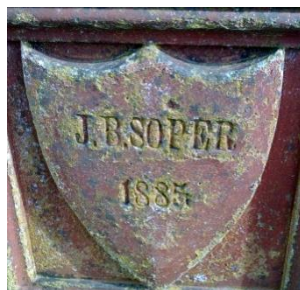




A short History of South View, Basingstoke, including the Holy Ghost Cemetery and the story of the ruined chapels.

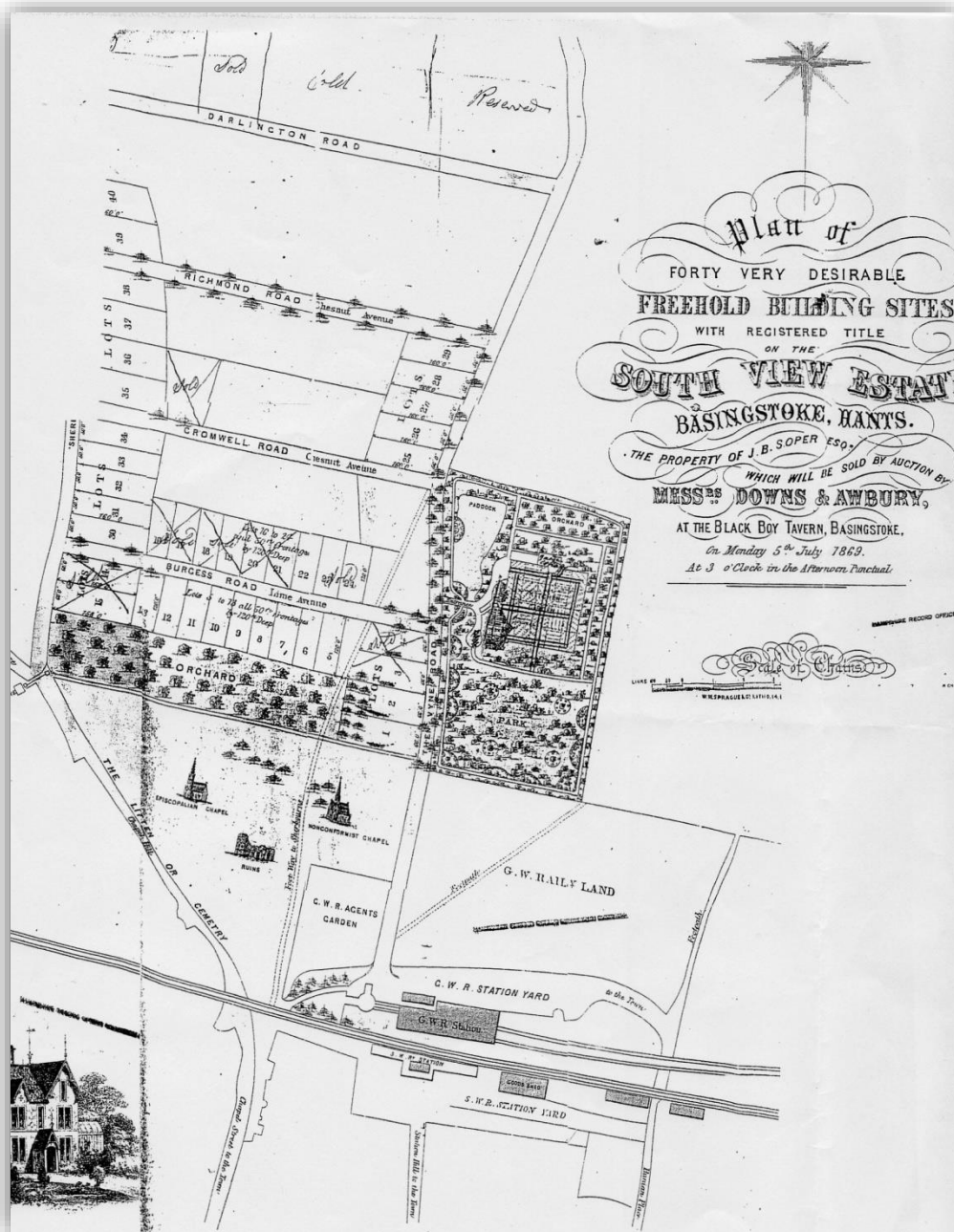
by

Debbie Reavell



Where is South View?

The map below is the very first layout of the area which John Burgess Soper marketed in 1869 and called South View. It is just north of the railway line through Basingstoke. Plots in Darlington Road had been sold or reserved. South View House occupies a large site and the old 'footway to Sherborne' is shown across the cemetery. The 19th century chapels in the cemetery are shown as well as the ruins of the chapels. There are two railway stations – north of the railway is the GWR station.



Introduction

“The most familiar object in Stoke-Barehills nowadays is its cemetery, standing among some picturesque mediaeval ruins beside the railway; the modern chapels, modern tombs and modern shrubs having a look of intrusiveness amid the crumbling and ivy-covered decay of the ancient walls”¹

Thomas Hardy’s name for Basingstoke was Stoke-Barehills, which perhaps gives us a clue to how it looked in his time. The view he describes is the one from the railway line



which was familiar to Hardy as he travelled up to London from Dorset, which he did frequently so he would have been used to this view of the ruins. He was objecting to the ‘new’ mortuary chapels erected after 1858. The photo shows how tree-less the whole area was.

We know too that Hardy stayed in the town for the celebrations of Queen Victoria’s Jubilee in 1897, when he felt too old to deal with staying in London itself. He wrote a note from a house called ‘Dinmont,’ maybe in South View, or Brookvale. We don’t know.

The new Episcopalian Chapel about 1858²

The story of this small part of Basingstoke is a relatively recent one. For centuries, as Basingstoke grew from a cluster of buildings around its parish church of St Michael and a meeting point of roads from Southampton, Andover, Salisbury, London and Reading with a busy coaching trade, little changed in this small part to the north of the town. The Chapel of the Holy Ghost and the town’s graveyard, known as the Liten, dates from the time of King John and some centuries later, in the 1520s, the Holy Trinity Chapel was added to the earlier building as a burial place for Sir William Sandys – this in the reign of Henry VIII.

Before the Enclosures of the late eighteenth century, strips and pockets of land in the town’s fields were held by various owners. In Basingstoke, some of the land belonged to the Holy Ghost Guild or Fraternity. Exactly when the Guild had been founded is not known – when it was revived by Lord Sandys in Henry VIII’s time, it was said to have existed from an earlier unknown date – ‘long before’³. Such guilds might be compared with modern day Lions Clubs or Rotary. The Guild had an Alderman and two or more Wardens. The land in South View was known as Norden Field; Chapel Hill was known as the Whiteway or Hollie Ghoste Street and led from the bottom of the valley as a continuation of Church Street up the hill where it forked into the road for Kingsclere and Newbury to the left and to the right a path went north to Sherborne, roughly following the line of the path through the cemetery today. It appears that it veered slightly eastwards and crossed present day Burgess Road, passing through where no. 53 is now and then joining the line of Vyne Road and heading across the fields to Sherborne St John. Of course, the subsequent development of Vyne Road may have caused a slight shift in this path.

¹ From Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* Everyman’s Library 1985, p. 360

² Courtesy of Hampshire County Council Arts and Museum Service DPA AMP 58

³ Baigent, F.J. and Millard, J.E. *A History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke* C.J.Jacob, p.118

Another path went along the ridge of the valley to Basing, roughly where the railway line now runs. I think that the 'black path' just south of Bunnian Place Railway Bridge is the line of this path, disrupted by the railway. It's the one which comes out just by The Castle pub (now called Poison, demolished in 2014). It is still traceable as there is a footpath south of the London line through the Eastrop business park, which hugs the railway line coming out by the railway bridge in Old Basing near the junction with Basing Road. I think this would have been a useful route during the winter months, when the Loddon valley may have become wet and difficult to use, but I remember the late Arthur Attwood insisting on this path as an important right of way, when the pedestrian access to the cemetery from the north side of the Vyne Road railway bridge had been damaged and the council were prevaricating about whether to bother to replace it at all.

At the Enclosures, things started to change. The fields where townspeople had worked their strips came into the ownership of the great landowners or 'the middling sort' of the town. Hereabouts, the most significant local landowner was the Duke of Bolton at Hackwood – their family linked back to the Powlett/Paulet family who had held Basing House and before them to Hugh de Port who had been given the land by William the Conqueror – just one of many places he acquired in the south of England. The town's fields were up for grabs and we see that the Duke of Bolton's land crept right up to the town. For the purposes of our area, the boundary of the Duke's land was where Fencott Place is today, along a field boundary where Queen Mary Avenue is and south down the hill beside Vyne Meadow car park. So, Soper Grove and Phoenix Park Terrace are not Lord Bolton's, but east of that is. Bolton Lodge was at the eastern end of Queen Mary Avenue roughly where the flats on Norn Hill are today. It became St Joseph's convent school and later St Bernard's. Lord Bolton's map of 1762 showing land ownership is the first time the town is mapped⁴.

To the south of the town, lands in the former Chequers Field were acquired by the Russell family who bought the land where Goldings and the Memorial Park is today as well as all of Eastrop and Crossborough Hill and Chequers Road; their land ended on the south side at Russell Road – the landowner on the other side of this was the Duke of Bolton.

The land at South View was acquired by the May family. The Mays were an old local brewing family. The brewery in Basingstoke had been established in about 1750 and was in Brook Street, north of where Chute House is today. There were many branches of the May family flourishing around this time, but it was Charles May (1767-1844) and his wife Sarah née Dyer (1775-1840), who lived in the Brewery House – a fine Georgian house with a double-bowed front. Charles May's father, Thomas and his brother, another Thomas, were mayors between them 11 times between 1796 and 1837. By the time South View was developed the land had come into the ownership of Charles and Sarah's grandson, John May (1838-1920) and his brother Thomas (1829-1870). Both John and Thomas May are buried in the cemetery at South View. If you have a covenant on your title deeds forbidding brewing, as do many in South View, then this probably comes from the prior ownership by these brewery brothers who did not want any competition! In 1867 John Burgess Soper bought land at South View from John and Thomas May.

