

NEWSLETTER

Updating Hampshire's History

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VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Hampshire

CELEBRATING BASINGSTOKE'S HISTORIANS

As **VCH** team members we are very conscious of the debt that we owe to those historians who have gone before us, since they laid the foundations on which we build. Thus, the theme of this edition of the Newsletter is '*Celebrating Basingstoke's Historians*'. It complements the similarly-named Hampshire Field Club's project, which also marks the centenary of the Institute of Historical Research. For further details visit:

<https://www.hantsfieldclub.org.uk/ihr100/index.html>

Barbara Applin, 1937-2015

Barbara Applin worked at the Willis Museum from 1967-71. She worked as an editor for Macmillan's, 1971-2008. In 1971 she was founding secretary of the Basingstoke Archaeological and Historical Society (BAHS), serving on the committee until 2015.



She was involved with local archaeological activities. In 1968-71 she led rescue digs and, jointly with Mary Oliver, a major dig at Ructstalls Hill from 1972-5. (Hampshire Field Club Proceedings 1979) and she wrote the script for a video *Beneath Basingstoke* in 1993.

She made a major contribution to local history and founded the Basingstoke Talking History group in 1996. These oral history recordings are placed in the Wessex Film & Sound Archive, providing source material for several books. Barbara wrote or edited a number of significant works and arranged for their printing and distribution by BAHS. These included *Roundabout Basingstoke* (1999), *Taking the Pulse of Basingstoke* (2005), about the NHS, and the *Co-op and Basingstoke* (2012). Barbara and Robert Applin edited and updated the important *The Making of Basingstoke* by Eric Stokes (2008).

She wrote scripts for two plays and three videos, including *A Day in Tudor Basingstoke* (2002), and she gave talks to local societies and at Oral History Society conferences. *Derek Spruce*

Arthur Attwood, 1916-2012

Arthur was a Basingstoke man through and through. He was born here, educated here and spent his working life here. He was a printer by training, but spent his later career as a journalist for the Gazette. His love of the town and its past was the inspiration for a weekly column usually illustrated from the paper's archive, and containing information he had discovered from residents, and the stories they told him - he was an early 'oral historian'. His main contribution can perhaps be said to have aroused the interest of local people in the history of the place where they lived, particularly important at a time when the general perception of Basingstoke was that it was a thoroughly modern town. He interviewed people celebrating special events such as golden weddings, and loved hearing their family stories which added to his store of local knowledge. He published several books, such as *Around Basingstoke: Arthur Attwood's Look at the Past*, and gave talks to many groups. With his faithful dog, he walked everywhere in the town, a very recognisable figure affectionately known as 'Mr Basingstoke'. In 1989, he was made a Freeman of the Borough, and in 2000, received the MBE.



Mary Oliver

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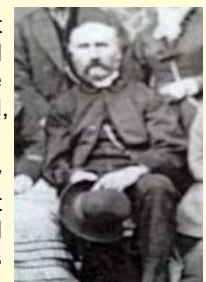
A History of the Ancient Town and Manor of Basingstoke, by F J Baigent & J E Millard, 1889

The book started as a small 29-page volume by Millard, then expanded at the instigation of Baigent into the 718-page history, much used and respected today, his aim '*to go more fully into the history of the town, and to consult every available source of information*'.



Francis Joseph Baigent (1830-1918) was the son of a professional artist and master at Winchester College. He had a lifelong keen interest in medieval art, heraldry, family and local history, with many of his notes surviving in 31 volumes in the British Library. Fourteen of these were used in a history of the county's parishes. He was nationally recognised and published, and instrumental in the early implementation of the original **VCH** of Hampshire.

James Elwin Millard (1823-1894) came to Basingstoke in 1864 as a vicar, having previously achieved the position of Master of Magdalen College School, Oxford, in 1846. He was a most energetic priest, reinvigorating the religious life of St Michael's and making many helpful pastoral introductions for his congregation. His keen interest in history led him to research original sources extensively and publish locally. *John Hare and Mary Oliver*



Anne Hawker, c.1936-2016

Anne was very active in the local history field. A mathematician by training, she attended a course in palaeography, became expert in reading old hand writing, and was passionate about documentary sources for the information they held and the stories they could tell. She discovered that the town records were stored in the basement of the Town Hall (now the Willis Museum) and worked her way through them, eventually making sure that they were sent to Hampshire Record Office where they could be safely stored and conserved and available for everyone to consult. This was her major contribution to the historians of the town. One of the stories she uncovered was about Anne Dennet, the widow of a mercer, and how she navigated life in Reformation Basingstoke. This formed the basis of *Voices of Basingstoke*, the first book published by BAHS in 1983. She also wrote *The Story of Basingstoke*, a popular paperback introduction when there was little else available. She was generous with her time, sharing her knowledge with others to help with their research.



