling was the language used by Bicker-Caarten, which although touching on many reasons for action to be taken to alleviate the situation of the poor, harks considerably on the fears of crime, disease and morality.

The district itself […] with no provision for decency or cleanliness, dismal, wretched, squalid and hideous beyond words to express, and then the tribes of children, hungry, dirty, barefooted and wild, growing up to swell the ranks of pauperism […] these fever dens in our midst to breed disease and spread it through the town. Then the scenes that occur in these abodes of misery and darkness, the drunkenness, brutality, immorality, they cannot be described […]\(^\text{19}\).

The language reflects and enforces these beliefs that poverty, immorality and crime were deeply intertwined but more than this is the implication that unless action is taken the disease and immorality that is rife in these areas will spread outside the slums and infect the whole population. His urging of action to remedy makes the case in even more graphic terms arguing that the council must, ‘in the interests of the public health and morality of the whole town, sweep these plague spots from our midst’\(^\text{20}\). Here we have the paramount concern of the middle classes: that the poor would drag down the rest of society. The very use of the term ‘plague’ suggests that the rest of the town could be infected with the disease of poverty. Bicker-Caarten’s letter led to a series of letters and articles, which ran in the *Southampton Times* through the winter of 1890/1891. Before looking further at this debate it is important to take into account Bicker-Caarten’s motives in terms of his decision to raise the issue and the language used. His radical politics are evident in his argument for the cause of the suffering amongst Southampton’s poor,

[…] It is caused by lowness of wages, and by the casual nature of the work most of these people are employed upon, by the utter want of responsibility for, and interest in, their labourers by the employers after they have paid them the small pittance\(^\text{21}\).

In this respect Bicker-Caarten speaks to, and possibly for, the working classes but in the consequent debate it is noticeable how even he uses language that is clearly aimed at a wider audience. It is possible that Bicker-Caarten used this language purposefully as his association with the working class was not totally ignored by the middle class readership. In a letter to the editor of the *Southampton Times* in the ongoing debate, J.G. Gibson accuses Bicker-Caarten himself of being to blame for the destitution as he was, ‘one of the principal agitators in the late strike’\(^\text{22}\), referring to the Southampton dock strike which for a few brief days shook Southampton with the spectre of violence and revolution.

An important point to note in this debate is that the vast majority of the evidence and language stems from two sources. That of Bicker-Caarten himself and that of the subsequent series of investigations carried out by the *Southampton Times* itself which supported the Liberal cause in the town. However, whatever its political leanings it is important to remember that for the majority, the local press would have been the main source of news and opinion.

---

\(^{17}\) *Southampton Times*, (Nov. 8, 1890)


\(^{19}\) *Southampton Times*, (8 Nov. 1890)

\(^{20}\) *Southampton Times*, (8 Nov. 1890)

\(^{21}\) *Southampton Times* (November 8, 1890)

\(^{22}\) *Southampton Times*, (8 Nov. 1890)
Although morality had become one of the key social concerns of the Victorians, it is important to remember that religion still played an important role for many. Bicker-Caarten provides evidence of the godlessness of the poor quoting a letter that he claims to have received with the express wish that he draws the public’s attention to the gambling, foul language and blasphemy that can be observed on any Sunday in the poor areas of the town, ‘especially during the hours of divine service’ (although why the poor would be more prone to swearing at precisely this point is anyone’s guess). In the same letter Bicker-Caarten claims to have spoken to an old inhabitant who told him that, ‘the streets and courts between Canal-walk and Orchard-lane are perfect hells upon earth on Sunday evenings’. While it is impossible to verify the source of Bicker-Caarten’s information, and worth noting that a later letter signed C.N.S backs up these reports, it is questionable why Bicker-Caarten raises an issue that seemingly has little to do with the living condition of the poor and far more to do with fuelling the concerns of the middle classes.

