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Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Journal No. 25

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Front cover picture:

The West side of Pier Street, Lee-on-the-Solent in 2017. The jewel in the crown is undoubtedly the building pictured on the corner with Marine Parade. (Howard Sprenger)
[see page 17]

Back cover pictures:

Top: HDML 1387, one of only a few survivors and the only HDML restored to her former appearance. (© Stephen Fisher)
[see page 6]

Middle: The millpond and weir remaining from the Silk Mill at Overton. (Richard Waldram)
[see page 19]

Bottom: A silver pouncet-box or vinaigrette. (Tony Yoward)
[see page 25]

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Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

(formerly Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group)

Journal No. 25, 2017

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Editorial

With Issue **25** of our *Journal* we reach our quarter-century; Issue **1** was published in 1992. The early issues are now available online to download via the HIAS website (www.hias.org.uk).

In our first article, Stephen Fisher looks at the history of the small wooden motor boats which played a vital role in the Second World War. Several were designed, and many were built, around the Solent and the South Coast. Howard Sprenger takes us through the history of one family's attempts to create a holiday resort at Lee-on-the-Solent. Developments there are in the news again with the re-development of HMS Daedalus and the area occupied by the Hovercraft Museum. Silk mills, such as Abbey Mill, Winchester, were a feature of several Hampshire towns in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the sole survivor being Whitchurch silk mill, still powered by the river Test and now a working museum. Richard Waldram recounts the history of Overton's silk mill, a much larger enterprise than Whitchurch and of which nothing now survives save the millpond. Tony Yoward ends this issue with a note on Snuff, a tobacco based product popular at the same period as the silk mills.

Martin Gregory
June 2017

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The Contributors

Stephen Fisher
Since returning to the UK after a number of years in Japan, Stephen Fisher has made history his profession. He took part in the Stonehenge Riverside Project and has thoroughly researched the Second World War history of the New Forest National Park. His maritime work includes surveys and catalogues of surviving D-Day infrastructure on England's south coast and, with his colleague Dr Julian Whitewright, he recently identified two long forgotten First World War German destroyers still visible in Portsmouth Harbour.
Until recently he led the historical research for the Maritime Archaeology Trust's Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War project, where he oversaw the research of 1100 ships lost along the south coast of England between 1914 and 1918. He is presently researching the role of Coastal Forces in the Second World War and working as a historian on National Geographic cruises around Europe.

Howard Sprenger
After training as a teacher at St. Luke's College, Exeter, Howard spent ten years teaching in Staffordshire and Hampshire before joining IBM as a technical author. He retired twenty six years later as a software development manager, and now teaches mathematics to adult students in Portsmouth. With his wife, he runs Kestrel Railway Books, and is the author of four railway books. He is a member of several industrial and railway societies and is the present Vice-Chairman of HIAS.

Richard Waldram
Richard Waldram is a retired physician who has lived in Overton for over 40 years. In retirement, he has written several booklets about the village including *Overton in Regency Times*, and *Historic Buildings of Overton*. Two articles about the history, structure and machinery at Quidhampton Mill, Overton have been published in the Hampshire Mills Group Newsletters, 2017.

Tony Yoward
Tony Yoward grew up in Swindon and moved to Emsworth in 1952 to manage, and later own, the Pharmacy. He is now retired. He has always had an interest in Industrial Archaeology, especially canals, and has served on the AIA committee. In 1970, he moved into the converted Slipper Mill building and his interest in mills took off. He has published a 'Glossary of 3500 milling terms'. He has been Chairman of SUIAG, a member of the SPAB Mills Committee and was one of the founding trustees of the Mills Archive, a website for British Mills.

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Stephen Fisher, (Figures1, 5 & 6 & back cover); Hampshire Archives, (Figures 22 to 24); Paul Lane, (Figure 4); Richard Oram, (Figure 25); Ordnance Survey, (Figures 2, 3, 8 &13); Howard Sprenger, (Figures 7, 9 to 12, 14 to 21 & front cover); Richard Waldram, (back cover); Tony Yoward, (Figures 26 to 32 & back cover).

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Second World War Coastal Forces of the Royal Navy in Hampshire

Stephen Fisher

By the time a ceasefire was declared in Western Europe on the 11th November 1918, the First World War at sea had evolved from one based on the big gun philosophy to a newer form of technological warfare. Although it would take all of the major maritime powers another three decades to realise it, the battleship had been usurped by more modern weapons, particularly the submarine, the mine and the aircraft.

But there was another weapon born out of the war that had made a significant impact. The Coastal Motor Boat (CMB) of the Royal Navy and the equally successful MAS boats of the Italian Navy had introduced a new weapon to the arsenal of any maritime power that cared to take notice. Small striking ships of a mere 40 ft (12 m) in length now had the power to sink a battleship. The CMBs had proved their worth in the North Sea, distinguishing themselves in raids on German ports. In 1919 a number of them joined British forces in the Baltic and, in a series of daring raids on the Bolshevik held port of Kronstadt, sank or damaged several much larger warships and earned three Victoria Crosses.

The Coastal Motor Boat was the pinnacle of some forty years of evolution of the motor boat. The development of the internal combustion engine had allowed for power to be generated by much lighter engines than steam had previously made possible. Married to planing hull designs that allowed a boat to ride on top of the water rather than plough through it, it was possible for small boats to reach speeds of 40 knots. With the addition of a torpedo, this allowed for a fast attack weapon capable of lightning strikes in enemy held waters.

The concept was the brainchild of three young naval officers, but it was Sir John Isaac Thornycroft who made it a reality. A boat builder of some renown, who had already been knighted for his services to the Royal Navy, Thornycroft had moved his firm from its small premises in Chiswick to a much larger site on the River Itchen at Woolston in 1904. Although the first CMBs had been built at a subsidiary site on the River Thames at Hampton, some of the 100 or so boats built afterwards were constructed in Hampshire boat yards such as Camper & Nicholson in Gosport.

The Royal Navy's abandonment of Coastal Motor Boats a few years after the war did not spell an end to Thornycroft's construction of them. In the 1920s and 1930s, many other nations took an interest and Thornycroft continued to evolve the design for countries as far away as the Pacific.

But the CMB was the not the ultimate peak of the motor boat and by the time the Second World War broke out, the few that were in service were obsolete. Between the wars a combination of leisure and sport were the primary drivers behind the evolution of the fast motorboat.