Basingstoke continued to grow; the market town with its many coaching inns and

⁴ Map held at Hampshire Record Office. 19th century copy 10M57/P3

trades flourished. Jane Austen and her family came to the town to shop, to dance and to visit the doctor.

In 1789 the Basingstoke Canal opened, although it was never really successful. But then came the biggest change to the town – arguably of greater significance than the town development in the 1960s – the railway arrived.

The scope of this history is confined to the area north of the railway which was developed by John Burgess Soper in the 19th and early 20th centuries and to the history of the ruined chapels in the Holy Ghost Cemetery.

The Holy Ghost and Holy Trinity Chapels



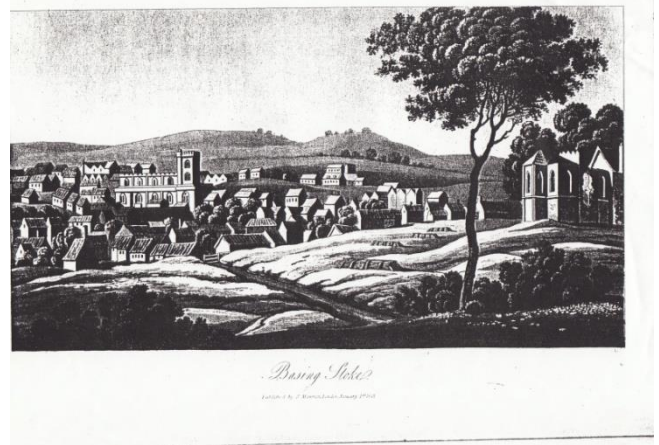
©Royal Academy of Arts, London⁵

Ruin at Basingstoke Aquatint engraved by William Pickett and coloured by John Clarke after a drawing by P.J. de Loutherbourg for his *The Romantic and Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales* c. 1824

This image from the topographical collection of George III dated 1808, shows the ruins of the Holy Trinity Chapel in a romantic light, in tune with contemporary interest in archaic themes and the ruin as a motif of the Picturesque. It does show how much of the ruin has been lost since then – it is also possible to make out the school building through the arches.

⁵ This image may not be reproduced without permission.

Other visitors had come to this part of the town before – in 1669 Prince Cosmo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, had passed through and an image survives (shown below) from that journey. It shows the ruined window-less and partly-roofless chapel and a view of the town with St Michael's Church visible. The Grand Duke was not much impressed with Basingstoke. He thought the town 'wretched' and the church 'small and very indifferent'.⁶



The history of this part of the town is a fascinating romp through England's religious history. The reason why the town's graveyard is not beside the parish church of St Michael and All Angels, although there are some gravestones there, is always explained by the fact that during the reign of King John (1199-1216) burials in churchyards were forbidden. In 1208 England had been placed under a Papal Interdict because of a serious dispute between King John and Pope Innocent III over the choice of Archbishop of Canterbury and who should choose him. This meant that church services could not be held nor could churchyards be used for burials. During the Interdict the townspeople of Basingstoke buried their dead on the sloping land to the north of the town. This is surely true, but a more pragmatic explanation for the town's dead to be buried up the hill in the chalk is perhaps that the land around the parish church is very low and close to the river and that perhaps during a few wet winters it became more sensible to use drier land. It could be the reason why St Michael's does not have a substantial burial ground.

The Interdict was lifted in 1214 and after this and by 1244 a chapel with a tower was built, dedicated to the Holy Ghost. The remains of this tower, which has a doorway of a slightly later date, still stands as the most westerly part of the ancient monument in the graveyard at South View. This is when the Guild or Fraternity of the Holy Ghost, which has already been mentioned, was established. After Henry VIII's time, this Guild had a teaching role as well as a religious one. Townspeople left money in their wills before the Reformation to pay for candles (or lights) to be placed in front of religious images in the chapel as well as in the parish church of St Michael.

In 1496, William Sandys inherited The Vyne house at Sherborne St John from his father, also William. He had married Marjorie Bray, niece of Sir Reginald Bray, and was knighted by Henry VIII in 1518 and admitted to the Order of the Garter. In 1523 he was created



1st Baron Sandys. In 1524 with Bishop Fox (1448-1524) of Winchester, William Sandys (1470-1540) decided to revive the Holy Ghost Chapel which was in disrepair and to provide a burial place for his family. It was not usual to use private domestic chapels, such as the one in the Vyne, for burials and it has been suggested that St Andrew's Church in Sherborne St John was already full of Brocas family monuments and the 'best' places had been taken!

⁶ Baigent, F.J. and Millard, J.E. A History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke C.J.Jacob, Basingstoke. 1889. Travels of Cosmo III. Grand Duke of Tuscany. p. 80

Sandys' Black Tournai Marble tombstone slabs

In Basingstoke Sandys added a large side chapel, dedicated to The Holy Trinity, to serve as a burial place for his family. Black tombstones made from stone from Belgium (known as Tournai marble⁷) marked the tomb of his father, Sir William Sandys, and possibly his own. The Sandys crest can just about be traced on them – as can the '*rose en soleil*' Tudor badge, which is half Tudor Rose and half sun's rays. The tombs were most probably set between the wall of the 'new' chapel and the old, like the Paulet family tombs in St Mary's at Old Basing. In the 1830s, when work was done to restore the monument, they were laid flat as we see them today⁸.

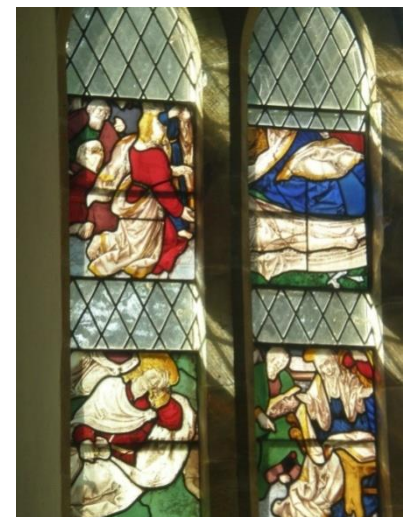
During the reign of Edward VIth, the Guild was dissolved, as it was regarded as a chantry chapel and therefore suspect to this Protestant monarch and his minders but, when Mary Tudor succeeded her brother, the townspeople petitioned the new queen and her consort, Philip II of Spain, to give them back their Guild. In 1556 Queen Mary and her husband Philip gave a charter to provide for a priest who was to devote himself to:-

"the education and instruction of the young men and boys of the town".

This laid the foundation for the boys' grammar school, known as the Queens School or as Queen Mary's Grammar School. A timbered school building was built in among the ruins, which served as the school's premises until it moved to Worting Road in 1855, coming back to South View in 1940 to a new building in Vyne Road, now the Vyne Community School. The name continues in Queen Mary's College, created as a VIth form college when Hampshire adopted comprehensive education in 1972.

High on the tower it is possible to make out the hemp-breaker which is the crest of the Bray family. It is a play on the French word for a hemp-breaker which is *braie* – a popular way of adopting emblems in Tudor times. Other crests (you will need binoculars) show the cross raggulé (ragged cross) of the Sandys family, and the winged goat as well as the combined initials of WS and MS – Sir William Sandys and his wife Marjorie. These crests are weathering away but they can also be found on the panelling in the Oak Gallery at The Vyne. The chapel at South View was renowned for its beautiful stained glass, which is Flemish and of the highest quality. In 1536 the Sandys family acquired Mottisfont near Stockbridge, which is now a National Trust property. Emblems of the Sandys family can be seen in windows at Mottisfont.⁹

Why did the chapels fall into such a ruinous state? Firstly the Reformation reduced the status and probably the income available to the Guild. The lead was removed from the roof – most probably during the Siege of Basing House, which finally ended when Cromwell¹⁰ took the house in October 1645. At some point, the glass was removed from the chapel for safe-keeping or for repair and taken to the Vyne – again probably at the time of the Civil War - by a



Glass in Woolbeding Church

⁷ Lincoln Cathedral has a font of Tournai marble, which is polished as these would once have been.

⁸ Ibid. Baigent and Millard p. 158

⁹ But not easily! They are in the window of the trompe l'oeil room – the blinds are usually shut so you can only see the Sandys' emblem from outside.

¹⁰ Cromwell stayed in the Falcon Inn now 13 London Street.

descendant of William, Sir Henry Sandys, who was killed in the Civil War battle of Cheriton in 1644. In 1653 the Vyne ceased to be a Sandys' house and was sold to Chaloner Chute. John Jenkins¹¹ has researched the windows which were removed from the chapel and taken to The Vyne and to Mottisfont (another Sandys' property). Much of the glass is in the Vyne chapel windows and can be seen to great advantage there. John Jenkins¹² demonstrates how the glass was cut down to fit the windows of the Vyne.



