



SHIRLEY HERITAGE PROJECT

Newsletter

OCTOBER 2010

ISSUE 2



Welcome!

To the second edition of our History newsletter

In this issue we're bringing you up to date with local history-related news since March 2010 and details of our forthcoming public talks.

At the time of this issue it is a particularly historic moment in the life of the Park. As the contractors give the Park a fantastic 21st Century makeover, it has to be said that seeing the play equipment of our children removed, with all the memories that this holds, has not been an easy moment for any of us. We love our Park and cherish the times we have spent there.

If you would like to write in, the editors of the History Newsletter are happy to receive any letters you or your children would like to share about times spent in the Park or playground.

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Letters to the Editor

Railway Links?

In April 2010, former Shirley resident and now Engine Driver, Dave Purvis contacted us by email. He had been reading on the FoSJP website our article on the 1880s proposed Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway and was disappointed to note that the route of the railway did not appear to be next to the Park as envisaged and told by generation to generation.

You may remember that the route went behind St. James' Church towards the Shirley School Playground and not next to the Park. Dave even went to the Hampshire Records Office to check on the route himself. In the coming months we'll be sharing Dave's findings on the FoSJP website. Having links with Railway enthusiasts and Railway historians, Dave also forwarded our information to Railway Author, Kevin Robertson and this is what he had to say in April 2010:

"It is wonderful to see so much new discussion on something that took place well over a century ago, which I had believed had been long forgotten, certainly unknown of by many. Long may the schoolchildren and others of the area continue their research."

i Kevin Robertson is the author of many Railway History Books including "The Didcot, Newbury & Southampton Railway", published by Wild Swan; we really appreciate his comments.

We'll be adding a list of Kevin's books to our website in case you'd like to read more on this subject.

What's in a Name?

St. James' Park was originally named and locally known as the Shirley Recreation Ground.

So when did the name change take place?

Local Historian, Mr AGK Leonard checked the Southampton City Council's City Archives - no mention there. Mrs Doswell contacted us in June 2010, with details of an email from SCC in 2005, still referring to the Recreation Ground. The SCC Parks and Open Spaces Team has no records as to why or when the name was changed. However, Helen Seward of SCC Neighbourhood Services confirms that SCC holds a map of the parks, listing St. James' Park as early as 2001. It was at about this time that the green and white signs were made for a number of the parks. This is our best clue to date.



FoSJP History Research Group

The History Research Group met for the first time on 25th April and again on 12th June. Members have since been helping with research and at History-related events.

If you'd like to be involved in this, the next meeting of the group will be announced at the 3rd October Public Talk and listed on the FoSJP website.

Members of the Research Group are pictured below with the University of Southampton group.

Working with the University of Southampton

Second Year Students from the University of Southampton worked with FoSJP from March to May 2010, as part of their history studies.

30th April

A delegation from FoSJP attended the University group's presentation. Pictured here are Group 20 with FoSJP Research Group members.



Mr Hancock of the FoSJP History Research Group writes:

"Six members of FoSJP attended a presentation on Admiral Sir Charles Bullen, GCB, GCH at the University of Southampton, given by students from the History Department.

Each student presented a part of the story, from his birth at Newcastle, his joining the Navy at the age of 10, his naval career, and his connection with Shirley, illustrated by extracts from various documents.

Sir Charles Bullen had the distinction of being the last surviving captain who served under Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805. He is of interest to the History Research Group as he spent the latter years of his life in this area."

5th May

To decorate the Parish Hall for the students' "Shirley Remembers VE Day", yards and yards of Union Jack bunting needed pinning and stitching.



Thanks go to local ladies Lucy Gledhill-Gilvarry, Jane Villiers, Jean Webb, Annie Donnan and Shirley Nicholas for all their work, and to Hilary Moore for hosting the work and doing much of the stitching the next day.

8th May

The students held their "Shirley Remembers VE Day" and videoed recorded memories. The room looked wonderful with bunting and displays. The students decorated a Street Party-style table with authentic wartime recipes including Wartime Blancmange, Trench Cake, Eggless Cakes and a Victoria Sponge, which brought back some memories for those attending.

Thank you to everyone who shared their time, especially to Mr Ken Conway, a former Air Raid Precaution Warden, Mr Arthur House, former WWII Saints goalkeeper and Navy Man on HMS Invincible, and Mrs Susan Ponsford, whose parents were Mayor and Mayoress during WWII.

Susan shared her parents' civic photograph album.



War-time Blancmange



Trench Cakes



Eggless Cakes

23rd May

Based on their research, the University of Southampton Students presented a talk on "WWII: The People. The Park".

Approximately 25 people attended and this was very well received. The students were graded with a first: top marks! So well done to all. A thank you card and flowers were received from the students.

Reports on History Events since March 2010

History Walk and Talk

St. James' Park to Shirley Pond Park

13th June, led by Dr Mary South

Lindsay Ford, Joint Curator of Maritime and Local Collections, Southampton City Council joined us with her family on this walk.



10 weeks to 87 years old!

This is what Lindsay had to say...

"A most enjoyable afternoon was had by all the family - mum, dad, kids (4 and 7). The weather was great and to actually get out and look at the area of interest (in this case the Shirley Pond area) helped to orientate us. The frequent information stops were most useful, particularly as everyone felt sufficiently at ease to offer their own snippet of information to the group, be it of an historical, botanical or conjectural nature.

