

## REMINISCENCES OF THE CITY OF WINCHESTER SEVENTY YEARS AGO.

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A VISITOR who sees Winchester for the first time early in the morning of a sunny summer day will probably admit at once that he would have to travel far to find a more picturesque and, indeed, beautiful city. The well-wooded valley to the west forms a glorious background to the old buildings, towers, and spires in the foreground. Seventy years ago this wooded valley was bare downland. Beyond St. James's and Clifton Terraces—then in course of construction—there were only the Waterworks House and the lodge of the Catholic Cemetery in all the space between the railway and the Romsey Road, and not a tree or a shrub of any kind. Looking to the northwest, the visitor would see the Workhouse, and would find it difficult to realize that all the houses and trees beyond were non-existent at the time of which we are writing.

Beside the Cathedral and College towers, the most conspicuous points in this view of the city are the spires of the Guildhall, St. Thomas's Church and Christ Church, the County Hospital, the Training College, and the tower of the Gaol. The last three are only partly seen above the tree tops. Away to the right is seen St. Paul's Church, the Congregational Chapel and, lower down, the graceful flèche of Trinity Church. The whole of these buildings are the growth of the last three-quarters of a century.

On the east side of the city, St. Giles's Hill was quite bare save for a small farmhouse with *one* elm-tree—still standing—in its garden. Save for the farmhouses and buildings, Chilcomb Valley was quite bare arable land. The stretch of ground between Southgate Road and the railway was mainly pasture land, with only a few elm-trees on the line of a disused

lane that formerly ran from the cemetery gate to St. Cross Road near the entrance to Kingsgate Street. It will thus be seen that the old city at the period of which we are writing was a quite small place, surrounded mainly by open downland on the east and west, much as it is shown in a print published in 1723.

The interior of the city has changed in these seventy years very greatly. At that time the railway seemed quite in the country. City Road had the city ditch, full of rank weeds, on the south side and a meadow on the north side, with a barn which was used as a kennel for the late Mr. James Dear's harriers. The Corn Exchange and the houses in Jewry Street to the north of it had only just been built. The Gaol was still standing. The centre and one wing of it still remain as Nos. 11 and 12 Jewry Street. At this date the entrance to Jewry Street from the High Street was not much wider than the entrance to St. Peter's Street now is. It has been widened eight feet since, and the shops, which are all new, have made this into the second business street of the city. The old theatre, on the east side, has been converted into shops and a motor garage.

In the High Street there are few of the houses and shops that have not been altered or rebuilt. Where the Guildhall now stands there was a well-frequented inn, "The Globe," with a bowling-green at the rear. Next to the inn, westward, was a stonemason's yard and the old Police Station. Between St. John's Almshouses and Abbey Passage stood two pairs of semi-detached cottages, known as Folkestone Place. These were pulled down when the Corporation purchased the Abbey House and grounds. The erection of the Guildhall, Police Station, School of Art, Free Library, and Reading Room have entirely changed the appearance of this part of the High Street, whilst providing adequate accommodation for the public work of the city. Formerly the Council met in the old Guildhall, over what is now Lloyd's Bank. This and a small Magistrates' Room at the side was all the provision for carrying on public work.

Where the Soldiers' Home now stands was formerly a butcher's shop, which projected some thirteen feet into the roadway. It was purchased by the Corporation, and the present line of frontage formed. Nearly all the *old* houses are gone. There were, at the time of which we are writing, two at No. 127, one at No. 150, and two at Nos. 166 and 167. These were all of the same type—very low two-storied houses with gables towards the street, and with a step or two down to the floor of the shops. Other quaint old houses stood on the sites of Nos. 51 to 54, Nos. 67 to 69, No. 80, Nos. 103 and 104. The offices and shops Nos. 72, 75, 76, and 77 have been built on land used as a pasture at the time of which we are writing. At the north-east end of the High Street, where the Russian gun now stands, there was a fine old red brick building known as Mildmay House, and for a long period used by members of that family as a residence. The land to the north of it, as far as Durngate Mill, and from the river nearly to Lower Brook Street, formed the gardens and grounds to this house. When it was sold and pulled down, Eastgate Street, Boundary Street, Lawn Street and Union Street were formed, and on part of the land occupied by the Mildmays, but belonging to St. John's Hospital, the block of twenty-six almshouses known as St. John's North, have been built by the trustees.