A Quest for Speed

The name of Hubert Scott-Paine should be familiar to anyone with an interest in flight in Hampshire. After taking control of the Pemberton Billing Aeroplane works on the River Itchen in 1916 and renaming it Supermarine, he turned an almost bankrupt firm into one of the leading manufacturers of aircraft and sold his stake in 1923 with sufficient profit to make him comfortable for life.

Not content to sit still for long, Scott-Paine purchased the Hythe Boat Yard on Southampton Water, at auction in September 1927. Renaming it the British Power Boat Company, he set about turning it into one of the most advanced yards in the world. Scott-Paine had always had a penchant for fast

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boats and he quickly recruited a team around him to help develop boats ready to tackle races and records around the world.

One of Scott-Paine's early recruits was Fred Cooper, whom he lured away from Saunders. Together they evolved a series of innovative hull designs and construction techniques that would be the mainstay of British Power Boat designs for years to come. Despite this, in 1929 an argument caused a furious Fred Cooper to leave the company and shortly thereafter he joined a small firm by the name of Vosper, in Portsmouth.



Figure 1. A Luftwaffe photo of the British Power Boat yard in Hythe, taken in 1940.

Meanwhile, Scott-Paine continued to develop powerboats and began to sell his ideas to the military. Initially the navy was reluctant to explore the potential of fast planing craft, but one branch of the armed forces that did take notice was the RAF. British Power Boat soon developed a series of fast launches which eventually blossomed into the High Speed Launches used by the RAF's Air Sea Rescue Service in the Second World War. Eventually the Admiralty began to take notice and soon British Power Boat were producing ship's tenders, fast launches and picket boats for the navy as well.

But Scott-Paine believed that the navy needed another type of boat – a replacement for the CMB. In 1935 he started work on a new design for a fast torpedo boat, based on Fred Cooper's hull designs from the late 1920s. The Admiralty was impressed with the first two 60 ft (20 m) boats and ordered several more even before they were finished. MTBs 01 and 02 entered service in the Royal Navy in 1936 and were soon followed by another sixteen vessels of the same type.

British Power Boat's near exclusive dealings with the Admiralty could not last forever though, and when the navy began to seek proposals for a new 70 ft (21 m) MTB, both Vosper and British Power Boat began to build boats. Scott-Paine, working with his new designer George Selman, began a brand new hull design quite separate from the earlier Fred Cooper hulls, but kept his work secret. At Vosper, under the management of ex RN commander Peter Du Cane, they worked more openly with naval staff in Portsmouth Dockyard. Both boats showed great potential, but the Admiralty eventually decided to accept the Vosper design into service and base all future MTB hulls on it. MTB 102 was commissioned in 1938 and went on to serve at Dunkirk, where she earned the notable distinction of becoming the smallest flagship of the Royal Navy, when Rear Admiral Wake-Walker transferred his flag to her to direct ships leaving the beaches. After service as a training vessel, she was transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps and sold off at the end of the war.

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Vosper fully deserved their success and it was fortuitous that they had recently opened a new yard at Portchester to supplement their original one in the Camber in 'Old' Portsmouth. War was not far away and between them the two yards in Portsmouth Harbour would produce 85 MTBs between 1939 and 1945, whilst a further 90 were built under licence in other yards, including Whites of Cowes who built eighteen and Berthon Boat Yard in Lymington, who built six.

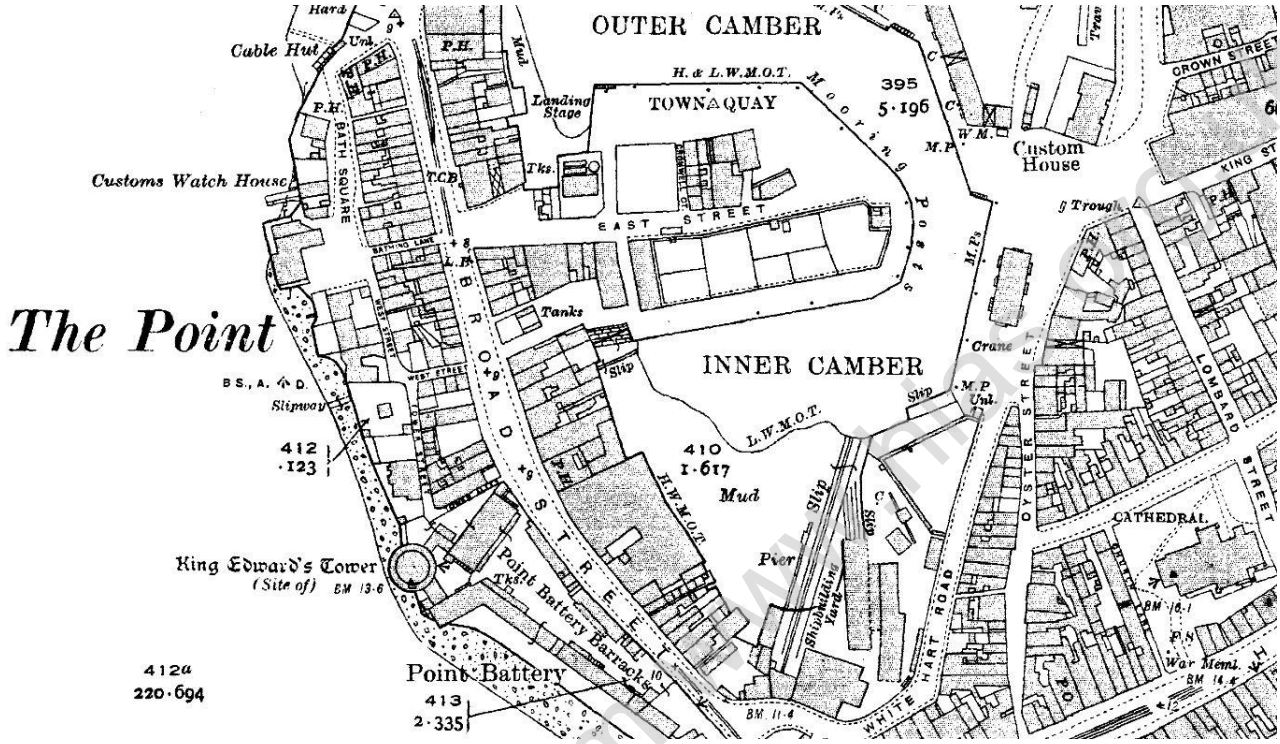


Figure 2. Vosper's boatyard in the Inner Camber, Portsmouth. Town Quay is now the home of Ben Ainsley Racing.