My daughters particularly liked seeing the 'dragons teeth' (barricades against the possibility of wartime invasion by German tanks) and which mum had not noticed tucked away in the hedge before, and balancing precariously on the banks of the stream whilst hearing about the invasion of the skunk cabbage! The only downfall of this was that we ran out of time to do the full walk - though of course this could be seen as an excellent opportunity for walk number 2! Maybe a map with the route and some of the points of interest with their dates marked on it would have helped to focus the mind a little?

Thanks to Michaela and Mary South and everyone else involved in FoSJP who made it a most enjoyable walk."

History Stall at Shirley School Fair

19th June, Shirley Infant/Junior School

Madge Heath, of the History Research Group answered our plea for volunteers and this is what she said about helping out on the day...

"It was with some trepidation that I agreed to help with the FoSJP stand at the Shirley Junior School fête. Trepidation because I am not used to the company of that age group. However it was good fun. FoSJP had a display stand and area to talk to people about the Park and a table with activities for children. I relieved at the activities table. The fête was very busy, the weather was dry, but rather cold in the breezy area where we were set up, papers had to be weighed down to prevent them blowing away. A word search was devised which many of the children enjoyed doing, while the other task was to identify where a series of picture were taken. The pictures related to the area around and in the Park and school. To help with the identification individual pictures with their title were posted around the playground, where the fête was taking place, so children and their parents were encouraged to visit the whole of the area to fill in their missing answers. This also proved popular with children returning to select their prize for completion in the form of one of a rather snazzy selection of pens."

Thanks must also go to Pete Wardell, whose collection of "Then & Now" postcards and photographs, comparing scenes of Shirley from the 1900s with today, were very popular with stall visitors.

Bourne Avenue Street Party

10th July, Bourne Avenue

FoSJP Chair, Nichola Caveney and History Co-ordinator, Michaela Lawler-Levene shared the history of St. James' Park and local history at the Bourne Avenue Street Party in July at the invitation of local residents - what a lovely community event!



Thanks to Margaret Osmond for her hospitality and Carolyn, who donated to FoSJP an 1871 map of Southampton to share at our forthcoming talks.

Battle of Britain 70 Years Anniversary 1940-2010

As Britain acknowledges this Anniversary of the air campaign by the Luftwaffe, during the Summer and Autumn of 1940, memories shared with us become so poignant.

Born in 1936, too young to be evacuated, Bill Smith recalled the whirring noise of sudden low flying enemy aircraft and the twinkling of machine gun bullets being fired along the footpath of Church Street. This was quite early during the war and at that time there was no warning, no siren going off. Boys searched for shrapnel after raids and at times there was huge devastation. He recalls the horror of a bomb that had landed at the end of Colebrook Avenue. Southampton, as a port, was a target for these air strikes.

A significant contribution of Southampton's residents to the Battle of Britain was local production of the Spitfire. Mrs Rita Judd recalls her mother's war effort:

"My mother, along with a number of other mothers of young children (mothers with only older children had to work in factories, shops, etc.) were asked to take paying guests into their homes. My mother had two young girls from 17-18 years old upwards, for four weeks at a time, who lived with the family and were provided with full board and keep for a certain payment per week, to cover the cost of their care."

These girls were trained in engineering skills and then sent off to work in factories around the country. One of the girls was sent to Seward's Garage in Winchester Road, to work on the making of parts towards the assembly of the Spitfire - work which was contracted around many sites throughout Southampton after the Supermarine Works was bombed."



The Supermarine Works was extensively damaged by the Luftwaffe on 25th September 1940, after which the Air Ministry ordered that production be dispersed; in Southampton alone, production was later carried out over 28 locations employing about 3,000 people.

Oral History Interviews

Thank you to Bill Smith for sharing memories of the Park in WWII, Mr Conway for more detailed memories of an ARP Warden, Ken Prior for memories of working in the Park, and descendants of George Harris - especially Patricia Quick, Helen Hart, Sarah Mintram and Jean Glue for sharing family memories and photos.

These will make a wonderful addition to the book on the Park's history.



Photos in the Park

Thanks also go to Dr Struthers for sharing a family photo in the Park.

We are particularly in need of colour photos on the original Winchester Road steps, the tennis/changing huts and photos of the flower beds in the Rose Garden.

If you have any pictures that you're happy to share, please contact Michaela by email: history@fosjp.org.uk or tel: 023.8034.4652.

Forthcoming Events

FoJSP History Talks Oct-Dec 2010

First Sunday in each month, 3-5pm
Shirley Parish Hall - refreshments provided

Sunday 3rd October

Tips on Researching the History of Your House (with local examples)
by Michaela Lawler-Levene & Madge Heath

Sunday 7th November

The Shirley Trams
by Jeff Pain

Sunday 5th December

Local Architecture
speaker to be confirmed



See FoJSP website for the latest information.

Other Related Events

The Sarah Siddons Fan Club Theatre Company will be performing "The Undertaker's Tale of 'Orrible Deaths'" from Holy Rood Church, High St, Southampton, on 31st October and 1st November at 7pm and 9pm. Tickets £5, tel: 023.8083.3333.

The Tudor House Museum will re-open next summer after a Heritage Lottery Fund refurbishment. In celebration of this wonderful achievement the city will be hosting a season of Tudor-related events next year. Look out for further information.