Glass in St Michael's Church

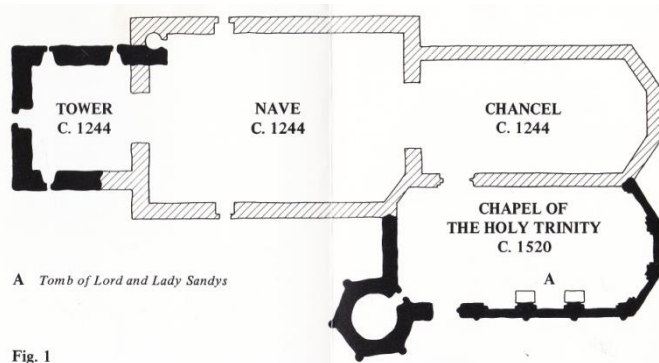
window and clearly shows the hemp-breaker. (See photo – the hemp-breaker is in the bottom right panel looking a bit like a paper guillotine!) Another small piece of glass was given to Canon Scholes, who built the Roman Catholic Holy Ghost Church in Burgess Road in 1903, and is in one of the windows of the south wall.¹⁴

The glass which was at Mottisfont remained there for the next two centuries. Some of it was then installed in the church of Woolbeding near Midhurst, where a member of the Mill family¹³ was rector during the 18th century. (Mottisfont had remained in the possession of descendants of the Sandys family.) Other pieces were given by Lady Mill of Mottisfont to the Reverend Anthony Chute, vicar of St Michael's Church from 1938-1947, but this was lost when bombs fell in 1940 - only a few fragments remain. One of the pieces in St Michael's rescued after the bombing is in the south aisle

A fair was held here in the graveyard every year from Wednesday to Friday in Whit week under a charter of Henry VI in 1449, and seems to have continued up to 1671¹⁵.

Blome's Hampshire of 1673 describes:-

"an ancient and fair Chappel, dedicated to the Holy Ghost, in the Roof of which was lively portrayed the Prophets, Apostles, and Disciples of Jesus Christ, which said Chappel is now reduced to ruin"¹⁶



A Tomb of Lord and Lady Sandys

Fig. 1

Plan from Baigent and Millard

The ground plan of the 13th century chapel is marked on the ground with stones and there is a badly eroded tomb, which would once have been in a tomb niche on the north wall of the chapel. It is of a knight, in mail

with a long surcoat, shield and sword. It is believed to be the tomb of Sir William de Brayboeuf, Lord of the manor of Eastrop who died in 1294. He has a shield and at his

¹¹ Jenkins, J.M. and Simpson, N. W. The Painted Glass of William, Lord Sandys (1470-1540)

¹² Ibid

¹³ Wayment H.G. The Stained Glass of the Chapel of the Vyne and the Chapel of the Holy Ghost, Basingstoke. In Archaeologica CVII, 1982 pp.141-152 – the Rev. Sir Henry Mill was Rector of Woolbeding 1746-1781

¹⁴ Ibid Jenkins and Simpson

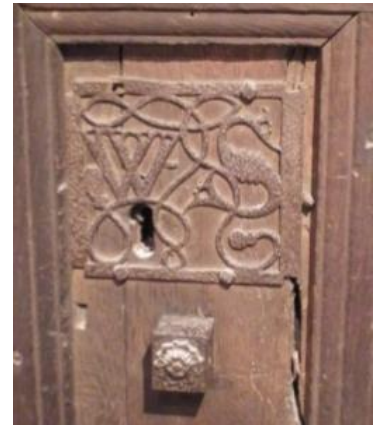
¹⁵ Ed. McKenzie, B Historical Miscellany of Basingstoke George W Willis p. 16

¹⁶ Blome's Hampshire 1673 from www.geog.port.ac.uk

feet there is a dog. Another damaged tomb dates from the early 17th century and is a few metres east of the remains of the earlier chapel west end. This figure is thought to be wearing a gown as worn by members of the Guild of the Holy Ghost.

The Willis Museum has a door which must have come from the chapel as the escutcheon has the initials 'WS' for William Sandys. The door had been removed and re-used on a house in the town before ending up in the museum.

Door in the Willis Museum with the initials 'WS'



Mrs Blunden

In 1674 a macabre event caused the town unwelcome notoriety. A Mrs Blunden (we don't know her first name) was the wife of William Blunden who was a maltster and a wealthy man. He was away from the town and his wife, presumably in pain, had asked her maid to go to the apothecary and get her something to help her. In those times, the best pain relief was opium based – in this case poppy-water. She fell into a deep drugged sleep and was thought to be dead. The weather was hot and so she was quickly buried. The schoolboys, whose playground was the burial ground, heard noises from the grave and even "take me out of my grave" and reported this to their schoolmaster, who did not at first believe them. But later, the body was exhumed and it did, indeed appear that there had been a fearsome struggle as though the poor woman had fought to get out. The town was fined for this terrible offence – at least, there was a London newssheet produced which said that this had happened but there is no historical evidence for the fine. In fact the person who had thought her dead escaped punishment because he had carried out all the possible tests to ensure that she was indeed lifeless. The late Arthur Attwood said that her grave had been just south-west of the tower.

Gilbert White (author of *Natural History of Selborne*)(1720-1793) was a scholar in Basingstoke and wrote about how he and other schoolboys set out to bring down the ruins by setting an explosive charge. He was a scholar in the Vicarage - home of the Rev Thomas Warton, Vicar of Basingstoke and studied alongside Thomas Warton Jr (1728-1790)¹⁷ who later became poet laureate. But since, on his own evidence he had played in the Liten and vandalised the ruins, it is possible that some of his lessons were taken at the school here¹⁸.

When the school moved to Worting Road in 1855 (on the BCOT site north of the Worting Road), there was an opportunity for the town to extend its much needed graveyard. A Burial Board was set up and land was acquired from what was known as Little Chapel Field north of the ruins. This was in addition to a piece of land known as Maiden Acre where the schoolboys had played. This piece of land later became subject to a dispute about whether the land had been given in perpetuity as a playground for the boys or for the children of the town. When the school moved to Worting Road and the Burial

¹⁷ Thomas Warton wrote a poem called '*To the River Lod[d]on*' calling it his '*sweet native stream*'.

¹⁸ White, Gilbert *Natural History of Selborne* 1769 "Very providentially the vast fragment which these thoughtless little engineers endeavoured to sap did not give way so soon as might have been expected; but it fell the night following and with such violence that it shook the very ground and, awakening the inhabitants of the neighbouring cottages, made them start up in their beds as if they had felt an earthquake."

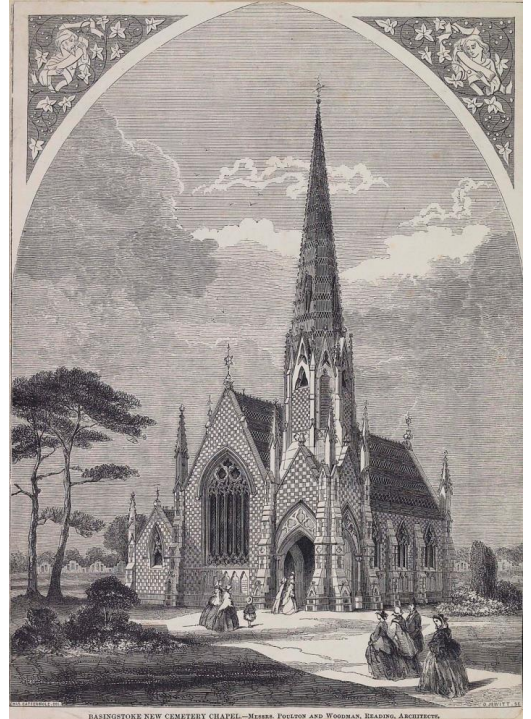
Board took the land as a burial ground, the towns' children went and played on the school's land at Worting Road. This led to a notice being put up warning that anyone trespassing would be found guilty of 'wilful and malicious trespass'. This was dated 26 July 1879¹⁹

With the school now gone, the burial board extended the graveyard north of the ruins and east to Vyne Road but not as far north as it does today as a portion of land equal in size to present day allotments belonged to the plot of land where Sylvaner Court is today.

Non-Conformist or Dissenters' chapel²⁰

In 1857 the cemetery lodge and two mortuary chapels by Poulton and Woodman were added and the wall was built on Vyne Road. These chapels were built in a high Victorian Gothic style, one Episcopalian and the other for Dissenters.

The cemetery was strictly divided, with non-conformist (Dissenters) and their chapel on the east side of the cemetery north of the Quaker burial ground, which already existed. Dissenters included Baptists, Congregationalists and Quakers. A piece of land in the south-east corner of the cemetery had been conveyed by the Great Western Railway to Henry Downs around 1850 (the earliest burial is 1848) as a trustee for the Society of Friends (Quakers) for use as a burial ground. This piece of land²¹, now within the enclosure of the cemetery, is where many of the town's Quakers are buried although there were other Quaker burial grounds at Reading Road and in Wote Street.



The two chapels were demolished in the late 1950s. The Episcopalian part of the cemetery was further sub-divided into consecrated and unconsecrated ground – clearly there were those even within the Established church who did not believe in the necessity for ground to be consecrated.

The Victorian Gothic cemetery keeper's lodge on the Chapel Street entrance is part of those cemetery improvements, also by Poulton and Woodman, from around 1857. It was the birthplace of poet, broadcaster and voice of cricket, John Arlott (1914-1991), whose father was the cemetery keeper here. A plaque put up by the Basingstoke Heritage Society notes this.



¹⁹ HRO 8M62/C5/1/18 Queen's School, Basingstoke. Notice

²⁰ Courtesy of Hampshire County Council Arts and Museums Service: HCC Records Office ref: TOP 19/2/67

²¹ HRO has a drawing which shows alleged ownership by Lord Bolton – part of a court case of 1878 between Lord Bolton and the GWR. 54M98/E/L2

The graveyard was in use right up to the time when the cemetery in Worting Road was opened in the early 20th century.

Some Interesting Burials

Thomas Burberry (1835-1926), founder of the now world-wide company, is buried here too. His early discovery, that fabric treated both in the yarn before weaving and then again afterwards, created a wind- and rain-proof material eventually made the name famous around the world. Burberry came to Basingstoke in 1856 and was in trade as a draper with various premises in Church Street and Winchester Street. He was an Ebenezer Strict Baptist and was a founder member of a chapel in Wote Street, which later became Moose Hall and was demolished during the 1960s town development. He lived at The Mount in Bounty Road, now demolished, where the Conservative Club is today. He later lived in Hook, but his son and grandson, both called Thomas, lived at The Shrubbery in Cliddesden Road, which later became the town's first maternity home.