However, this did not spell the end of the British Power Boat contribution. Scott-Paine took his work to America, where the hull of his 70 ft (21 m) boat became the basis of Elco's PT boats, perhaps the most famous of which was PT-109, commanded by a young John F. Kennedy. Meanwhile, George Selman continued to evolve the 70 ft hull in Hythe. In the winter of 1940, he submitted a design for a 71 ft 6 in (22 m) Motor Gun Boat, a desperately needed counter to the German E-boats striking at British convoys on the east coast. The Admiralty were impressed and over the course of the war, 96 boats of the same design were assembled at Hythe. The boat was found to be incredibly reliable and versatile: it was the only Coastal Forces design that did not suffer from structural defects and in 1943 most were armed with torpedoes and re-designated as MTBs.

The Slow Boat to Success

Aggressive fast attack boats are vital in any war, but equally important is defence. In 1939, the Admiralty quickly realised the need for a fleet of small boats capable of patrol, escort, minelaying and minesweeping duties.

Fortunately they were not the only ones to realise this need. As war clouds gathered over Europe in the late 1930s, a car manufacturer by the name of Noel Macklin began to investigate ways in which he might be able to contribute to the war effort. Sensing the need for easily produced launches, he began experimenting with a design and founded a company – Fairmile Marine – in the grounds of his property in Cobham, Surrey. The very first Fairmile **A**, ML100, was constructed at the notable Woodnutt Yard in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight in 1939. The Admiralty quickly took notice and soon placed an order for eleven more.

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What was so special about Macklin's design was the method of construction. Taking his inspiration from American mass produced launches of the First World War, Macklin perfected a method of producing all of the individual elements of the boats at Cobham, using frame jigs to ensure that all the hulls would be the same. The parts were then transported to boatyards on the coast, where they could be assembled and launched as a finished vessel.

The Fairmile **A** was not a perfect hull however, and soon the Admiralty were able to supply their own designs. The lines and drawings for the new 112 ft (34 m) launch were turned over to Fairmile, who began manufacture in the same way. By the end of the war, some 650 incredibly versatile Fairmile **B**s had been built in boatyards in the UK, the Mediterranean, the Far East, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

A number of boatyards in the Solent region were employed to undertake the construction of these boats. As well as Woodnutt, which built four Fairmile **B**s in addition to the two **A**s, Solent Shipyards on the Hamble built fifteen and further west, Itchenor Yard in Chichester Harbour built eight. A number were also built on the River Itchen in Southampton. The yard of Risdon Beazley Ltd at Bitterne Manor, which also operated a fleet of salvage vessels for Admiralty operations, built nine Fairmile **B**s and further upriver, Southampton Steam Joinery Company built five.

The employment of Southampton Steam Joinery is unusual as they were not a boat building firm. Indeed, their 'yard' was not on the river, but inland on Kingsbury Road off Bevois Valley. However, further investigation into Fairmile's records gives the address for Southampton Steam Joinery as 83 Whitworth Crescent. This was in fact the location of the Phoenix Boat Yard, adjacent to Cobden Bridge in Bitterne, so it seems likely that the yard was under the management of the Steam Joinery Company and the Fairmile **B**s were built here. This is all the more likely given that the Steam Joinery Company's yard on Kingsbury Road was severely damaged in the November 1940 air raids on Southampton.

Meanwhile, within the Admiralty, the need for a smaller motor launch that could protect harbours and estuaries had also been recognised. In late 1939, William Holt, Chief Constructor of the Naval Construction Department, submitted his designs for a 72 ft boat powered by twin diesel engines allowing for a casual 12 knot speed. The first order for 33 Harbour Defence Motor Launches (HDMLs) was placed in January 1940, but by the end of the war no fewer than 480 had been launched. They were popular vessels that quickly gained a reputation for good sea keeping and reliability. As Holt himself noted, their service went well beyond what had originally been anticipated of them. Perhaps even more remarkably, some were still in service around the world well into the 1980s. (*See picture on back cover*.)

The HDMLs were built in the traditional boatbuilding fashion, and not the prefabricated 'flat-pack' method employed by Fairmile. Individual boatyards had to build the entire boat themselves, with the exception of the shaft brackets, rudders, steering gear and naval equipment (wireless and weapons), which the Admiralty provided. For this reason, orders were only placed with skilled and well-equipped boatyards. Care was also taken not to place more work with yards already busy with Fairmile orders.

Nonetheless, the Solent was again well represented and approximately 8.5% of the HDML fleet was constructed in the area. Berthon Boatyard in Lymington built 22, Moody Boat Yard at Swanwick Marina on the Hamble was recruited to build nine and the small Ranalah yard at Wootton on the Isle of Wight built two. A little further afield, Elkins Yard in Christchurch Harbour built eight.

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The Dog Boats

In late 1940 and early 1941, the Admiralty developed a new hull form, again largely led by William Holt. The boat they developed was designed to have sufficient speed and armament to counter the German E-boat and, at 115 ft (35 m) in length, was the longest of the wooden Coastal Forces boats commissioned into the navy. Knowing the success of the Fairmile method of construction, the design was based around the same method of construction. Once again all of the parts would be pre-prepared in Cobham and distributed to contracted boat yards.

The first Fairmile **D**, or Dog Boat as their crews came to name them, was not laid down until June 1941, so in the meantime, the Admiralty decided to utilise the jigs for the Fairmile **A** and construct a number of new gunboats, classed as Fairmile **C**s. The type was a 'holding' design used as a stopgap measure before the Fairmile **D** came into service and only 24 were ever built, but they served for the rest of the war after they had all been completed in 1941.

Meanwhile, the prototype Fairmile **D** – MGB 601 – was launched in October 1941, but by then another 39 were already under construction. By the end of 1945, a total of 224 had been built. Once again, the Solent yards saw several orders. Woodnutt built three Fairmile **C**s and 13 Dog Boats; Solent Shipyards built two **D**s and Risdon Beazley built a single **C** and 12 **D**s. Remarkably, despite 31 boatyards around the country receiving orders for Fairmile **C**s and **D**s, these three Solent yards built 12.5% of the total fleet.