The next important change in the High Street was the rebuilding of "The Market," now Messrs. Dumpers' Restaurant. The old building was an ugly, dark, forbidding-looking brick structure, but fairly well occupied every Wednesday and Saturday by country people, who brought in butter, eggs, poultry, fruit, vegetables, honey, etc., for sale. The townspeople regularly attended, and even professional people did not disdain to attend early to secure bargains and engage waiting boys to carry home their purchases. The other changes in the High Street, such as the new banks, business premises, public-houses, and offices, are so numerous as to have entirely changed the character of the very picturesque old street. Almost the only unaltered front is that of the *Hampshire Chronicle* office, No. 57. On the Castle Hill great

changes have taken place. The red brick building next the Westgate is the only old one now left. A house once used as an Officers' Mess was pulled down to make way for the new buildings. When the crest of the hill was lowered in 1849, the foundations of the keep of the Castle were found, and later on the remains of a round tower that stood at the north-east angle of the Castle precincts, and formed a junction of the old city wall from the Westgate. A small red brick building then stood next the County Hall, where the Grand Jury Room now stands. It may be worth recording that, when an underground passage was being formed to connect the new cells at the east end of the County Hall with the old Grand Jury Chamber, it was found that the north wall of the County Hall was built on trunks of trees laid lengthways of the wall. The end bays of the County Hall were enclosed with hideous plaster partitions, forming the two Courts of Justice in which the Assizes were held. Their abolition has enabled the noble old hall to be restored to something like its original beauty, not to say grandeur. The new Assize Courts, County Buildings, and roadway make probably the greatest architectural improvement in the city of recent times.

When the railway was formed, it cut through the public grounds known as "Oram's Arbour," and left a triangular piece of land to the east of it, since built over. In these days of housing schemes, and the various suggestions for building without bricks, it may be interesting to note that the pair of houses next the Romsey Road railway arch, and similar pairs in Upper High Street, were built with puddled chalk, after a French fashion called *pisé-work*. In Southgate Street, on the east side, stood a long, low house, with its back to the street, belonging to the Rivers family. At No. 25 lived Owen B. Carter, well known as an extraordinarily clever draughtsman, and the architect of Ampfield and Otterbourne churches, the cemetery chapels, and other notable buildings. The late George Edmund Street, architect of the Law Courts, was a pupil of his.

The two blocks of houses formerly known as Chernock Place were built by one William White, who also established the Waterworks on the Romsey Road. On the site where No. 24 St. Cross Road stands there was formerly a long, low house abutting on what is now Edgar Road, some cottages, and a small Jewish synagogue. The house was occupied by one Aaron Brandford, a road surveyor to the old St. Cross Road Trust. He was a Jew, and since his death there has only been one of his nation in the city that we have ever heard of. There was only one house on the St. Cross Road between Freelands and the St. Cross turnpike—namely, No. 40, called the Old House. Where Culver Road now is was a footpath to St. Michael's Church, with pasture land on both sides, and a pond about halfway down on the south side.

What is now Romans Road was a narrow dirty lane, taking its name, not from the ancient Romans, but from one Sally Romans, who kept a small public-house at the Kingsgate Street end of it. In St. Peter's Street the greatest change to be noted is the conversion of the old Nunnery into the Royal Hotel. In Parchment Street the County Hospital occupied a long space from the Post Office northwards. It was a fine building in its way, with a double flight of steps in the centre. The site of the Hospital and what were nursery grounds, to the north, is now occupied by small houses, quite altering the character of the street.

In the Upper, Middle and Lower Brooks most of the former vacant space has been built over, particularly the site of "The Old Grey Friars" at the North end, between Middle and Lower Brooks. The greatest change, however, in the aspect of these streets is the closing in of the Brooks, which were formerly open, and in part of the Middle Brooks the stream ran down the centre of the street. In this street two quaint old houses have been pulled down—*viz.*, Harman's Marine Stores on the east side, and the "Old House at Home" on the west side. Both Middle and Lower Brooks have been greatly improved of late years, almost entirely by the public spirit of the late Mr. W. D. Forder, who, at his own expense,

abolished three of the worst rookeries. In Chesil Street the formation of the Great Western Railway and its station has brought about considerable changes. A number of small houses were pulled down to make way for the entrance to the goods sidings, and to provide for the greatly increased traffic. A quaint block of houses has been removed for the purpose of widening the roadways.