Close to the Burberry vault is the gravestone of **Alfred Milward** (1837-1926), who opened his first shoe shop in the town around 1860. He too, was a Strict Baptist and it is said that he walked to Reading to preach on a Sunday and then back again. Milwards Shoes had branches in many towns.

Other townspeople of note buried in the cemetery are; **John May** (1837-1920), brewer, mayor and great benefactor to the town, and his brother **Thomas May** (1829-1870); **John Mares** who had a rainwear and clothing business²² (New Street, 1894-1950s), had been an apprentice of Thomas Burberry; **John Mussellwhite** (d.1876) and his son, William (d. 1903), whose building business flourished in the town and further afield until the 1960s. Mussellwhite had premises in Cross Street and at Eastrop Mill. The firm built many of the houses in Basingstoke – most of Eastrop Lane, many in Fairfields and a few in South View. They built the quirky Temple Towers apartments in Richmond Road as well as houses in Skippetts Lane and Cliddesden Road. Architect George Bennet Mussellwhite (1826-1874) designed the portico added onto the London Street United Reformed Church frontage in about 1870. In 1938, the firm built St John the Evangelist in Hook, designed by Edward Maufe, and in the 1950s St John the Evangelist in Newbury, which is listed (rare among post-war churches) and was designed by Stephen Dykes-Bower.

Members of the Wallis family, including **Arthur Wallis** founder of the firm of Wallis and Steevens, are buried in the Quaker part of the cemetery. **Charles Steevens** lived for a while in Sherborne House and his initials 'CJS' are in a cartouche above the front door of that property, which is one of just a handful of large 'gentlemen's residences' which survive in Basingstoke.

Although the gravestones were lifted in the late 1960s the burial records from about 1700 tell us who was buried here. **John Ring's** claim to fame now is that he sold a writing slope to the Reverend George Austen, Rector of Steventon, as a gift for his daughter Jane. John Ring was an auctioneer and furnisher – his ledgers are in the Hampshire Record Office.²³ Jane's mother, Cassandra Austen, had great faith in **Dr**

²² There is a photo of the Australian touring cricket team of 1948 wearing 'Peltinvain' raincoats, made by John Mares.

²³ HRO 8M62/15 Customer Accounts and Ledger. John Ring Dec 1785 - Oct 1792 Entry on p65 for 'a small mahogany writing desk with a long drawer and glass ink stand compleat' to Revd Austen Senior, Steventon in 1794

John Lyford²⁴ of Basingstoke, the family doctor, also buried here, and it was his nephew, Dr Giles Lyford, who treated Jane Austen in Winchester during her last illness in 1817. Another **John Lyford**, son of the Basingstoke doctor, was part of Jane's social circle. After a ball on January 8th 1796, she wrote with her usual acerbity:

“...to my inexpressible astonishment, I entirely escaped John Lyford. I was forced to fight hard for it however.”²⁵

This **John Lyford**, who took Holy Orders, married Jane Lodge and died in 1799 at the age of 30, is buried here too.

Roman Catholic burials took place near the gate leading to the former presbytery, now flats, belonging to the Catholic Church of the Holy Ghost in the north-west corner of the burial ground. Here is buried World War I Victoria Cross holder, **John Aidan Liddell**. Throughout the northern part of the graveyard are 22 graves maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, mainly of servicemen who died in Park Prewett hospital which was used as a Canadian military hospital in the 1914-1918 war. Apart from these servicemen who are buried here, there are other family gravestones which memorialise the lost servicemen of the First World War – for example the Paice family who record their two lost sons, one on HMS Invincible at the battle of Jutland, the other buried at Gonnehem cemetery in northern France. A full list of the CWG burials is on page 30.

John Burgess Soper (1820-1895) Founder of South View

John Burgess Soper knew Basingstoke from childhood. It seems to me that he recognised the business opportunity which the coming of the railway would have on towns like Basingstoke and he was able to purchase all of the area north of the railway, now known as South View. It was Soper who was responsible for the layout and promotion of South View – the name he gave to the house he built in Vyne Road. What he bought in 1867 was fields – for instance we know that when he sold land to the water company to put the reservoir (in Darlington Road), he was paid for a field of sainfoin – a fodder crop for working horses. He bought all the land from John and Thomas May, brewers for many years in Basingstoke. Their ancestor had acquired the fields following the Enclosures in the late 18th century. Before that they were in various ownerships, part of Chapel Field for instance belonging to the Guild of the Holy Ghost. As Soper is so much part of South View and its development I have included some of the family's interesting story.

Soper was born in Padworth in 1821 into a family of gun makers. His youngest brother, William (b. 1836) had a flourishing gun business in Reading and produced a weapon famous enough to be called the Soper Rifle. Their father, Richard Soper (1794-1863) had taken over the business from his elder brother, John (1793-1830) who had committed suicide at the age of 37²⁶. John and Richard were the sons of John Soper 1758-1821 and Martha Burgess b. 1792 – other children were Anne b. abt 1794 and Giles b. 1798.²⁷

²⁴ Listed as 'Surgeon and Man-midwife' in a Basingstoke Directory of 1784

²⁵ Jarvis, William in Jane Austen Society Report. 1962 pp.216-218 Letter to her sister Cassandra dated 9 Jan 1796.

²⁶ The Times 9 Nov 1830 From website Sopers of Berkshire.
<http://genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~soperstuff/Berkshire>

²⁷ See footnote 25

Richard Soper and his wife Sarah, née Paterson, and four of their children are recorded in the 1841 census in Market Place, Basingstoke. He is a gunsmith here, in Winchester Street from 1829-1834 and in London Street from 1843-1848.²⁸

John Burgess Soper was one of their 14 children born either at Aldermaston, Padworth, or Basingstoke. In 1841 John Burgess Soper was trading as a whitesmith²⁹ in London. He married Ann Laybourn, daughter of Thomas Laybourn of Auckland, Durham in June 1841 at St James's Westminster.

They had four daughters and a son, John George Laybourn Soper, born 1846, christened in Basingstoke on 27 December 1846, died in 1848, their third child. They had four daughters – Sarah Ann³⁰, Betsey³¹ Mary, Rosa Ellen³² and Alice Maria. He had a flourishing ironmongery business and is also described as a gunsmith so was possibly in the same premises where his father had been in the Market Place.



**Soper's Almshouses in Chapel Street.
Photo by Robert Brown.**

In 1889 he was mayor, The Times describing him as a 'Gladstonian Liberal'. He named the houses he built in Soper Grove 'Gladstone Villas'. He had an active civic life as a member of the Burial Board and other institutions. He founded some almshouses in Chapel Street which were demolished in the 1960s – their foundation plaque is in the Willis Museum. When he died in 1895 he left the princely sum of £598 12s 3d equivalent to about £50,000 in today's value.



Dr Croker's high wall, Fencott Place.

Soper might be described as litigious. There is a note of a libel case at Winchester Assizes, where he was awarded £50 following a defamation case he pursued against the borough surveyor. There is also the case of South View House and Dr Croker.

The Hants and Berks Gazette of 1882 (26 August) reports a case of assault brought by Soper. There had been a scuffle with the occupant of South View House (Dr Arthur Croker), which had been originally built by Soper and let out. By this time he had sold the property to a Dr Arthur Croker, a retired

naval surgeon. There had already been 'differences' between the two men and it was said that Soper had allowed his friend John Fencott to build terraces of houses very close to Dr Croker's property simply to annoy him. In response, Dr Croker had built a

²⁸ See footnote 25

²⁹ A whitesmith (as opposed to a blacksmith) worked in 'white' metals. Soper would have done piping for domestic gas installation amongst other things.

³⁰ Married Frederick Stephens. She is buried in South View with her parents and sister. Died aged 71 in 1913.

³¹ Married Lear George B. Howe, son of Lear Howe, teacher at the Grammar School in Basingstoke. She is buried in South View with her parents – she died at the age of 32 in 1876.

³² Married Charles Cooksey. In 1871 they are in Chichester. After Rosa's death, Alice Maria Soper is living with Charles Cooksey in 1901 in Southampton as his wife. Rosa is buried in Basingstoke cemetery in the Catholic part.

very high wall against the houses – it is still there today, the houses in question are in Fencott Place. (see above)

During the assault Dr Croker had got an iron bar from the stable. He pushed him [John Burgess Soper] over with this. Words used by Dr Croker were “unfit for publication” and Soper called him “a dirty beast” for his language. The magistrates would not send the case for trial as grievous bodily harm but treated it as common assault. There were, according to the report, “loud cheers” at this decision, disapproved of by Mr A. Wallis (another magistrate). Later that year, John Burgess Soper was charged with perjury and accused of not being as badly injured as he had said following this assault. There were ‘a string of witnesses’ who had seen Soper out walking when he said he had been confined to his house by his injuries for 3 days. The case was sent for trial at the Assize.³³ The case got to the Queen’s Bench who decided that Croker should not have been acquitted.³⁴ We get the impression that Soper was not particularly popular with some elements among the town’s leading men!

He was closely allied with the non-Conformist teetotallers during the Massagainian³⁵ riots from 1880 – 1883. Indeed, he was one of 3 magistrates appointed to the bench which altered the balance so that the mayor, May’s Brewery manager William Henry Blatch, and his supporters were outnumbered by those who broadly supported the right of the Salvation Army to parade through the town campaigning against the demon drink. A petition to the Lord Chancellor was got up to try and oust Soper and others from the bench – a petition which smelled ‘strongly of beer and tobacco’,³⁶ which was done to try and get the appointments of Soper and others sympathetic to the Salvation Army annulled. However, the appointments were confirmed by the Lord Chancellor and from then on the brewers did not have a majority on the magistrates’ bench.³⁷

Soper is buried, not in the Dissenters’ part of the cemetery, but in the Anglican (Episcopalian) part of the cemetery and his own religious affiliation is not known. However, it was Soper who offered land to the Catholics at South View when other non-conformists were opposed and he also offered land to the Vicar of St Michael’s for a mission church. St Michael’s did own a plot in Sherborne Road which housed curates from time to time. The house was called St Raphael’s and has since been demolished and flats built on the site.