The debate also included a series of articles that ran in the Southampton Times over the winter of 1890/91. These articles investigated the conditions of the poor in even more detail and were perhaps even more alarmist than Bicker-Caarten’s own revelations. Of particular interest is their comparison of the poor with that of ‘dark’ Africa. This was a common theme in the period and one that which the public would have been very familiar, comparing the poor with the ‘savages’ of Africa. Indeed, the author clearly expects the reader to be familiar with both Stanley’s ‘In Darkest Africa’ and General Booth’s ‘In Darkest England’. Again the moral crisis forms the central theme of the debate in these articles. Despite all their pitying of the condition in which the poor live, the reason for improving that condition is for the moral gain that this would have, both in terms of protecting themselves from the spread of moral decay and to prevent the poor being pulled further into the abyss by the irredeemable residuum. The majority of the third article in this debate is devoted to this theme and notably recommends the inflammatory words of General Booth,

The reekings of the human cesspool are brought into the schoolroom and mixed up with your children. Your little ones, who never heard an evil word and who are not only innocent but ignorant of all the horrors of vice and sin, sit for hours side by side with little ones whose parents are habitually drunk, and play with others whose ideas of merriment are gained from the familiar spectacle of the nightly debauch by which their mothers earn the family bread.23

With such language forming the central tenet of the debate it is hard to imagine that public opinion on the matter of poor housing was not intrinsically linked to their fears of the immorality and criminality of the poor.

The outcome of this debate was that an enquiry into the condition of the housing was to be produced by the Borough Surveyor in conjunction with the Medical Officer of Health. That the council and public were not driven by any radical zeal when it came to social reform is evident in the subsequent delays in dealing with the report. The Medical Officer, A. Wellesley Harris, duly submitted the report in December 1893, by which point public interest had largely evaporated, and it was swiftly despatched to a joint committee of the town’s Health and Works Committees where it was effectively forgotten until the following September when a newspaper report again shook the population into anguished action.

On September 15th, 1894 the Southampton Times reported the death of Ellen Wren in one of the lodging houses in Simnel Street. What struck a chord with the readers was not merely the fact that another pauper had died, but the circumstances in which she died were a classic encapsulation of the middle-class fears of the moral depths to which the poor could sink. The 49 year old Wren had been found naked, lying

23 Southampton Times (January 3, 1891)
face down in a pile of rubbish in her room, having apparently suffocated while drunk. Furthermore, the owner of the property had recently been fined for keeping a brothel\textsuperscript{24}.

However where he does refer to individuals or physical symptoms it is invariably in relation to the morality and danger of the poor. There seems little in the tone and descriptions to indicate to the reader that concerns other than these should play a part in deciding social action within the town. An amusing footnote to the debate is to be found in his improvement scheme that proposed that removing the poor from the area between High Street and Westgate Street would make possible a direct route to the West End Station, an improvement of, ‘great convenience to the public, who now have to travel by a circuitous route’. Wellesley Harris was clearly no Charles Booth.

Morality in particular seems to be a favoured topic of Wellesley Harris, far more so than disease which one assumes is what he would be more conscious of as Medical Officer of Health. In the introduction to the report he makes reference to the water-closet accommodation, or lack thereof, on which he comments ‘the tone of female morality is much lowered by the existing condition of things in this particular respect’. Reference is also made whenever there is even a rumour that a particular house has been used as a brothel or is inhabited by individuals of ‘low character’, but more telling is the summary to the report that describes effects of residence in these districts. Morality is given particular weight and is worth quoting in full,

\begin{quote}
The situation of many of these houses in blind narrow Courts leading out of our principal streets by a passage, and hemmed in on all sides by taller houses renders them pretty well secluded from passers by. Near neighbours, however, can bear witness to the misery, vice and drunkenness which are rife in such Courts. Owing, as I have suggested, to their secluded position, the general public are unaware of these scenes, and consequently they exist without interference.
\end{quote}

In addition to the immorality found in the report, Wellesley Harris emphasises the direct dangers that the poor present to the middle

