



# SHIRLEY HERITAGE PROJECT

## NEWSLETTER



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ISSUE 8

## National Archives Visit

### *FoSJP History Research Group visits Kew*

In November 2013 a small (and rather excited!) band of **FoSJP History Research Group** members made a trip to the **National Archives** in Kew.

We quickly became absorbed in the archives with discoveries about St. James' Park, the proposed Didcot, Newbury and Southampton railway in the 1800s, Shirley Schools, the World War I Shirley Prisoner of War Detention Camp, and the development of Shirley. The highlight was the unfurling of the 1840-1843 tithe map for the Parish of Millbrook and Shirley which offered a tantalising glimpse back in time.



The intriguing story which emerged from the National Archives of the rebuilding of the Shirley Schools at the turn of the century and their move from Church to State control was reflected in the December 2013 talk given by Michaela Lawler-Levene and Liz Webb. We are hopeful of a return trip soon to the archives to uncover more fascinating reflections of the past.

*Vicki Stacey*

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## IN MEMORIAM

Mrs Freda Hancock shared memories and photographs with us, including the pony and trap on Laundry Road featured in History Newsletter #6 in April 2013.

Freda died suddenly on 20th March 2014, aged 92. Our condolences to her son Ray and all her family.

## Oral History Project

### *Training Workshop*

On Saturday 1st February Padmini Broomfield, regional representative of the **Oral History Society**, delivered a training workshop to FoSJP volunteers to help us in the collection of memories of St. James' Park and the surrounding area.

Thank you to the 13 people who attended the course and to those who are now busy typing up the recorded interviews. Special thanks go to Vicki Stacey, Typist Coordinator, and Cindy Philips, Lead Typist.

### *Photoshoot*

Oral History Project interviewees were invited to a photoshoot on Saturday 8th February, ready for the forthcoming book on the history of St. James' Park.

After their *paparazzi* session, our visitors enjoyed a cup of tea in the ParkLife Café and enjoyed a chance to reminisce with each other about times past.

We've also invited our interviewees to afternoon tea at the ParkLife Café on **Sunday 27th April**.



*Next to the Edwardian lady, pretty in peach (Liz Webb), are interviewees Mrs Peggy Crockett, her daughter Mrs Julie McKay, and William Smith.*

# Autumn 2013 Public History Talks

## Oatlands House—Things It Saw and People It Met

Speaker: Madge Heath

This talk looked at the history of Oatlands House, which stood on the corner of St. James' Road and Winchester Road: from the building of the house through to 1920. Using deeds, the census, street directories and local papers, we learnt about the first and second tenants who both ran girls' seminaries before it became used as a family home.

The advertisements for auctions of the contents when various tenants left and the owners tried to sell the house showed something of the lifestyles of those tenants. The finding of various tradesmen's records and books for the house in 1919 and 1920 sparked memories from some of the audience of having seen the products listed as sold in the grocer's book.

For those of you who missed this talk, a version of it will be given to the **Millbrook Historical Society** on Thursday 2nd October 2014, 7.30pm at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Millbrook Road.

Madge will present the history of the house post-1920 in our Autumn 2014 series of history talks: "Oatlands House—Its Later Life, Demolition and Rebirth".

## Images of Shirley from Old Picture Postcards

Speaker: Peter Wardall

Peter Wardall, a prolific postcard collector, shared over 100 Victorian and Edwardian images of Shirley and their modern corresponding photographs with a 40-strong audience: a truly "Then and Now" experience and a real insight into the social changes of Shirley. Some 3-D effects made the audience feel as though they were walking down Church Street in the early 1900s, among boys in caps and girls in white pinafores over their dresses.

Peter featured images of tea merchants, biscuit shops, family bakers, butchers, and shoes shops, and the audience reminisced about fish shops, grocery shops, and many more well-loved shops including a bootmaker called "Jesus Strong's"!



In contrast, the view expressed was that today's shops seemed to have a higher proportion of charity shops, bookmakers, and fast food restaurants, although in 2013 there were some changes to this trend, with new coffee shops beginning to open.

The changes in transport from trams, bicycles, and pedestrians to many cars and vans were very evident.

Most noticeable by their absence were the trees that lined avenues such as Cecil Avenue, and the rows of smart wrought iron garden fencing that lined many of Shirley's streets, including the wall around St. James' Church, which were needed for arms during World War II and were forcibly removed. Don Smith clearly remembers them coming round and cutting all the fencing off.

**Talking of the absence of trees...** Recent storms brought about the sad loss of another tree in St. James' Park, reminiscent of the great storm of 1987 when a plane tree was lost.



This photo was taken on Wordsworth Road in 1987 by Ray Hancock



One of the most visible changes was the differences in Shirley High Street and Shirley Road shops, especially the types of businesses: originally independent traders with very smart, beautifully presented shop windows, with awnings to protect their produce from the midday sun.

# Edwardian Pop-Up Photographic Studio

Celebrating the Edwardian origins of the Park (1907), the ParkLife Community Room was converted into an Edwardian Pop-Up Studio on Saturday 8th February.