The Railway

In terms of ruthless development, I suspect there has been nothing quite like the way the railway companies rode roughshod over local communities. Wealthy landowners like the Duke of Wellington might be able to see off the proposals for lines across their land, but the companies had considerable clout. The line from London to Basingstoke arrived in 1839 and the Great Western Railway from Reading in 1848. These were separate companies with separate stations. The Great Western, Brunel’s railway, had a wider

³³ Gazette 14 October 1882 p.8

³⁴ Gazette 25 November 1882 p.3 The outcome was an order *nisi* which meant a provisional decision, which does not have force or effect until a certain condition is met such as another petition brought before the court or after the passage of a period time.

³⁵ Clarke, Bob The Basingstoke Riots The Massagainians and the Salvation Army 1880-1883 Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society 2010 See this book for the full story.

³⁶ Gazette April 9 1881 p.2

³⁷ See also Bob Clarke’s book The Basingstoke Riots The Massagainians and the Salvation Army 1880-1883 Arch and Hist Society 2010 The appointments to the bench had been sought by Richard Wallis acting alone and the other (brewers’ faction) had objected to this as they should have sought the new nominations collectively.

gauge than the London and South Western Railway and Brunel was in the end forced to adopt the narrower gauge used by other railway companies. The station for the GWR was on the north side of the present station, with pedestrian access under the Vyne Road Bridge – this still survives as the raised route under the bridge.

The GWR had substantial goods sidings to the north and one of the surviving buildings is the former stable now in the north car park and the row of cottages still known as Great Western Railway Cottages as well as the Great Western Hotel, with the words, "livery and bait" visible on its outbuildings – evidence of the travellers who left their horses to be cared for when they set off by train. By the entrance to the railway car park, a strip of GWR rail still holds up a gatepost.



Former GWR stabling in the old Goods Yard

By 1868, the London & South Western Railway was seeking to extend the upline platform which required taking a strip of land 25' wide from the southern end of the cemetery. The footway referred to above was already there. At this time, the Corporation (as the council was then known), agreed to lower the road to give a headroom of 12' under the bridge arch. The railway company agreed to the costs of exhumation and reburial of bodies and agreed to widen the arch of the 'tunnel' to 20'. There was an insistence that the "entrance to the cemetery be equally good as at present"³⁸

St Thomas's, Darlington Road



³⁸ HRO plan 10M57/TR10/6 and 10M57/TR10/4

It was Admiral Ryder³⁹ who had the idea for establishing a diocesan home for women from Portsmouth, Portsea and Gosport. He was a member of the Church of England Purity Society and in 1883 delivered a paper at Reading entitled 'The Purity and Prevention of the Degradation of Women and Children.' It was thought that essentially places of refuge where the women could live and work and not return to their families would be a solution - a place where young women whose lives had been ruined by prostitution or abuse could come to live and work. In January 1863 the Bishop of Winchester gave his approval to the project to build a home at Basingstoke, chosen for its distance from Portsmouth and for its closeness to the railway. In 1874 a site of 3 acres was accepted in Basingstoke with option to buy 2 more acres @ £250 per acre. The seller was John Burgess Soper, who had acquired the land from the May Brothers in 1867. It was to offer to women:-

"the chance of recovering the character they have lost before God and society"

The home gave the women accommodation and work as laundresses, taking in laundry from the town. They were not allowed to go home, or, if they did, they would not be re-admitted to St Thomas's. Often their mothers would plead for them to go home and help with the care of their younger siblings, but it was known that if they did, the cycle of abuse and the income from prostitution would lead them into their former lives. The history of the home, written by its second warden, the Rev Reginald Bigg-Wither, contains heart-rending letters written by women whose lives had been changed by their stay in St Thomas's. By 1885 there were 60 penitents in the home plus servants, workers and sisters. The site was described thus:

The whole site of five acres, admirably placed upon the crown of a hill, eight minutes walk from Basingstoke Station, (with all its railway facilities), well supplied with water for garden and Laundry purposes, with a view extending from 5 to 25 miles in every direction, was surrounded partly by a wall, (given by Sir E Hulse) partly by a high fence of oak and fir. Moreover by an additional loan of £375 from Admiral Ryder, a suitable Gardener's Cottage or Lodge was built at the entrance gate of the "Home" grounds." "600 or 700 trees and shrubs" were planted.

In July 1884, work began on a new chapel designed by Henry Woodyer, a well-known architect and a follower of Pugin. (He also designed St Thomas of Canterbury at Worting). The chapel was dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester on July 21 1885, the eve of St Mary Magdalen's feast day⁴⁰ (she is, of course, the patron saint of 'fallen' women). Women who were taken in at St Thomas's had to stay for two years and would be trained in laundry and dairy work, cooking and needlework as well as doing some basic studying. The women, many of whom were very young, lived in cottages with a house mother. Two of the sisters who worked at St Thomas's, Sister Rachel and Sister Harriet, worked there until their deaths from overwork and it is reputed to be the ghost of Sister Harriet, a lady in grey, who haunts the present day nursing home.⁴¹

³⁹ Admiral Sir Alfred Phillips Ryder (1820-1888) Admiral of the Fleet, KCB. Commander in Chief, Portsmouth. He had been interested in this welfare work since 1850.

⁴⁰ Fisher, John Hampshire Magazine August 1988 p.55

⁴¹ Ibid p.57

The 1930 OS map calls St Thomas's the Mount Tabor Certified Institution, which was a different kind of home, sheltering people under the terms of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act⁴², but precisely when the diocesan home closed and Mt Tabor opened I don't know. It's interesting that Terry Hunt's photos of the chapel are labelled by him as the Chapel at Mt Tabor and although his photos are sadly undated they will probably not be later than the mid-1930s as his obituary noted that he had been ill for 8 or 9 years before his death in 1949. The Hampshire Record Office has references to Mount Tabor as being the home of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Transfiguration (an Anglican order) run under the auspices of the Winchester Diocesan Union for Preventive and Rescue Work.⁴³ In 1951 St Thomas's got its old name back as the School for the Deaf which occupied the site until it was closed in the mid-1980s. After that the premises were used as a night-shelter for the homeless but suffered some vandalism and fires.

When the complex of buildings was threatened with demolition for re-development in 1989, a group of local people led by the redoubtable Jean Miller, who lived opposite the home, fought a huge battle to save it and achieved statutory Grade II* listing for the chapel and were eventually able to resist Hampshire County Council's intention to demolish the rest of the complex of buildings. Now, as St Thomas's Care Home, run by Barchester Healthcare, it has a new and useful life.

The history of St Thomas's Diocesan Home for the Friendless and Fallen, Basingstoke⁴⁴ was written by the warden, the Rev Reginald Fitzhugh Bigg-Wither, who lived in Darlington Road in the warden's house from at least 1880 to 1895⁴⁵. The Bigg-Wither family home was at Manydown and it was Reginald's grandfather, Harris Bigg-Wither (1781-1833) who had proposed to and been accepted by Jane Austen, the whole matter having to be sorted out the next day.

Murder in Vyne Road – The Cornfield Murder

On 26th November 1924 The Times reported the verdict of what became known as 'The Cornfield Murder'. This tragic event took place at the north end of Vyne Road. On August 13th the body of Mrs Lucy Fisher was found by a couple walking on the footpath leading from Basingstoke to Sherborne St John. The location was about 40 yards from the borough boundary, which in those days was where Queen Mary Avenue is today. The victim lived with her husband in Lancaster Road, in the then quite new council houses. Her husband worked in Percy Fisher's leather works, which were just at the junction of Sherborne and Kingsclere Roads. Her murderer, whose name was William Edward Matthews, was considered 'unstable' and the verdict was 'guilty, but insane' and he was to be detained at her Majesty's pleasure. He lived with his mother in Queens Road and was 24 at the time of the murder. He had served in the Royal Marines but had been discharged because of his poor mental health. It is likely that he spent the rest of his life in Park Prewett.

⁴² It seems likely that it continued to operate a laundry as Miss Muriel and Edith Pink, who lived from childhood in Richmond Road recalled the laundry being taken to and fro by horse and cart. They moved to Richmond Road in about 1926.

⁴³ HRO100M97/C1/1

⁴⁴ HRO: History of the Foundation and of the chief incidents in the gradual Establishment of St Thomas' Home, Basingstoke, the Winchester Diocesan penitentiary for Friendless and Fallen Women, with a chapter concerning the penitents. Printed and Published by Jacob, C J, Winchester Street, Basingstoke and Simpkin, Marshall and Co., Stationers' Hall Court, London. No date.

⁴⁵ Basingstoke Directory Entries 1784-1935

Local historian, Robert Brown, told me that he was once in touch with a woman who had gone with her mother to visit her uncle in Park Prewett who had been this person.

The South View Estate Development

The map of 1851 has no development at all in the area but we know that John Burgess Soper acquired the land in 1867. The first auction of 1869 calls the area 'The South View Estate, the property of J.B.Soper Esq'. That first auction put on the market:

"40 very desirable freehold building sites to be sold by auction at the Black Boy Tavern ⁴⁶ on Monday 5 July 1869 at 3 o'clock".