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Southampton Times} (15 Sept, 1894)
\textsuperscript{25} A. Wellesley Harris p.4

\hspace{1cm}

\begin{center}
\textit{Simnel Street c1892 (City Archives)}
\end{center}
classes in terms of violence and revolt. In his scheme for improvement he recommends the removal of the poor housing not for health or social welfare reasons but to remove the ‘riotous class’. That Southampton had suffered riots, scuffles would be a better word, some years earlier and that the dock labourers involved would most likely have come from one of the areas in question was correct but in describing an entire class as ‘riotous’ Wellesley Harris’ words would have reminded readers to the fears that had griped the town during these strikes and which had led to two companies of the King’s Royal Rifles being placed under arms at Winchester to quell the riots, which in the event never erupted.

The fear of racial degeneration found little expression in the local housing debate. Other than the references to ‘dark Africa’ and its connotations of racial development the debate largely focussed on morality, disease and crime. This is not to say that belief that the race as a whole was degenerating did not find expression locally. In a lecture on the Local Government Act of 1888, then mayor Sir James Lemon, commented on the decision to devolve the management of ‘Asylums for Pauper Lunatics’ to the county council as being, ‘an important duty, considering how lunacy is unfortunately increasing in this country, and the heavy cost thus entailed upon the ratepayer’.

This apparent rise in the number of pauper lunatics sat well with the degeneration argument, although in reality it was more likely the introduction of the concept of feeble-mindedness at this point that informed Lemon’s argument.

Although morality, crime and disease form the central theme of the housing debate in Southampton during this period it was not the only factor that drove social debate. Despite the fact that the town lacked the civic gospel of Birmingham or individuals with the zeal of Chamberlain, Booth or Webb, social action was not unknown. Among the poor areas on which the housing investigation focussed there were several missions, most notably the Simnel Street Mission, that had been working to better the condition of the poor for a decade providing Sunday services, Sunday school, a savings bank, a coal and clothing club and a temperance society among other things. But the hard work of these clergymen did little to affect the overall attitude to social action in Southampton. Some evidence of sympathy was to be found from other quarters. Edward Gayton, a member of the Council, had undertaken his own investigations and in a letter to the Southampton Times commented, ‘Let anyone go into some of the houses in Simnel Street, or to Back-of-the-Walls […] and he will realise that it is no wonder that the glare of the public-house is such an attraction’.

But voices such as these were few and far between.

From the language that dominated the public debate it seems clear that middle class fears of criminality, immorality and degeneration were indeed the main driving force behind the issue of poor housing in Southampton. That this debate was conducted by relatively few needs to be taken into account but it is also true that this is the limited opinion that most of the middle class readership would have been receiving. Coming as closely on the back of the dock strikes it is did it comes as no great surprise that the language of fear dominates. Constant references to riot, disease, immorality and crime were not designed to prick the middle class conscience but to warn of the dangers that inaction could lead to. Whether these fears were the main factors in driving social action and debate generally would require further research into social debate within the town as well as in similar towns such as Plymouth or Bristol. The important point is that Southampton and cities like it were not the centres of social philosophy that could be found in places such as Manchester, Birmingham and London. Further research may demonstrate that these parochial towns, governed by shopkeepers, acted on different motives, motives of fear that may have

---


27 Southampton Times (December 13, 1890).
reflected the majority of towns rather than the social conscience of the cities.

Select Bibliography

Daily Echo, 1888-1900 (Southampton City Library)

The Southampton Times, 1870-1900 (Southampton City Library)

Lemon, James, A lecture on the local government act 1888 (Southampton, 1888)

Report on the Police Establishment including Criminal and other Miscellaneous Statistics of the Southampton Borough Police (Southampton: Warren & Son, 1892)

Wellesley Harris, A. Detailed Report of Dilapidated and Unhealthy Houses in the Borough of Southampton (Southampton, 1893)

Doughty, Martin, Dilapidated Housing and Housing Policy in Southampton 1890-1914 (Southampton: University Press, 1986)