1. Elkins, Christchurch (8).	6. Camper & Nicholson, Northam (5)	11. Ranalah Yacht Yard, Wootton (2).
2. Berthon Boat Yard, Lymington (28).	7. Thornycroft, Woolston (5).	12. Camper & Nicholson, Gosport (18).
3. British Power Boat Company, Hythe (180).	8. Moody, Swanwick (9).	13. Vosper, Portsmouth and Portchester (85).
4. Southampton Steam Joinery Company (5).	9. Solent Shipyards, Sarisbury Green (17).	14. Woodnutt, Bembridge (22).
5. Risdon Beazley Ltd, Bitterne (22).	10. Whites, Cowes (42).	15. Itchenor Shipyard (8).

Table 1. List of boat builders and total numbers (in brackets) of Coastal Forces vessels constructed.

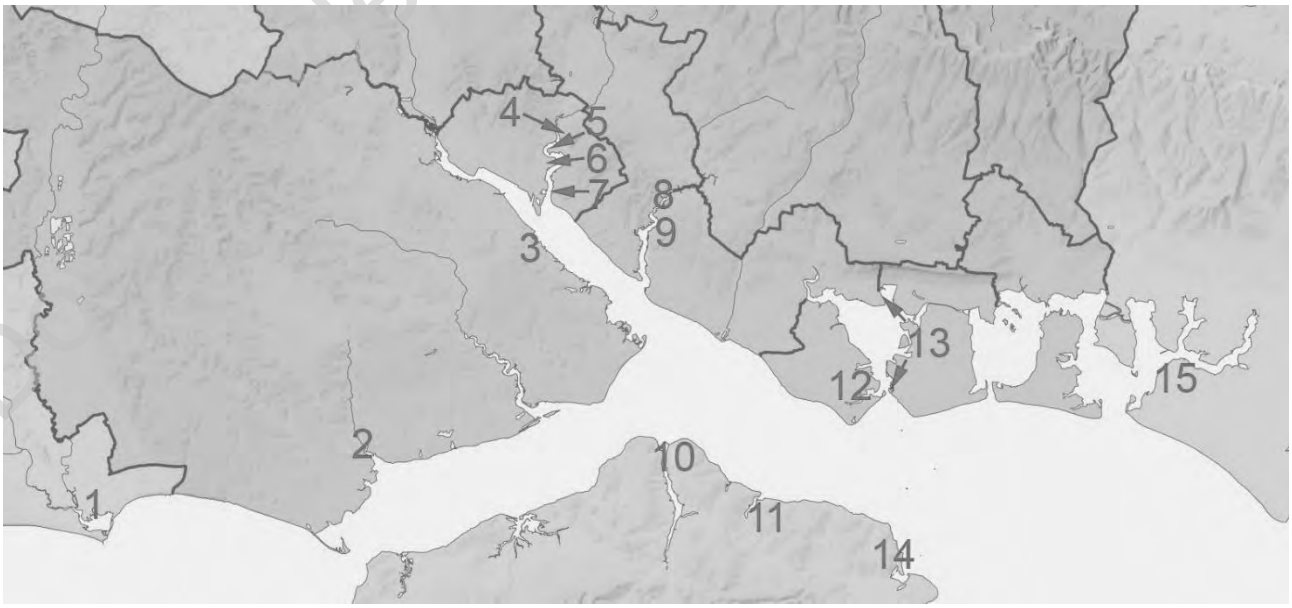


Figure 3. Map of boat builders around the Solent involved in the construction of Coastal Forces vessels. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [CC BY-SA 3.0], via Wikimedia Commons.

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Alongside the numerous Coastal Forces vessels, many of the boatyards, particularly British Power Boat and Vosper, were also building numerous fast boats for other branches of service (both the RAF and the army) and small boats for the Royal Navy Patrol Service (such as minesweepers). Both Thornycroft and Whites were also producing much larger vessels and numerous destroyers were launched from both yards during the war.

Even so, between 1936 and 1945, more than 450 boats, representing every type that was put into service, were built for Coastal Forces in the Solent region, representing more than a fifth of the total number built worldwide. This significant contribution is something that is frequently overlooked, in no small part because the role of Coastal Forces itself is so frequently overlooked. Despite their heroic actions in securing the seas around Britain and the Mediterranean during the war, their story is poorly told and, as one veteran recently remarked to me, frequently confused with that of RAF Coastal Command!

Survivors

Today there are few survivors of the near 2,000 Coastal Forces boats built during the war and incredibly, MTB 102 is one of them. After being sold off at the end of the war and a brief life as a private yacht, she was refurbished by a film studio in the 1970s. In 1976 she appeared in *The Eagle Has Landed*, starring Michael Caine and, in 1977, *Soldier of Orange* with Rutger Hauer. She is now maintained by the MTB 102 Trust based in Lowestoft, but is a frequent visitor to the south coast.



Figure 4. Motor Gun Boat 81. (Photograph courtesy of Paul Lane)

Closer to home is MGB 81, one of the original batch of George Selman's 71 ft 6 in MGBs. After the war she was sold, briefly used for smuggling by her owner and then became a houseboat. In the 1980s she passed between a few owners – each of whom undertook dedicated work on restoring her to her wartime appearance – until she came to Portsmouth in 2009 to become part of Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust's Memorial Fleet. In November 2016 the Memorial Fleet received a Libor fund grant which will enable 81's engines to be replaced and will help keep her running for years to come.

Across the harbour in Gosport is HDML 1397. She remained in the navy long after the war and was eventually recommissioned as HMS *Medusa*. Her long service means that she was never converted to a houseboat and, as a result, many of the fixtures and fittings on board are original. She is now

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cared for by the Medusa Trust and is moored at Haslar Marina (when she isn't sailing around the Solent).

A more recent addition to the local area is RML 497. A Fairmile **B** converted for rescue work, she served for many decades after the war as a ferry in Devon. In 2015 she was purchased by the National Museum of the Royal Navy. At present she is moored on the River Itchen at Northam undergoing maintenance, a mile and a half down river from where she first took to the water in 1941 at the Phoenix Boat Yard (run by Southampton Steam Joinery Company) next to Cobden Bridge.