The sites on offer were plots in Sherborne Road (east side), Burgess Road north and south sides and Vyne Road west side between Burgess Road and Cromwell Road. This first auction bears little relationship to how the area was eventually developed. Apart from the few houses next to the Church Hall, the south side of Burgess Road became allotments and the houses in Vyne Road were not built until the early years of the 20th century. It is from Soper that the Basingstoke and Eastrop Water Works bought land for the Darlington Road reservoir in 1871 and from him that St Thomas's Home for the Friendless and Fallen also purchased their plot in 1874. The road which Soper provided as access to the reservoir was known originally as Soper's Road, but later became Vyne Road. A directory of 1875 shows that William Bayley who was a solicitor, town clerk and many other things, was living in South View House. He later built Sherborne House as a home for his large family.

So it appears that South View House provided the name for the estate which Soper sought to develop. This large house stood where Weale Court is today and was not demolished until the 1970s. Although built as a 'gentleman's residence', on a site which stretched from Queen Mary Avenue to Phoenix Park Terrace, its surrounding land was soon reduced in size as Soper Grove, Phoenix Park Terrace and Fencott Place were built. If John Burgess Soper built it for himself, then he never seems to have lived in it. He did live in a cottage on the site but his own house, Hillside, where Sylvaner Court is now, was where he and his family lived. There were some similarities between the two houses; they both had a tower room and stone staircases. It was said that Soper had a horror of fire and certainly the other houses which we know he built - Gladstone Villas in Soper Grove - also have stone staircases. So I don't think there's any doubt that he gave the area its first property and its name. Within a few years South View House was let, but without its extensive lands. These were retained by Soper and sold on for re-development.

Evidence for W H Bayley's occupation of South View House comes from a land tax declaration in 1894 in which he declares "that he has known J B Soper since he purchased and laid out [the house] in 1867".⁴⁷ In 1880 South View House was up for auction plus a cottage and 30 plots for housing. The auction details are as follows:

⁴⁶ now Censo Bar in Church Street, formerly the Hop Leaf

⁴⁷ HRO ref: 40M74/E/T3 22 August 1894 Land Tax Issue

Auction of South View House and Cottage and 30 plots⁴⁸.

Auctioneer C F Cooksey to be held at the Red Lion 26/2/1880

Description:

South View House – own well-planted grounds 1¼ acres with carriage drive bounded by Lord Bolton on the east, frontage to S and W, extensive views, 5 good bedrooms, 2 dressing rooms, bath, 2 W.C.'s hot water heating, stabling 3 horses, coachhouse with man's room over and walled in kitchen garden.

The Cottage, lot 2 – 2 rec, 3-bed, attic occupied by Mr H Keep (tenant) approached from Soper's Road [Vyne] by private roadway 10 ft wide.



South View House. Photo by Terry Hunt ⁴⁹

It was a substantial house. The name of the auctioneer is interesting, because Charles F Cooksey became Soper's son in law, when he married Soper's daughter, Rosa.

South View House later became a Boys' Home, called in 1932 a 'Boys' Garden Colony'. In Millie Day's childhood the boys worked for Schroeders' nurseries in Winchester Road and were marched there and back each day.⁵⁰ The house was later converted into flats and demolished when Weale Court was built in the 1970s.

Selling South View

I have referred to the first auction of 1869, when plots on both sides of Burgess Road, Sherborne Road east side and Vyne Road between Cromwell Road and Richmond Road were offered for sale. In Darlington Road, the site already sold for St Thomas's Home is marked 'sold' in 1869 and South View House, is marked with its extensive grounds which stretched from Queen Mary Avenue to Phoenix Park Terrace. Two plots in Burgess Road are marked 'sold' – the pair which are now 49 and 51. I think it is likely that Soper built these. At the other end of Burgess Road on the north side the land for the terrace

⁴⁸ HRO 10M57/SP158

⁴⁹ Photo courtesy of The Willis Museum, Basingstoke.

⁵⁰ Notes from oral history done by Sheila Houston 15/11/1992. Amelia (Millie) Day, nee Matthews born 3/9/1910, Tilehurst, Berks. Died 1994. Lived mostly in Phoenix Park Terrace and then Weale Court.

(1-13) is marked sold. The builder who put 7 villas on this plot was G F Hedges – but not until 1899.



Hillside House, Vyne Road

By 1875 a directory gives us the following homes in South View: W H Bayley in South View House itself; John Bray Hill in South View Villas, Burgess Road (this will be either 49 or 51 in today's numbering); Joseph Hunt in 3 Vyne Road and J B Soper in The Cottage, South View, which I think was a cottage on Vyne Road – part of South View House's large site. A few years later, in 1880 Soper is living in Hillside on the site where Sylvaner Court is today; his garden extending westwards along what is now the north part of the cemetery.

No 3 Vyne Road, built by baker Joseph Hunt and occupied by his two daughters, was known as Prospect Villa, although the gatepost today says 'Dean Lodge'. Perhaps the southwards facing 'prospect' from 3 Vyne Road was lost when Soper's 'castle,' properly known as Hillside, was built (it was given this name because of the crenellations on it). Sadly, the only photo which survives of Hillside is the one taken after the Massagainians had broken all its windows. (above). The Massagainians was the name given to the brewers' men whose intention was to make life difficult for the Salvation Army by following their marches with a cacophony of saucepans and loud noises. Why this name? Because they 'massed' again and again.⁵¹

South View – later developments and auctions

By 1885 Soper was auctioning again but by this time, he had greatly reduced the size of the land around South View House itself. Already 3 new houses had been built on the north of the site – one survives as 36 Vyne Road. Just to the south was a house called *Celtesbury*, which Soper designed for his daughter Rosa Ellen and her husband Charles Cooksey. While excavating the footings of this house, the remains of a Celtic cist burial were found and these finds are in Reading Museum with other finds made by Cooksey, an auctioneer by trade, but a keen archaeologist and historian. It was after this find that the new home was named *Celtesbury*! This auction of 1885 offered 31 plots of freehold building land in Soper Grove and Fencott Place and the south side of Burgess Road, where the allotments are today. A further auction took place in 1903, referring to 'numerous Residences of a Superior Class' which had already been built in the area.

⁵¹ Clarke, Bob The Basingstoke Riots The Massagainians and the Salvation Army 1880-1883
Basingstoke Archaeological & Historical Society 2010

Tally-Ho Lodge

Like many developments, things did not turn out quite as they were first planned. In South View, the corner sites generally had large detached houses; on Cromwell Road and Sherborne Road south was Cromwell House and opposite on the north side, Tally-Ho Lodge, known first as Bridport Lodge and built by coal and timber merchant, Gerrald Stephens who had, unsurprisingly, moved here from Bridport.



On the corner of Burgess Road and Vyne Road north side was Oakley Lodge which I was told had been built by a local builder for one of his daughters and that he had built another house, the former Registrar's office, 60 New Road, for another daughter. If this is so, I have not been able to find any evidence for it. But the houses are very similar. Dentist Mr Carey lived here for many years.



53 Burgess Road, Oakley Lodge

The corner of Cromwell and Vyne north side had a large house, for many years in the 20th century the home of popular local GP, Dr Douglas Watt and his family. The house was demolished in the 1990s

and four homes are now on the site of this large home. It was the home of Francis Hillary, J.P., who was in business as a monumental mason. The house was known as The Peak, although in Dr Watt's time it was known as 'Greensleeves'.

Many houses have attractive features and interesting histories. 14 Cromwell Road was named Wallberry – for the reason that the newly-weds who bought it were from the Wallis and Burberry families. Arthur Wallis, grandson of the founder of engineering company, Wallis and Stevens, married Lorna Burberry, granddaughter of Thomas Burberry founder of the clothing company in 1918.⁵²

⁵² A photo of the wedding party can be found in Luffrum, J and Williams, H Eds. The House in Mary-Anne's Garden, known as The Shrubbery, Cliddesden Road.

The architect and builders of Temple Towers in Richmond Road were Mussellwhite. These flats, with their art nouveau influenced canopies, date from 1933. Their construction must (and did indeed) have outraged the then residents in 9 and 11 Richmond whose view southwards became the back of the flats – a sea of Crittall windows and drainpipes.



The three pairs of 19th century villas on the north side of Richmond Road were built by 1889 – they have elegant pressed or moulded tile decoration. The rest of Richmond Road was not developed until around 1912. All of these villas would have had an amazing view.



Darlington Road – the Warden's House

This handsome house now divided (half shown here) carries the inscription:

"Unless the Lord shall have built this house, those who built it have laboured in vain".

It was the home of the warden of St Thomas's Home for the Friendless and Fallen. From 1928 it was used for women and girls - presumably with babies, and closed for this use in 1958, when "higher

welfare state allowances and changed circumstances of living caused women and girls not to seek residential care".⁵³

⁵³ HRO 100M97/A2 North Hants Association of the Diocesan Association for Preventive and Rescue Work. After 1932 known as the North Hants Moral Welfare Council, which later became known as Wel-Care.

Sherborne House, corner of Darlington and Sherborne roads.



This is one of Basingstoke's only surviving 'gentlemen's residences' from the age when men walked to their place of business. We know that this house was built by William H Bayley between 1871 and 1881. He had previously lived in South View house. He was a solicitor, town clerk and clerk to all sorts of town committees and charities – his name turns up everywhere. He and his wife Sophia had 10 children but she died in childbirth in 1882⁵⁴.

The 1881 census lists 5 live-in servants to help with this large household. The house has, I believe, stained glass windows with the fables of Aesop in them, to entertain his children. Not long after Sophia's death, Bayley moved to Hook (an easy commute by train). Sophia and William are buried in South View Cemetery, as are some of their children. His name survived in the legal partnership of Bayley Mant and Kingdon at least until the 1970s. One of the blocks of new flats has been named 'Bayley House.' A later owner was Charles Steevens (partner of engineering company, Wallis & Steevens) and his initials are in the cartouche over the porch entrance. Sherborne House's survival is owed to its many years of use as a Health Authority home.

