

# NEWSLETTER

Updating Hampshire's History

No. 15

Spring 2020

VICTORIA  
COUNTY  
HISTORY



Hampshire

## THE RED BOX PROJECT

Institute of Historical Research, London, 20 November 2019



**VCH** celebrated its 120-year anniversary in 2019 with a Red Box project, for which the new director, Catherine Clarke, asked each active county in England to fill a box the size of a Red Book to commemorate their county's history.

Hampshire's Red Box is illustrated below. The contents of the fifteen county boxes represented can be viewed at:

<https://www.history.ac.uk/research/centre-history-people-place-and-community/chppc-red-boxes-gallery>

### VCH Hampshire's Red Box

The contents representing north Hampshire include the following:

- A model of a Hampshire Hog
- Civil war musket balls from Old Basing
- Geology map with clay and chalk samples
- Sheep's wool and teasel
- A Basingstoke Canal token
- *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen
- Gabardine sample with Burberry label
- Models of a steamroller and a Thornycroft truck



The **VCH** Red Box exhibition in London finishes at the end of March. The **VCH Hampshire** box will be returned to us, and later in the year we will be displaying it at various venues, such as Basingstoke Discovery Centre and the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester.



**VCH Hampshire** Volunteers at the IHR



**VCH** Anniversary cupcakes



**VCH** Red Boxes from Shropshire, Essex and Durham



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# BASINGSTOKE in 1900

**Hampshire Volume 1** was the very first **VCH Red Book** volume to be completed and was published on 1 January 1900. It was the only one to appear during the lifetime of Queen Victoria. The county set was completed in four further volumes published in 1903, 1905, 1911 and 1912. **What was happening in Basingstoke in 1900?**

## Queen Victoria's 63<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of Accession in 1900



On Wednesday 20 June 1900, known as the Queen's Accession Day, the Royal Standard was hoisted over Basingstoke's Town Hall. In addition, the 'Cross of St George' – the original 'flag of old England' was flown from a flagpole recently erected on the tower of St Michael's Church. From the *Hants and Berks Gazette*, readers would have learnt that the bells of St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle and St John's Church were rung and 'a royal salute was fired in the Long Walk ... [and] Her

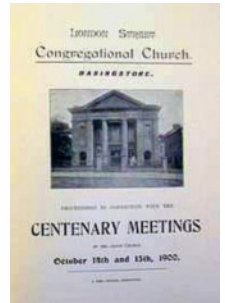
*Majesty's warships in Sheerness Harbour were dressed from stem to stern with gay bunting*'. No doubt toasts were drunk in many of Basingstoke's hosterlies in honour of the occasion.

*Roger Ottewill*

## Congregational Church, London St, Centenary Meetings

In October 1900, members of Basingstoke's Congregational Church celebrated the 100th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of their premises in London Street on 10 May 1800. Moving from a meeting house in Cross Street, the new chapel, which could accommodate 500 worshippers, opened the following year, with the distinctive Doric columns being added in 1860.

The anniversary celebrations incorporated special Sunday services, at which the musical contributions were of 'a high order and ... naturally festal in character'. On Monday a tea was followed by a public meeting addressed by many leading Congregationalists, both ordained and lay.



*Roger Ottewill*

## St John's Sunday School, Dedication in 1900

By 1894 about 900 children attended C of E Sunday schools in Basingstoke housed in six buildings in the town. Revd H Cooper Smith appealed for donations for a new purpose built school and quickly received two anonymous gifts - one for £1,500, the other for £25 from a working man who donated his holiday savings. A site next to Church Cottage and Elbow Corner House was purchased along with part of the former Merton Farm land fronting Church Street and Brook Street. Initially called the New Sunday school, it was renamed St John's at its dedication in 1900. The rooms were used on weekdays for temperance and parish meetings, the Girls' Club, the Girls' and Women's Bible Classes and the Guild of the Holy Spirit for lads and men. It became an elementary day school in 1901 when the Fairfields board school became overcrowded. In the 1920s the buildings were in a poor state, pupil numbers fell in the 1950s when South View and Oakridge Infant



schools opened, but St John's remained the only voluntary C of E school in the town. It was demolished in 1967 during the town centre development; the name continues with its modern replacement in Kingsmill Road.

*Jennie Butler*

## A New Workhouse Infirmary

By the end of the 19C workhouses had predominantly become repositories for the elderly and infirm and buildings were primitive, decrepit and unsuitable. Many unions built their own adjoining infirmary, as did Basingstoke. There was much disagreement and argument, but finally a piece of adjoining land was purchased from Lord Bolton for £550 (mortgage: Ecclesiastical Commission for England) and work went ahead at a cost of £10,000 (borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board). The infirmary, opened with great ceremony on 3 May 1900, was state-of-the-art for its time with water and sewage mains and a gas supply, plus a modern boiler system and a telephone. It had dedicated waiting and treatment rooms, surgery and labour wards, bathrooms. Just as importantly it had comfortable living conditions for staff – unknown in the workhouse itself. The building continued in use through WW2 and into the NHS, later as a nursing and convalescent home, until 1974 when a boiler breakdown led to its abandonment. Unlike some old infirmary buildings, which still stand today, it was not protected and was seriously vandalised. It was demolished in 1977.



*Barbara Large*

## The Railway That Never Was

At a crowded meeting at the Albert Hall, Kingsclere, on 4 September 1900, chaired by W W B Beach MP and supported by Lord Alexander Russell, the Mayors of Basingstoke and Newbury and other local worthies, there was unanimous support for a light railway connecting Kingsclere with the LSWR and the GWR. The meeting appointed a committee to take this forward. The proposed line would leave the LSWR at Basingstoke and join the Didcot, Newbury and Southampton line at Highclere with stations at Sherborne St John, Monk Sherborne, Wolverton, Kingsclere and Echinswell. Despite the initial enthusiasm, the committee was unable to obtain sufficient funds to make an application to the Light Railway Commissioners. Basingstoke Council could not legally make a contribution and there was a lack of enthusiasm from Newbury as they feared that it would lose the Kingsclere trade to Basingstoke.



Meanwhile the railway system in the Basingstoke area was being upgraded and expanded. The line was doubled to four tracks to Worting junction, the western goods yard was being greatly expanded, the station and associated offices were rebuilt and the line to Alton was built with a siding into the newly (1898) established Thornycroft motor works. Mays Brewery built the Station Hotel to replace the Junction Inn.

*Bob Clarke and Bob Applin*

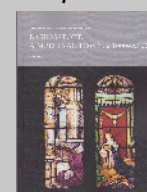
## VCH Hampshire PUBLICATIONS



*Mapledurwell*



*Steventon*



*Medieval Basingstoke*



*Cliddesden, Hatch and Farleigh Wallop*

AVAILABLE FROM: The Willis Museum and Basingstoke Discovery Centre, Basingstoke, the Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, and [jean.morrin@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:jean.morrin@winchester.ac.uk)