Figure 5. Houseboat 'Sungo', formerly MTB 486, on the river Itchen at Cobden Bridge. (© Stephen Fisher)

There are a surprising number of other survivors scattered along the south coast and eight more Coastal Forces craft can be found around the Solent if you know where to look. If you stand on Cobden Bridge in Southampton it's possible to see three British Power Boat MTBs of the same class as MGB 81. Most obvious of these is MTB 486, now the houseboat *Sungo*, moored in front of the apartments on Priory Avenue that overlook the Itchen on the north side of the bridge. This boat was once the lead vessel of the 29th (Canadian) MTB Flotilla commanded by the artist Anthony Law. Her adventures in the war are well documented in his book *White Plumes Astern*. Looking south from the bridge, nestled amongst a dozen other houseboats on the north-west side of the railway bridge, are MTBs 455 and 477, now the houseboats *Talisman* and *Shearwater* respectively. Both served around Britain's coast in 1944 and 1945.

At the Hayling Yacht Company – at the head of Mill Rithe on the east side of Hayling – are another three craft. The houseboat *Fontenay* is another British Power Boat, formerly MGB 118 (later redesignated MTB 437) that served between 1942 and 1945, principally in the 2nd (Dutch) MTB Flotilla. MTB 467, now the houseboat *Platypus*, served with MTB 455 in the 4th MTB Flotilla in 1944 and 1945. The third boat at Hayling is the former Fairmile **C** MGB 325, one of only two surviving Fairmile **C**s in the world. She was built by Frank Curtis in Looe, Cornwall. After serving for a number of years as a gun boat and taking part in several clandestine operations on the European coast, she is now the houseboat *Eidolon*.

Incredibly, the only other Fairmile **C** is just ten miles away at Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. Formerly MGB 320, built by Alex Robertson & Sons in Argyll, Scotland, she is now a floating houseboat called *Xoron*. The survival of these two Fairmile **C**s is all the more remarkable given that only 24 of this class were ever commissioned. Ironically, despite 224 Fairmile **D**s being built, none survives today.

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Figure 6. MTB 24 at Bembridge (© Stephen Fisher)

The final boat in the area, also at Bembridge, is a reminder of the fate that may still await many of these historic craft. MTB 24, more recently the houseboat *Little Susie*, will most likely be scrapped this year. Originally built by Thornycroft and launched in late 1939, MTB 24 was one of a handful of boats that saw service from the start of the war to the finish, a testament to the quality of her build.

She was also the first Coastal Forces boat to shoot down an enemy aircraft, during her return from the Netherlands as German forces overtook the Low Countries in May 1940. She was placed on the disposal list in October 1945 and in time she found her way to Bembridge. Although apparently a very happy home for many years, she has been vacant and derelict since 2014. A hole has been made in the side to stop her from floating at full tide and drifting away from her mooring, and the stern sags so dramatically that it appears the hull has broken. It would be impossible to move her in this condition and attempting to lift her would probably cause the hull to collapse. Restoration from this state would be extremely complicated and it is more likely that she will be broken up on site in the near future.

There is even less surviving evidence of the boat yards that built them. The great yards of British Power Boat in Hythe, Thornycroft in Woolston and Vosper's Portsmouth yard that built several hundred 'short' MTBs and MGBs between them, have all become housing estates, as have the yards of Elkins, Southampton Steam Joinery and Risdon Beazley. Some smaller yards still serve in much the same capacity and a few retain their original identities (although perhaps under different ownership).

Fortunately, after many years of planning and effort, the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust was also awarded Libor funding in November 2016, allowing it to renovate a building at Priddy's Hard in Gosport as the first step towards a permanent Coastal Forces exhibition. The Libor funding awarded to PNBPT for MGB 81 will also pay for the building of a replica CMB that will demonstrate the speed and power of these original torpedo boats. Perhaps in years to come, the story of these little ships and the crews that served on them can be better told.

More information on Coastal Forces in the local area can be found on the (still incomplete) "Spitfires of the Sea" website. There is also a handy interactive map of all known surviving craft at www.spitfiresofthesea.com/survivors.

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Lee-on-the-Solent – The Building of a Resort

Howard Sprenger

Lee-on-the-Solent was the vision of the Robinson family whose seat was Newton Manor, Swanage. Sir John Charles Robinson (1824-1913), originally from Nottingham, was art advisor at the South Kensington Museum (later the Victoria and Albert Museum) and after his retirement from that post in 1882, he became Crown Surveyor of Pictures to Queen Victoria. It is believed that during his visits to Her Majesty at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight, he saw the possibilities of creating a holiday resort on the banks of the Solent that might rival Bournemouth and Brighton. Another story says that his son, Charles Edmund Newton-Robinson (1853-1913) spotted the area's potential while participating in yacht races in the Solent over many years. Either way, it is to these gentlemen, and to a lesser extent Charles's younger brother, Edmund Arthur Robinson (1856-1916), that Lee-on-the-Solent owes its existence.

In 1883, Sir John began buying up land, and by the end of the year, the family owned 264 acres (107 hectares), which included a frontage of over 2000 metres of land facing the sea. By the following year, the Lee-on-the-Solent Estates Co. had been formed to market freehold building plots to the gentry who, it was believed, would be attracted by the "excellent bathing, sea fishing and boating" offered by the proposed resort, and also "a good school for gentlemen's sons". Streets were laid out on a grid pattern, and services were installed, but it was up to the buyers to develop their own plots, under the proviso that only a single private dwelling house could be built on each one.

The family was also responsible for improvements at Swanage through Sir John's relationship with the famous builder John Mowlem, who hailed from the town, and with Mowlem's nephew, George Burt, a Swanage resident. Later, Charles Newton-Robinson went on to develop the Tankerton Bay Estate in Kent, the aim of which was create "a watering place for the best class". Like Lee-on-the-Solent, this speculation enjoyed some success, but his plan to establish a resort at Ravenscar on the North Yorkshire coast failed quite spectacularly, so that although plots and services were laid out as at Lee, only one building was ever built. It remains to this day in splendid isolation next to the site of the station on the erstwhile Scarborough and Whitby Railway, which opened optimistically to serve the new development, but which must have seen hardly any traffic.

Sir John and his son Charles both died at Newton Manor within eleven days of each other, father on 10th April 1913 and son on the 21st April. Edmund did not survive very much longer, dying on 14th April 1916.