Vyne Road houses

36 Vyne Road in 1885 was the home of Frederick Marsh, another monumental mason, and a cousin of Francis Hillary who lived at The Peak (now demolished). East of the house were stables and outbuildings, demolished in 2013. The house was called at times Clynemilton and at others Luzborough House – H G Bradford built "4 new loose boxes" here in 1914, but a photo by Terry Hunt shows Conrad Prince's Hunting Stables which were on the corner of Vyne Road and Queen Mary Avenue where there are offices today. In 1895 Frederick Marsh was listed as the proprietor of Basingstoke Hunting stables which survived as stables until at least 1907 when "W Prince & Sons, dealer in horses, 9 Vyne Road" is listed in the Trades Directory for that year.

⁵⁴ Hants and Berks Gazette 11 November 1882



'Prince's Hunting Stables' by Terry Hunt

Millie Day's⁵⁵ oral history recalls as a child going over the fields at Oakridge to pick up sharp stones so that Mr Bradford's racehorses could exercise safely there. She mentions 'golf links' which is probably the golf course marked on the OS 1912 map west of Norn Hill.

Richard Ellaway lived at 22 Vyne Road. A friend of George Willis, he was interested in local history and very much part of the founding of the Willis Museum.

Photographer **Terry Hunt (1883-1949)** and his sister lived in Vyne Road – the house was called 'Vandyck' and is now numbered 7 Vyne Road. He previously had lived in Rochford Road and had run a business in Church Street.⁵⁶ About 1600 glass plate negatives by this local photographer are in the Hampshire Record Office or at the County Museum, both in Winchester. Many have been made available as prints. 5 and 7 Vyne Road were built by Mussellwhite in around 1902.

Phoenix Park Terrace was said to have been built for railway workers, but this doesn't seem to be the case. An auction of 1891 at the Red Lion notes the sale of all the cottages in Phoenix Park Terrace plus Phoenix Villa – that is 20 cottages and 1 villa offered at £3000. The houses had been built by T W Chester in 1878 but were not at that early stage occupied by railway workers. The 1881 census shows a variety of occupations among the residents. Millie Day's memory of Phoenix Park Terrace, when she was young, was that most of the men were employed by the railway. In 1940 she paid rent of 7s/6d (38p) a week for her



house (no.2), which had neither gas nor electricity – oil for lamps was bought from Wiggins shop in Vyne Road. The bombs which fell in August 1940 blew out all of the windows. There was an air-raid shelter on Vyne Meadow, she recalled.

Vyne Road - Great Western Hotel and houses to the north⁵⁷.

Interestingly another plan for the area now known as **Vyne Meadow car park** was for tight terraced housing all over the area, but instead it was

acquired by Mr Raynbird for his cattle auctions business and many may remember

⁵⁵ Notes from oral history done by Sheila Houston 15/11/1992. Amelia (Millie) Day, nee Matthews born 3/9/1910, Tilehurst, Berks. Died 1994. Lived mostly in Phoenix Park Terrace and then Weale Court.

⁵⁶ Hants and Berks Gazette June 1949 for his obituary.

⁵⁷ Terry Hunt. Courtesy of Hampshire Records Office: HRO HPP38/0144

cows and sheep penned on that area - there were other cattle pens just south of the railway station on Station Hill where the business office was.

At one time Mr Raynbird lived at 6 Vyne Road – one of a pair of houses next to the Great Western Hotel. The Station Manager of the Great Western Railway lived in one of these houses – the auction map of 1869 marks the piece of land opposite the pub as 'G.W.R. Agents' allotment garden'.⁵⁸ The two houses were demolished and a dairy was built set back from the road – Down Grange Dairy owned it. After that a freezer shop and then a builders supply business. The flats inexplicably named Glebe House now stand on the site.

Land which had been compulsorily purchased by the railway companies, but not used, could be returned to the former owners. In 1878 Vyne Meadow had been the subject of a dispute between the GWR and Thomas May and was then described as being covered with spoil from the making of the railway. A drawing held at the Hampshire Record Office shows the disputed ground.⁵⁹

Soper Grove – the shops

In 1899 builder G F Hedges built '2 new shops and living accommodation' and by at least 1911, John Wiggins with his wife Annie was in business here. The 1901 census has John and Annie living at 4 College Terrace, Flaxfield Road. Born in Oxfordshire, John Wiggins was in Basingstoke aged 19 working as a grocer's porter. The shop was known as Wiggins until it was taken over by Mrs Rapson who had previously had a business in Reading Road. Her son, David and wife Janet ran the shop for many years.

Burgess Road Church Hall

The Holy Ghost Catholic Church

The foundation stone on the Burgess Road hall dates the building to 1878, the church itself being from a later date. There had been no Catholic Church in Basingstoke before this date. The history of the church⁶⁰ says that there had been an influx of Irish labourers who had come to build the railway and this had added to the number of Catholics in the town.



Canon Crookall from Woolhampton had been coming to say mass in Basingstoke in a private house. He wished to buy land for a church but met with opposition. John Burgess Soper's gardener was a Catholic and when Soper heard of this, he offered a choice of sites in South View and the first chapel was built, now the hall. The church also built the row of cottages next to the hall and in 1878 Father James Daly lived in one of these, known as Shirley Cottage, the kitchen being used as a chapel⁶¹.

⁵⁸ Opened as a community garden in 2013.

⁵⁹ This drawing shows alleged ownership by Lord Bolton and Thomas May – part of a court case of 1878. HRO 54M98/E/L2

⁶⁰ Grufferty, Father Tom Holy Ghost Church, Basingstoke. A History. 1992

⁶¹ Ibid. p.2



Holy Ghost Hall and Church, Burgess Road

Like many others, Canon Alexander-Joseph Scholes travelled the railway line to London and knew of the Holy Ghost ruined chapel. By 1900 the town had no resident priest. Canon Scholes was an architect as well as a priest and had already built a church in Yeovil. It was his decision to build Basingstoke a Catholic Church. The builder was Joseph Tigwell. By the end of 1901, Canon Scholes had moved into the new presbytery attached to the church. He died in 1920 and is buried outside the church which he had built.

During WW1, when the Belgian Royal family were living at Hackwood Park they attended mass here.

During restoration in 1992 the following inscription was found on the candle-holder on the Lady Chapel altar – it was thought at the time that this could have been the original sanctuary lamp from Burgess Road hall.

*Virgini Deiparae de Asseerquick Ex Voto
Orato Animo Laetantes Offerunt
Edmundus Waterton de Walton Eques Christi
Et Josephine Uxor SVA Carissima
Die 11 June AD 1862*

Roughly translated this is a prayer of thanksgiving 'Virgin, Mother of God of the Vow of Asseerquick/ pray with a joyful spirit/Edmund Waterton of Walton, Knight of Christ/ and Josephine his dearest wife.'⁶²

But what was the connection between Edmund Waterton, his wife Josephine and the church? Edmund Waterton was born in 1831 in Walton Bretton, Yorkshire – his father a 'landed proprietor' according to the census. The house was called Walton Hall – a handsome Palladian mansion. The date of 1862 is too early for the Burgess Road hall so this remains a mystery. In fact, his wife Margaret Alicia Josephine née Ennis had died in 1879. The other mystery is Asseerquick. Is it a place, perhaps in Belgium? A bit of research showed that the family had lived in Brussels and that Edmund Waterton had written a History of English shrines to Our Lady.⁶³ I have not seen the inscription myself but have not been able to discover this place.

“Air raid in south-east England town⁶⁴”

In August 1940, a stray bomber which had dropped bombs in Church Square flew north and dropped more in Burgess Road. Four people were killed in total and several houses in Church Square and Burgess Road were damaged beyond repair and demolished.

⁶² Thanks to Tom Merriam for help with this item and Latin.

⁶³ *Pietas Mariana Britannica* London, 1879

⁶⁴ Hants and Berks Gazette. Friday 23 August 1940

Millie Day⁶⁵ recalled that the windows in Phoenix Park Terrace blew out and that her husband who worked at Thornycroft's was told to go home – anyone who lived in South View was to go home as there had been a bomb. She knew the family in Burgess Road and took them in as their home was uninhabitable. A family called White, who were visiting in Burgess Road that day, were also killed.



The bombing of Burgess Road – 1940 and today



Other evidence of WW2 can be seen in the cemetery where the tank blocks survive – part of a defensive ring around the station which would have served as a defensible 'island'. Loop-holes in the south parapets of the Chapel Hill railway bridge and the Bunnian Place bridge (left) also date from WW2. There was an air raid wardens' post in Burgess Road, just by the entrance to the cemetery (a house is there now).

On Whiteditch is a building, which was thought to be a gas decontamination unit. It has a central tower which may have contained a water tank for the showers.



WW2 building at Whiteditch

However, further research showed that this building and one other south of War Memorial Park were built as Rescue Party Depots, in a sort of tidying-up exercise. Before this, equipment had been housed in various builders' yards or at the council. The two buildings were to be known as No. 6 and No. 7 Parties. Work began in the autumn of 1943 and was held up by a shortage of material, finally completed by March 1944.⁶⁶

The Whiteditch building has survived because it was used by rugby and football clubs as changing rooms.

⁶⁵ See footnote 46

⁶⁶ Hampshire Record Office. Civil Defence Committee Minutes 148M71/1/6/44, /49./50./51

South View today

So much has changed. This was the very northern edge of Basingstoke until the early 1950s when the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston built an outpost estate to house some of its personnel. They called it Oakridge which derived from the name of a nearby farm but which gave rise to the suspicion that it had been named after the Oak Ridge plant in Tennessee where part of the Manhattan Project had begun. Before then it had been as Millie Day⁶⁷ described it:-

“Queen Mary Avenue was a cart track with dog roses and scabious. Next field was called the Warren, mushrooms there. At the top of Vyne Road a cornfield, then Oakridge farm on the right and further Popley Farm and a dell called the White Horse Dell”.