Members of the public could dress

up in period costumes and have their photograph taken in an Edwardian style photographic studio.

FoSJP are grateful to its members who lent family photographs and furniture to create the style.

Thanks also go to [Southampton City Council Arts and Heritage Learning Team](#) and to the [Forest Forge](#)

[Theatre Company](#) for their loan of costumes.



Here is a selection of the photographs from the studio session—all taken by Anna Vickers in February 2014!



More of these photographs are on the [FoSJP website](#) (see History/Past Events/Edwardian Photography Studio)

## A Welcome Sign and Park History Timeline

Artist and photographer Anna Vickers is currently converting photographs from the Edwardian Pop-Up Studio and using quotes from the Oral History Project interviewees into a Welcome Sign and Park History Timeline for the Park Building.



## Autumn 2014 Public History Talks

From Sunday 5th October 2014

We're pleased to announce details of this Autumn's public history talk series! All talks take place at **Shirley Parish Hall**, on the corner of Colebrook Avenue and St.James' Road, which has wheelchair access. Talks are FREE and refreshments will be served.

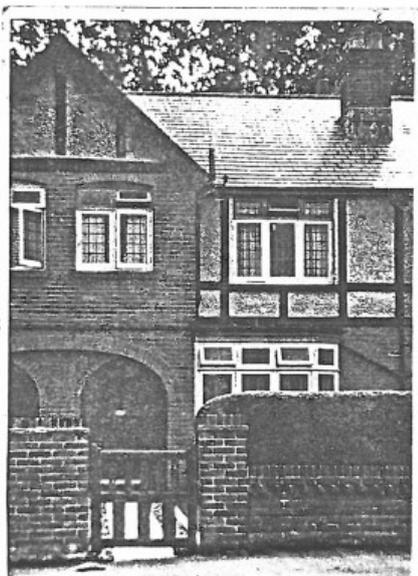
Sunday 5th October 3.00—5.00pm	Leaving for France, Landing at the Dardanelles—Hampshire and the Great War, 1914-1915 Speaker: Professor Adrian Smith, Faculty of Humanities: History, University of Southampton
Sunday 2nd November 3.00—5.00pm	Interpreting Tudor House Speaker: Karen Wardley
Sunday 7th December 3.00—5.00pm	Oatlands House—Its Later Life, Demolition and Rebirth Speaker: Madge Heath

# Do You Know Who Lived in Your House?

*Thanh and Chris Gelauf have been discovering who lived in theirs*

## **Captain Larkin and Cedar Avenue**

**W**e have been living in Cedar Avenue for a little over four years. When we moved in we were given two old photographs by the previous owner: one of a young couple on their wedding day and one of a naval officer. According to the deeds, the house was built in 1930. An elderly neighbour, Michael, told us one day that we are living in what he calls “a very historical house”. He explained that he has lived in Cedar Avenue since the war and that our house once belonged to a Captain Larkin who was the first owner.



*Cedar Avenue*

Michael told us that Captain Larkin took part in the Dunkirk evacuation; apparently he was in command of a merchant ship called “The Gracie Fields”. Michael also said that Captain Larkin suffered a shrapnel wound and long term eye damage as a result. He ended that story on the happy note that Larkin was eventually cured by a German doctor some time after the war ended.

Following web searches and help from the Southampton Central Library, we have discovered more about the Captain. He was born in Liverpool in 1891 to a seafaring family and his full name was Noah Rothwell Larkin. He moved to Southampton as a young man and had a wife and daughter, both called Kitty. He died in 1965 while still resident at Cedar Avenue: he lived in our house for 35 years.

We invited Michael to tea with us and recorded our conversation with him. Michael believes that Captain Larkin was employed by Red Funnel and used to command paddle steamers as well as screw-driven (propeller) vessels. The Captain was a very kind man who used to fix bicycle punctures for all the local children.



*Captain Larkin*

Michael remembers a great deal about the wartime: his father served as an ARP warden and his family used to go to a big house in Sherfield English to spend the night as it was a lot safer!

After the death of Captain Larkin, his daughter lived in the house for another year before moving with her husband (a podiatrist) to an address in Upper Shirley.

We are very happy and glad to live in the house with our children. We hope to pass on an appreciation of local history to them.

## Diary Dates

*Also see our article on Autumn 2014 Public History Talks (page 3) starting in October*

<b>Easter Monday, 21st April</b> 12noon—4.00pm	<i>St.James' Park</i>	Six historic fairground organs will be playing at the <b>Easter EGGsstravORGANza</b> event
<b>Sunday 27th April</b> 3.00pm—4.30pm	<i>ParkLife Community Room</i>	Afternoon Tea for Oral History Project interviewees and typists
<b>Wednesday 7th May</b> 7.30pm start	<i>Shirley Parish Hall</i>	Friends of St.James' Park Annual General Meeting
<b>Sunday 6th July</b> 3.00pm start	<i>St.James' Park</i>	Park History Tour at the <b>Community Games</b> event <i>Meet below the ParkLife Café terrace</i>