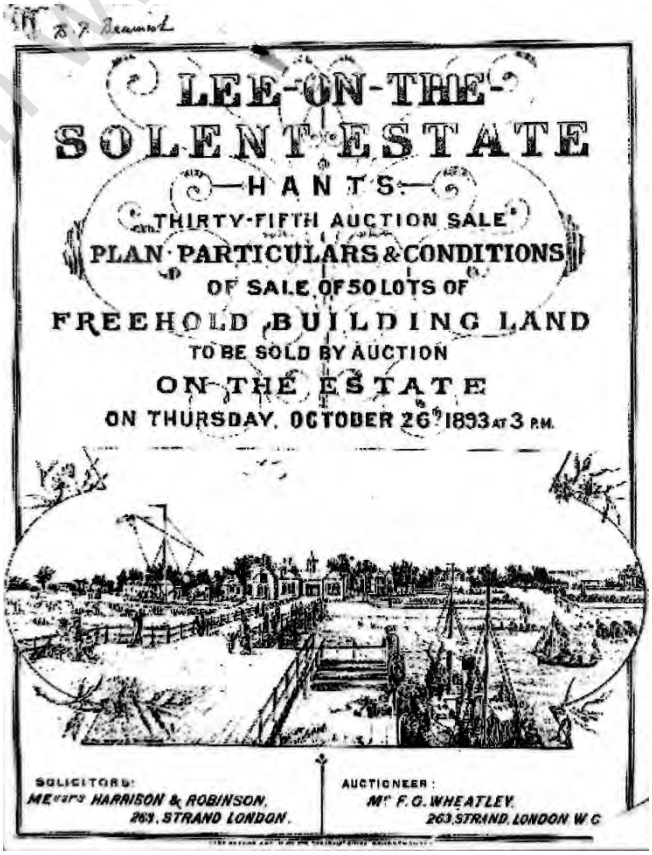


Figure 7. This notice of the "thirty-fifth auction sale" dated October 1893 implies that an average of three to four such sales per year had been taking place since the Robinsons began developing Lee-on-the-Solent as a resort.

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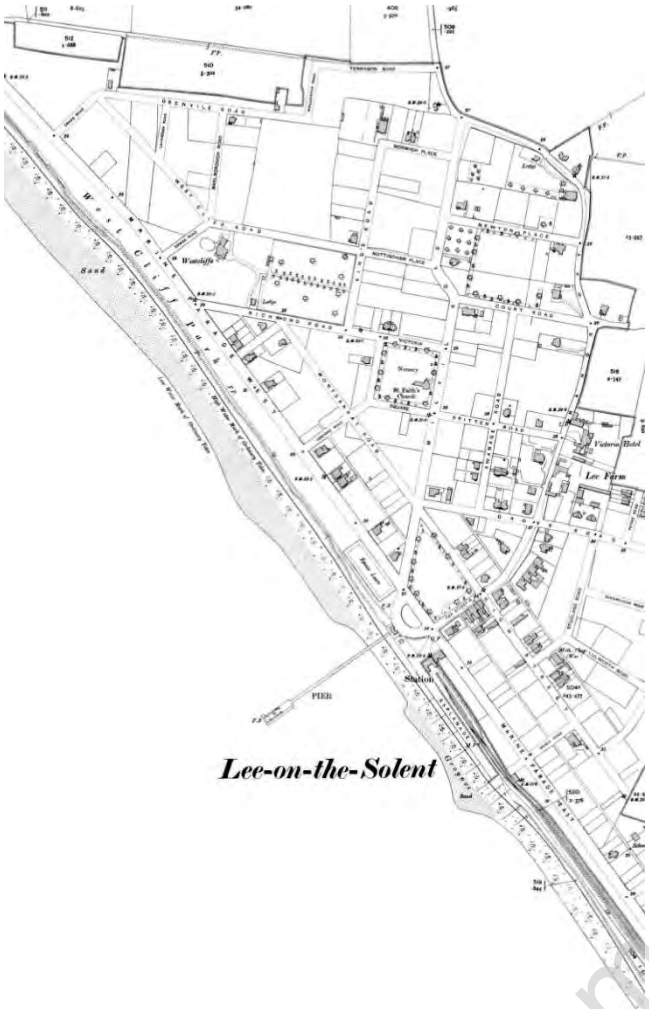


Figure 8. Lee-on-the-Solent 25 inch map of 1909. Representative of the situation after the Robinson's promotion of the resort, this plan clearly shows the pier with the railway station next to it. The trapezium-shaped parcel of land opposite the pier is undeveloped, and to the north along Milvil Road, Victoria Square is shown with the temporary "tin tabernacle" in place. If this is an accurate record of Lee-on-the-Solent at this time, the number of plots that have been built on is very small considering that they had been auctioned off in great numbers since 1884.

The first part of their vision to be constructed was Marine Parade – 50 ft (15 m) wide, a mile long, and separated from the seashore by a 150 ft (45 m) wide strip of grassland that would be used for recreation. This was quickly followed by the construction of a 750 ft (230 m) long pier, the foundation stone for which was laid by Lady Marianne Robinson in 1885. Designed by Galbraith & Church of Westminster, the £10 000 cost was provided by Sir John, and it was formally opened by Lady Robinson at a ceremony on 3rd April 1888. It replaced a small wooden landing stage, and had glazed shelters, promenade seats and a pavilion at the sea end. At the landward end there was an entrance building constructed by Mr Wareham of Titchfield to a design by Horace Alexander of London.



Figure 9. The pier c1907. The original entrance building to the pier is seen, together with the shops on Pier Street to the right, then the original two bays of Trafalgar House, and on the far right, the Flowers Buildings and the station building.

It was intended that the pier would be a regular stop on a paddle steamer service connecting Southampton, Lee, Portsmouth, Southsea, Cowes and Ryde**,** and the first steamer to land its passengers, *Princess Beatrice*, built by Barclay, Curle & Co. Ltd. on the Clyde in 1880, duly arrived on the pier's opening day. However, it soon became apparent that a service would only be viable in the summer months, and even this was restricted to eight trips a day between Lee-on-the-Solent and Clarence Pier, Southsea. Operated by the New Steam Launch Co. of Portsmouth, and using the steam launch *Venus*, the 45-minute trip could be enjoyed for a return fare of one shilling. The original aspiration for a more wide-ranging service was fulfilled to some extent in 1923, when a Southampton-Lee-Cowes service was introduced by Lloyd's Motor Packet Service, and proved to be quite popular.