Mary Oliver

Revd Joseph Jefferson, 1766-1824

In 1900 one of Revd Joseph Jefferson's successors as minister of London Street Independent (later Congregational) Church, Revd Capes Tarbolton, commented that he was 'a poetical and antiquarian writer, as well as an earnest and successful Minister'. Born in Wigton, during his lengthy ministry in Basingstoke from 1791 to 1819, Jefferson combined his ecclesiastical responsibilities with historical research, a particular interest being the Holy Ghost Chapel. Following an initial publication on the subject in 1793, a first edition of his *Sketch of the History of the Holy Ghost Chapel at Basingstoke in Hampshire*, was published in 1804 followed by further editions in 1808 and 1819. These incorporated 'The Ruins of a Temple, a poem', a verse from which is:

*While thus I wander 'mong these ruin'd walls,
And from each solemn thought instruction glean,
Creative fancy to my mind recalls,
The wonted grandeur of this ancient scene.*

Other publications included *The History of Basing House in Hampshire* (1815); *An account of a Roman Mosaic Pavement recently discovered near Crondall* (1817); and a *History of Silchester* (1821). From Basingstoke, Jefferson went to Thirsk in Yorkshire where he died aged 57.



Roger Ottewill

George Willis, FSA, JP, 1877-1970

George William Willis was a Basingstoke antiquarian who was educated at Queen Mary's School. He was a jeweller and clock maker who inherited the family business established by his father. He developed a life-long interest in archaeology, natural history and the history of the town, field walking with friends and searching for worked flints. He was active in local politics serving 37 years as an Independent on the Basingstoke Town Council, elected Mayor in 1923/24 and an Alderman from 1923. He was elected the first Freeman of the Town in 1954 in recognition of his service.

He persuaded the Council to establish a library and museum in 1933, donating his own collections to get it started. It was named The Willis Museum in his honour in the 1960s.

He was an active member of the Hampshire Field Club (HFC), often reporting his own field walking finds from the Basingstoke area. Supported by HFC members, he was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.



Bob Applin

Diana Stanley, 1909-1975

Born in London and moving to Basingstoke in 1954, Diana Stanley is best known as an artist and illustrator of children's books. However, she deserves to be recognised as an historian, on account of her one publication from 1968, *Within Living Memory*, which effectively combines her interest in the past with her wonderfully evocative paintings of the town before redevelopment. In this she describes Basingstoke, somewhat idyllically, as 'a small compact town surrounded by farms and woodlands stretching for miles around, all mutually bound together by agricultural and forestry activities into a single entity. Town served country and the country supplied the town in an inseparable dependency'. There is now a blue plaque on the house where she lived in Cliddesden Road - a testimony to her distinctive contribution to Basingstoke's heritage. As John Betjeman observed in his preface to *Within Living Memory*, 'Basingstoke is lucky in having so sympathetic an artist and writer'. He continued by expressing the wish that 'there were Diana Stanleys to illustrate every market town in England'.

Roger Ottewill



Eric G Stokes, 1919-2003

Eric Stokes had a distinguished war time career in the RAF Volunteer Reserve reaching the rank of Wing Commander and being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and bar for flying hazardous missions in Mosquitos with a Pathfinder squadron.

He graduated from Oxford in Geography and became a master at Queen Mary Grammar School for Boys in Basingstoke. He became joint archivist of the school publishing a history of the school 1556-1972 with R C Crossman (1973). He became Head of Humanities at Queen Mary's Sixth Form College. He was very active in the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in Basingstoke being Chairman at one time. The WEA published his *Expanding Basingstoke* in 1980. It also published a book of quotations, *The Things They Say about Basingstoke* in 1990 with a revised edition in 1997.

He worked on a history of the town but this was unpublished at his death in 2003. *The Making of Basingstoke* was edited and updated by Barbara and Bob Applin and published by BAHS in 2008. It remains the pre-eminent recent single volume history of the town and is available from the Willis Museum.



Derek Spruce

BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM: The Willis Museum and Basingstoke Discovery Centre, Basingstoke, the Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, and jean.morrin@winchester.ac.uk



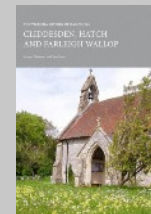
Mapledurwell



Steventon



Medieval Basingstoke



Cliddesden, Hatch and Farleigh Wallop