In no part of the city has greater change taken place than at the College. At the time of which we are writing the Headmaster's house had been recently rebuilt, with the buildings at the back in which were housed the "Commoners," who, at that time, resided with and were under the control and management of the Headmaster. They were usually about one hundred and twenty in number, and their home playing field was a small piece of ground to the south of the new buildings, lying between Big School and the old flint wall to the west, and a wall, since pulled down, that ran from Big School to a point in the flint wall below the Magazine. This small meadow, if it may be called so, was soon one mass of mud in wet weather. For cricket and football, "Commoners" went to "Rackhills," now the site of the Great Western goods yard. In those days College boys went to "Hills" daily, as provided for in the Statutes.

The bulk of the teaching took place in Big School, where it often happened that two or three classes were being orally examined at once. The only classrooms were two standing between the north-west corner of School and the south-east corner of the new Commoners' buildings. Attached to these was a lavatory, known as "Moab," and between it and the south-west buttress of Hall was "Blue Door," with a guarded opening in the centre, where the porter attended to answer calls from the College boys. Of late years great changes have taken place in the use of the College buildings. The rooms over the six chambers were used formerly as lodgings for the Fellows. Now they are converted into dormitories for the seventy boys, and the old "Chambers," where the boys lived, studied, and slept, fitted up, with

Seventh Chamber, as studies, and another room recently arranged at the north-west corner.

It is very difficult to realise the extraordinary change that has been made in the Chapel. Formerly the walls were lined with fine oak panelling and cornices, with a really beautiful chancel screen at the west end. While beautiful in itself, it was entirely out of place in a purely Gothic chapel. It is a matter of congratulation that this fine work has been purchased by Sir George Cooper and fixed in a new room at Hursley Park. To-day everything possible has been done to render the glorious building as perfect in its interior fittings as it was before in the perfect beauty of its proportions and its details. The Chantry in Cloisters has become, under recent auspices, a perfect gem of its kind.

Outside College proper, the greatest change of all is that initiated by a former Headmaster—the late Lord Bishop of Southwell—in placing Commoners in boarding-houses in Kingsgate Street, Culvers Close, Southgate Road, and Edgar Road—ten houses in all. Following this change, the old Commoners' buildings have been converted into class-rooms and a noble library; and other class-rooms have since been added, besides large detached buildings in Meads and Romans Road as Science School and Music Schools. There have also been erected five courts, rackets courts, a gymnasium, sanatorium for infectious diseases, and a fine museum in the Memorial Buildings. Outside the buildings, great changes have been made in the meadows to the south of the wall surrounding the old College Mead. These pieces of water meadow were known as Lavender Mead and Doggers Close. The first named was full of small ditches, into which the Lockburn discharged with all its filth, and across the second the "Black Ditch" passed. These unsavoury streams were all abolished, and the land drained and made into the delightful "Meads" which add such a charm to the College precincts to-day.

The formation of Culver Road and widening of Romans Road, with the erection of the four boarding-houses in Culvers

Close, entirely altered the character of the neighbourhood between Kingsgate Street and Southgate Street. Two other boarding-houses have been built in Edgar Road and Kingsgate Park, and four others formed by altering and adding to existing houses. In the days of which we are writing the only bathing-place was in "Pot," in the deep water below the first lock, and rumour talks of daring swimmers who had the hatch in the lock-gates opened, and then dived through with the downward rush of the stream. Now a very charming bathing-place has been formed on the line of the old barge river, just to the east of the College mill-stream. This valuable addition to the amenities of the College was provided by a former Headmaster, the Rev. Archdeacon W. E. Fearon.

One great change at the east end of the city still remains to be mentioned—*viz.*, the purchase of the front of St. Giles's Hill by the Corporation, and the laying out of it as a public recreation ground. It was bought in the face of a very strong opposition, but to-day I think all good citizens will rejoice in its possession as one of the most delightful spots in the city. When it was purchased, the top was used as allotment grounds. There were no paths, steps, or trees, and the only way on to it was by a steep, dirty track through weeds of all kinds, about where the wooden steps now are. Another notable change was the purchase and laying out of the park in the north walls, and of the Abbey House and its charming gardens. I think all will concede that these are valuable additions to the attractions of the city. Oram's Arbour, too, is very much more attractive than it was seventy years ago. Of changes in local conditions in these days it may be worth while perhaps to mention a few. The roads were mended simply by laying down broken field flints in the winter and allowing them to be ground in by the passing traffic. Rolling in the metal was not thought of until years later, when a four-horse roller was introduced. The only paved footpaths were those within the old walls of the city. There were only a few streets that had gutters to carry off surface water. For many years the streets were lighted

with oil-lamps. Many houses cast all their refuse into the river, and the rest drained into cesspools that had continually to be emptied, with results that may be imagined. Water was only laid on to a comparatively small number of houses. It will surprise no one to hear that the old death rate was twenty in the thousand.