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There was a semi-circular area opposite the entrance to the pier and by 1928, this had been made into a remembrance garden with the war memorial centrally placed within it. Unfortunately, in 1932, the pavilion at the end of the pier caught fire, and despite the best efforts of the Gosport Fire Service, it could not be saved. They did, however, manage to protect the rest of the pier by removing some of the wooden decking to act as a fire break, and the pier remained in a steadily increasing state of decrepitude for the rest of its life. The terrace of shops and balconied apartments on the east side of Pier Street and Trafalgar House (subsequently much enlarged and now known as Pier House) were developed at the same time, and these buildings still stand.



Figure 10. Pier Street, (east side) c1909. This fine set of buildings with their balconied fronts was a major development in the early days of Lee-on-the-Solent and, although now surrounded by later buildings, is relatively unchanged over 100 years later.

Reinforcing the development that was taking place at the end of the 19th century, the Lee-on-the-Solent Light Railway opened in 1894 from Fort Brockhurst station on the Fareham to Gosport line. Promising to deliver its passengers to "where the rainbow ends", it had a short life, closing to passengers in 1930 and to freight in 1935. Interestingly, the Robinsons were not initially involved with the promotion of the railway, but when the completion of the line was threatened by financial troubles in November 1892, Sir John bought the remaining unsold shares for £30 000, thus providing a much-needed injection of capital. On the arrival of the railway, the Flowers Buildings were built to house various businesses, including the railway company's own offices which were on the corner of the block. After his arrival in 1907, the estate agent, Frederick Flowers, opened an office in the buildings,



Figure 11. Pier Street, (east side) 2017



Figure 12. Flowers Buildings and booking hall 2017.
A view of the railway booking hall and Flowers Buildings from the site of the cinema.

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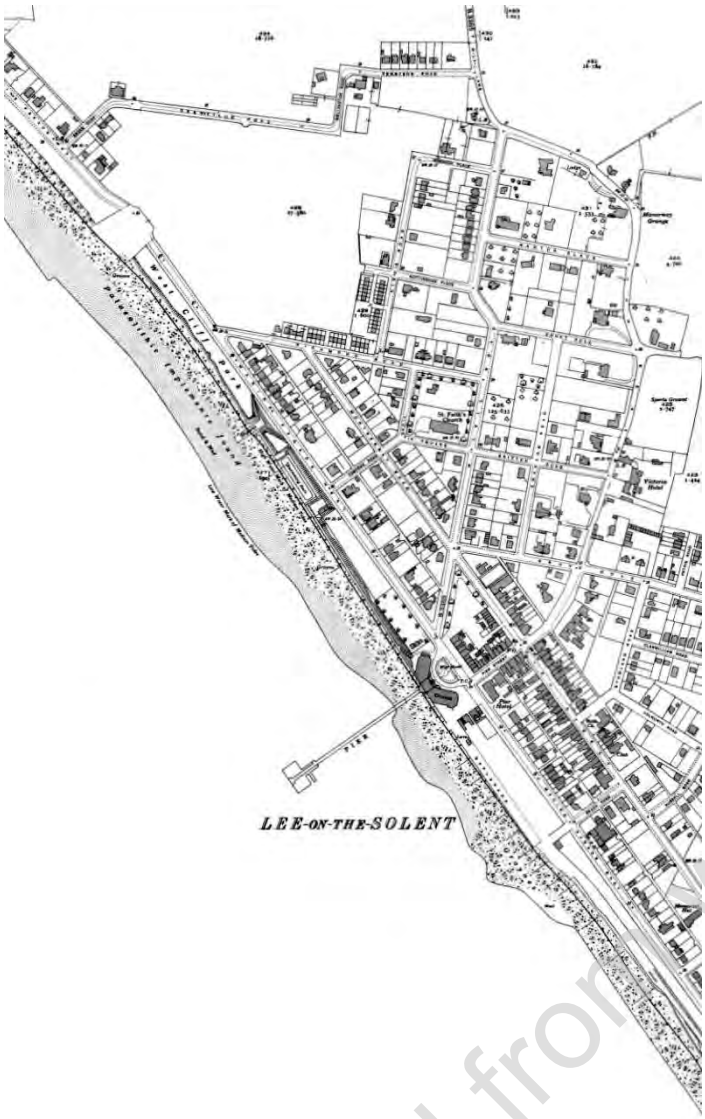


Figure 13. Lee-on-the-Solent 25 inch map of 1938. Despite the destruction of the pavilion at the end of the pier in 1932, it appears intact on this plan, but the tower complex can now be seen, as can the new buildings on Marine Parade, Pier Street and High Street. The new St Faith's church is shown on Victoria Square, and so is the row of Art Deco houses at the top end of Milvil Road. There has clearly been substantial development since the 1909 map, but a large area to the north (which had been shown as potential building land on the earlier map) is now quite bare, reflecting the arrival of HMS Daedalus, which effectively cut off any further development in that direction.



Figure 14. The Lee-on-the-Solent tower under construction in 1935.
The pier looks surprisingly intact as the steelwork for the tower is being erected in the background. The left-hand part of the complex looks substantially complete.

and they were subsequently named after him. They survive as shops and a restaurant, as does the railway booking hall, which now houses an amusement arcade; it is all that remains of the railway in Lee, the trackbed at the terminus now being used for a skate park.

The fact that the rail service was discontinued in the 1930s is somewhat ironic, as that decade produced the second major phase in the development of Lee-on-the-Solent; its Art Deco buildings date from this time. Most prominent of these are the flats and shops that still stand at numbers 1 to 9 Marine Parade, together with the buildings around the corner on the west side of Pier Street and some of the buildings on High Street, behind those on Marine Parade. In the Robinsons' original proposal, this area was reserved for a hotel which was never built, so there was a large plot in the centre of the town that was ripe for development. St Faith's church on Victoria Square was built in 1933 on the site of a "tin tabernacle" that had served the town from around 1894, and a row of Art Deco houses near the church on Milvil Road (Nos. 33 to 41) also dates from this period.

Many of the buildings built between the wars were designed by Trevor J. Tatham, who moved to Lee in 1915 to teach at the Edinburgh House School on Manor Way. In 1921, he moved to 20 Manor Way and pursued the twin careers of teacher and architect, becoming the most prolific architect in Lee-on-the-Solent between then and 1939. The centre of the town is now a

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conservation area, and compared with other local architects working at the time, his buildings survive in the largest numbers.