After WW1 (1921), council housing was built in the triangle between Sherborne Road and Kingsclere Road and in 1940 Queen Mary's Grammar School for Boys moved to Vyne Road from its Worting Road site. Post-war council housing was built in Queen Mary Avenue (1950s) and all the roads through to Doswell Way and Reading Road many of the roads taking names from the town's history – Lyford, Warton, Pemerton, Deanes etc. South View Schools were built to serve the AWRE children.

When the agreement was signed between the Borough of Basingstoke and the London County Council in October 1961 to house 11,500 families in Basingstoke under the new and expanded towns scheme, things were clearly going to change. The new estates at Oakridge and Popley created a new northern boundary for the town on land once farmed as Oakridge Farm and Popley Fields Farm. Old routes such as Sherborne Road and Reading Road (Norn Hill) were cut off by the new Ringway. Many displaced residents whose homes were compulsorily purchased for the development were rehoused at Oakridge 3 as it was called – the *Hallamshire* houses where Sherborne Road meets Oakridge Road.

Since then there have been small developmental changes and many large gardens have been sold in whole or part to make new plots and homes. The large corner houses have all gone apart from 53 Burgess Road, but that has lost its garden and corner site. Since then too, the town centre has grown enormously and crept nearer and nearer to South View.



Typical 'rat-trap' wall in South View

In 2006 South View was designated as a conservation area, with a good appraisal document which draws attention to features of the area - its notable buildings and its many walls – particularly the 'rat-trap' boundary walls⁶⁸ in Burgess Road and Cromwell Road. The purpose of the designation is to preserve what is best and to be certain that any replacements 'conserve or enhance' the area. At the time,

⁶⁷ Notes from oral history done by Sheila Houston 15/11/1992. Amelia (Millie) Day, nee Matthews born 3/9/1910, Tilehurst, Berks. Died 1994. Lived mostly in Phoenix Park Terrace and then Weale Court.

⁶⁸ A Victorian method of wall construction.

this included a number of Edwardian or 1920s street light columns, but these are now reduced to three⁶⁹, all in Cromwell Road – evidence of very recent change. Many of us live in infill houses which are only here because the area has changed and large gardens split up and built on – my own house is built on the former tennis court of 9 Vyne Road so evidently more change will come but hopefully the best bits of this small part of Basingstoke will survive.

I chose to write this history because I have lived in the area for most of my life. Growing up, I knew the stories of Mrs Blunden and the covenants against brewing and wondered about them. I joined the Basingstoke Heritage Society in 1989 and became secretary which meant that I was forever researching this or that to answer a question put to the society. The South View Conservation Volunteers did and do wonderful work uncovering monuments in the cemetery and it was good to find some which were very overgrown. The South View Residents Association have campaigned for South View for years and were successful in getting a grant to do some reparation work by a stonemason in the cemetery a few years ago. This is not the final story of South View. I will have left things out or not answered the questions which people have about the area where they have chosen to live. I hope that this little history will interest people and inspire them to find out and fill the gaps in this story. I owe a debt of thanks to Barbara and Bob Applin who kindly read and commented on this for me.

Debbie Reavell
South View
2014

⁶⁹ Another was destroyed in 2020!

**COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES – SOUTH VIEW CEMETERY,
BASINGSTOKE with added information from the burial registers.**

1. **BALLARD, James s/no. 2448** Private, Hampshire Regiment, 2nd/4th Bn., Age 50, 09/11/1917, Grave Ref, A. 292 Wote Street
2. **BRADDOCK, SYLVESTER**, Private, Canadian Infantry (Western Ontario Regiment, 18th Bn, Age 26, 07/06/1918, Son of Timothy and Mary Braddock, of 167, Main St., Woodstock, Ontario. **s/no 53065**. Address PP Hospital. Canon Scholes officiated. B. Manchester, UK 16/12/1891
3. **COOK**, Private, **ERNEST CHARLES**, 242451, 5th Bn., Hampshire Regiment. 8 May 1917. Age 18. Son of Charles and Mary Jane Cook, of 213 Junction Rd., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. A. 268.
4. **CORNISH**, Private, **HAROLD**, PO/16621, Portsmouth Div., Royal Marine Light Infantry. Died of phthisis 21 January 1920. Age 24. Son of William and Emily Cornish, of 30, Richmond Rd., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. A. 286.
5. **DE PELICHY, Julius**, Sergeant, Canadian Infantry (Quebec Regiment), 22nd Bn., 26/04/1918 born Ypres, next of kin in Louvain. **S/no 63292**. Address PPH. Officiating Scholes. Dob 20/1/1882
6. **DIBLEY**, Air Mechanic 2nd Class, **WILLIAM FRANK**, 281033, Aircraft Repair Depot (Donibristle), Royal Air Force. 18 April 1919. Age 22. Son of John and Mary Ann Dibley, of 36, Reading Rd., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. A. 360.
7. **FULLBROOK, Ernest**, Serjeant, Army Service Corps, 11/04/1917, Grave ref A.198. **s/no T/12126**. Address Knowle Asylum
8. **GOODYEAR, Frederick**, Private, Training Reserve, 33rd Bn., 26/03/1917, Grave ref A83. **s/no 8/1800**. Aged 18 Dummer
9. **HASLER**, Private, **CHARLES GEORGE**, TR7/2110, 92nd Bn., Training Reserve. 31 May 1917. Age 18. Stepson of Mrs. E. Hasler, of 61, May St., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. B. 731.
10. **JAMES**, Lance Corporal, **JOHN FRANCIS**, WR/296421, 107th Railway Operating Coy., Royal Engineers. 8 February 1920. Age 31. Son of John William and Amelia James, of 19, Junction Rd., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. A. 353.
11. **LACERTE, Wilbray**, Corporal, Canadian Army Medical Corps, No. 4 Canadian Stationary Hosp., 14/11/1918. **s/no 26467** address Canadian Hospital, Monk Sherborne. Age 32. Scholes.
12. **LIDDELL**⁷⁰, Captain, **JOHN AIDAN**, V C, M C, 7th Sqdn. Royal Flying Corps. and 3rd Bn. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, Died of wounds 31 August 1915. Age 27. Son of John and Emily C. Liddell, of Sherfield Manor, Basingstoke. Grave Ref. E. R.C. 2257/8. An extract from "The London Gazette," dated, 23rd Aug., 1915, records the following:-"For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty on 31st July, 1915. When on a flying reconnaissance over Ostend-Bruges-Ghent he was severely wounded (his right thigh being broken), which caused momentary unconsciousness, but by a

⁷⁰ This is not a typical Commonwealth War Grave

great effort he recovered partial control after his machine had dropped nearly 3,000 feet, and notwithstanding his collapsed state succeeded, although continually fired at, in completing his course, and brought the aeroplane into our lines - half an hour after he had been wounded. The difficulties experienced by this officer in saving his machine, and the life of his observer, cannot be readily expressed, but as the control wheel and the throttle control were smashed, and also one of the under-carriage struts, it would seem incredible that he could have accomplished his task.”

13. **MERCER**, Corporal, SYDNEY ALBERT, 54928, Machine Gun Corps (Infantry). Died of wounds (gas) 25 October 1918. Age 23. Son of David and Julia Mercer, of Basingstoke; husband of Annie Mercer, of 10, Anstey Rd., Reading. Grave Ref. A. 291. Address Rayleigh Road.
14. **OLIVER**, Private, W A, PO/18784, R.M. Depot (Deal), Royal Marine Light Infantry. Died of heart failure 4 May 1916. Age 18. Son of Arthur and Emily Jane Oliver, of 31, Basing Rd., Basingstoke. Grave Ref. E. R.C. 1947.
15. **ROBERTSON, J**, Private, 78th Btn. Canadian Infantry (Manitoba Regiment), 78th Bn. 21/08/1918, Son of Soulonge Robertson, of 127, 4th Avenue, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. s/no **2173567. PPH.** Scholes.
16. **SIMPSON, William S**, Rifleman, London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles), 16th Bn., 11/05/1918, Grave ref B. 518. s/no **554682** age 36 Victoria Street, Reading. RC Rev O’Gorman Power
17. **SLARK, WILLIAM JOHN**, French Red Cross Society, Born 1868 Norman Place, Basingstoke - Died 6th June 1916 age 49 Guy’s Hospital. Boustead Cof E [bmd death William John Slark, Southwark, age 49 Q2 1916]
18. **STRONG**, Leading Stoker, JAMES, 303502, H.M.S. Victory, Royal Navy. 15 April 1917. Age 39. Son of Annie Pollard (formerly Strong), of Basingstoke, and the late James Strong; husband of Emily Clarke (formerly Strong), of 26, Prince George St., Portsea, Portsmouth. Grave Ref. A. 12. Died Knowle Asylum.
19. **USHER, Alfred Joseph**, Private, Army Service Corps, No. 1 Reserve Depot, 27/04/1917, Grave ref B. 12. s/no **M2/274296** age 38, ex-soldier buried 3/5/1917. Phoenix Park Terrace. b. 1879
20. **VANDER POORTEN, Henri Leander**⁷¹, 10th Regiment of the Line, Born 23 February 1884 in Meerbeke near Ninove, Belgium, Wounded on 30 October 1914, Died 5 June 1916 “Basingstoke Cottage Hospital” Age 35 Scholes **THIS IS A BELGIAN WAR GRAVE.**
21. **WILLIAMS, Lambert Llewellyn G**, Sergeant Pilot 1322385 Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve . Died 17 June 1943⁷², age 21 Grave E.1993 6 Chesterfield Place
22. **WILSON, William Charles**. Private 355190 2nd Btn.Hampshire Regiment. Died 24 March 1919, age 25. Grave A219 Flaxfield Road

⁷¹ This is a Belgian war grave although similar in appearance to a CWGC stone.

⁷² The only WW2 grave here.

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