These reminiscences would be incomplete without some account of the great changes that have taken place in educational matters. In the fifties of the last century all elementary education was in the hands of the clergy. The Congregationalists maintained the British School at the back of their chapel in Jewry Street, and all the rest of the schools were erected and maintained by the Church of England. There was no School Board, no educational authority—only a voluntary educational committee, who later on collected a voluntary rate to keep the schools going. Since then new schools have been built, and most of the old ones added to, and the administration has passed into the hands of the Town Council.

But it is in secondary education that the greatest and most marked progress has been made. There was no such thing as a public school for the middle classes. A great effort was made to supply the want, by public subscriptions, in 1885, when what was then called the "Modern School" was built. It was well supported, but after five years entirely failed, from causes that need not be referred to. The School for Girls was the first middle-class school established. From a very modest start in Southgate Street, it has grown to be one of the institutions that the city may well be proud of. Peter Symonds' School was the second middle-class school founded. It has now an established reputation, and some three hundred scholars. This school also started in Southgate Street, and now has admirable buildings and fine playing fields, thanks very largely to endowment provided from the funds of Christ's Hospital.

The County Girls' School was the last established, but by no means the least successful of these three flourishing middle-

class schools. No city would wish for better provision than we now have for the education of the middle classes, and for all promising scholars from the elementary schools.

There are still two very prominent objects of intense interest that must be mentioned—*viz.*, Mr. Alfred Gilbert's fine bronze statue of the Queen, and Mr. Hamo Thornycroft's grand statue of King Alfred. For the latter we are largely indebted to the energy and perseverance of Mr. Alfred Bowker when Mayor in 1901. It would be difficult in all the realm to find two statues of such high artistic value, or of such striking and original design. Mr. Gilbert essayed an almost impossible task in modelling the folds of a modern dress in bronze. The noble statue of the great Alfred appeals to all by its grandeur and simplicity.

As showing the great difference in the course of trade, it is worth noting that at the annual fair on October 23rd, 1849, there were 650 tons of cheese pitched in the Broadway, 45,000 sheep and 520 pigs offered for sale; and at St. Giles's Hill fair in 1851, 200 tons of cheese. Magdalen Hill and St. Giles's Hill fairs died out about 1860. At these two fairs it was formerly the custom of the citizens to dine in the refreshment booths on pickled salmon at one fair, and roast pork at the other. It may be noted here that in the forties of the last century there were only two principal fresh meat butchers in the city, and they killed *between them* one bullock weekly. At that time the population of the city was about thirteen thousand. The ground floor of what is now the Museum was then an open market, where country butchers brought in and sold meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays. One of the last of the country butchers was Mr. F. Galé of Micheldever, who made a notable figure at his stall, in his blue coat and well-groomed top hat.

Many old customs have quite died out. On May Day at all the villages round "Bowers" were formed of bent hazel boughs covered with greenery, for the good folk to dance under. This was called "going a-maying." There was generally one in Avington Park, and a very highly

esteemed citizen, now passed away, told me that he had the honour, on one occasion, of opening the dance with the Duchess of Buckingham. The children, too, went a-maying, and collected money for their schools by carrying garlands of spring flowers round the town. There were no clubs in those days, but the smoking-rooms of the "George," the "Black Swan," the old "City Arms," the "Crown," and other inns, all had their regular attendants. Usually each citizen had his own proper seat, and joined the company regularly every night, with great punctuality, to discuss with his neighbours political or local affairs. The scenes in the streets at night can hardly be realized. There were always strong piquets out, and most nights soldiers were "frog-marched" to the barracks. The old barracks were packed with troops, some two thousand in number, with beds in every corridor.

It will hardly be credited to-day that anyone living can remember the day when Henry Stevens and Enoch Facey delivered all the letters in Winchester, and that, before the railway was opened, four of the huge old broad-wheeled wagons brought in and out of Winchester all the heavy goods that entered the city, except coals brought up in barges by the canal from Southampton. Neither will it be realized that in the forties an old lady was regularly carried to the Cathedral in her Sedan-chair, which was uncovered for her to hear the service. Of the improved sanitary condition of the city we have recently written, and need not here repeat the information then given; but it is safe to say that for a city of its size few places are better provided than Winchester with all the requirements for health and recreation. Two things, we think, are needed—*viz.*, covered swimming baths and an adequate Institute where the young people of both sexes could meet and enjoy all wholesome pleasures and amusements. When times are better, we hope and believe these wants will be supplied.