A significant development at this time was the Lee-on-the-Solent Lido, built in 1931. This was built on quite a large scale being (at 73 m) half as long again as an Olympic sized swimming pool. Most unusually, it was heated, making it the only example of a heated outdoor seawater lido in the country. The surrounding cliff tops provided a natural viewing area for swimming galas and water polo matches, and on the seaward side there were changing cubicles. Unfortunately, the lido struggled to meet its running costs, so in 1949, when it was discovered that a new filtration plant would need to be installed to meet Ministry of Health regulations, plans were made to convert it into two paddling pools – one 6 in (150 mm) deep for toddlers and the other between 1 ft 3 in (375 mm) and 2 ft 3 in (680 mm) deep for older children. The pool has now been filled in and has become a children's play area.

In 1935, the 50-year development of Lee-on-the-Solent was crowned by the construction of the Lee Tower complex on the site of the pier entrance building opposite 1 to 9 Marine Parade and next to the Flowers Buildings and the old railway booking hall. It was built by local builder Arthur Prestidge for the developers, Solent Properties Ltd. (of which Mr Prestidge was one of the directors) to a design by London architects Yates, Cook & Darbyshire, with the steelwork being done by the Southampton contractors, William Dibben & Son, and all bricks being made in kilns at Lee.



Figure 15. Lee-on-the-Solent Tower.
A view of the tower complex from the east, taken in the early 1950s.



Figure 16. View from the Lee-on-the-Solent Tower.
Probably taken not long after the tower was constructed, this view is looking north along Milvil Road. The new St Faith's church is identifiable in the middle distance with HMS Daedalus immediately beyond the built-up area.

The plan of the complex resembled a letter "Y" where the stem was represented by the pier. On the ground floor of the left-hand (northern) arm was a "winter garden" – a ballroom with a sprung floor – next to which was a concourse, buffet bar and kitchens. Above the ballroom on the first floor

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Figure 17. Lee-on-the-Solent Tower post-1958.
Taken after the demolition of the pier, this view shows the alterations that were made at the rear of the tower complex.



Figure 18. Marine Parade in 2017.
Nos. 1 to 9 Marine Parade provide the most obvious evidence of the changes made during the 1930s. The row was built in two blocks, the nearer one (Nos. 1 to 5) being by far the more pleasing to the eye, to the extent that Nos. 6 to 9 appear to have been added rather unsympathetically. As built, the top-floor windows of Nos. 6 to 9 opened onto a long balcony (the deeper windows originally being doors) which to some extent mitigated the otherwise bland appearance. The current jumble of shop fronts and the proliferation of street furniture have done nothing to improve matters.

was the Palm Court Café and Restaurant. The right-hand (southern) arm housed a cinema with stalls and a circle; it contained around 900 seats (some reports say 845, others, 950), and prices varied from 9d for the front stalls to 1s 10d for a seat in the dress circle. At the junction of the three parts of the "Y" was a 120 ft (36 m) high white tower, with an observation deck at the top that could be reached by stairs, or by a lift at a cost of 6d. A clock was added in 1954.

Nikolas Pevsner somewhat dismissively described the tower as looking "rather like an elongated cigarette lighter", and the complex overall as "a good piece of second-rate inter-war modernism of the slightly jazzy sort, constructed of concrete when concrete seemed very up-to-date"; he conceded that it had "a rather nice elegant vulgarity". While all of this might be true through the eyes of an architectural critic, the building of the tower complex was (literally) a concrete manifestation of the continuing desire to promote Lee-on-the-Solent as a holiday destination.

The complex opened on 26th December 1935 (three months after the railway closed) and was hailed as "a monument to (the builder) for all time". The opening was performed by Admiral Sir Arthur Waistell, Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth until his retirement 1934**.** The cinema celebrated with a showing of "Marry the Girl" starring Sonnie Hale, and "In Town Tonight", a musical starring Jack Barty, Stanley Holloway and Wilson, Keppel & Betty (both films having been released that year). The optimism of the opening day was short-lived, however, as within a year, the complex was in financial difficulties, and in 1937, the company that ran it went into liquidation. Parts

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of it were leased to various parties, with the cinema being taken over by a Portsmouth-based cinema chain, and by 1939, the rest had been taken over by Gosport Borough Council.

On the outbreak of World War II on 3rd September 1939, the cinema was closed and the complex was requisitioned by the military. As an anti-invasion measure, the Army rendered the pier unusable for landing by enemy troops by blowing up some sections – an act that was mimicked by Mother Nature a little later when heavy seas washed away some of the remaining parts of the structure. Another wartime measure was to cover the tower in camouflage paint to disguise it from German aircrews and prevent it being used for navigation for bombing raids on Portsmouth and Southampton. Later in the war, some temporary repairs were made to the pier by the United States Army, who used the complex as their headquarters for the D-day landings on 4th June 1944**.**



Figure 19. High Street in 2017.
This part of the 1930s development occupies the north-eastern side of the previously vacant area of land in front of the tower complex, indeed, the building nearest the camera appears from contemporary maps to be the first to have been built on the site. The remaining white-painted buildings have been attributed to Trevor J. Tatham, although a 1950s postcard shows a gap where the bay-windowed building now stands.

At the end of the war in 1945, the complex was de-requisitioned, and the cinema re-opened. At around this time, a Captain Cutler attempted to run a ferry service to Cowes using an ex-RAF rescue launch, but the service was discontinued when he left the area. Gosport Borough Council, as owners of the pier, received compensation for damage caused during the war, and it was assumed that the money would pay for the reconstruction of the pier and the restoration of the ferry services, but this was not to be and the pier was demolished in 1958. This necessitated alterations at the rear of the tower where the entrance to the pier had been, a two-storey bay being added between the two arms of the complex in a contemporary style with panoramic windows in contrast to the relative lack of windows in the original structure to each side.



Figure 20. Trafalgar House in 2017.
Now known as Pier House, the two Dutch-gabled bays of what was originally Trafalgar House on the left were extended by the next three bays in the 1930s to the design of Trevor J. Tatham. Since then, a further two bays have been added in the same style to create a very impressive building on the sea front.

Ten years after the cinema re-opened, it was equipped to screen Cinemascope films, but the whole venture was little more successful than it had been before the war, so the cinema closed in 1958, and

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became a bingo hall. It also tried to cash-in on the professional wrestling boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and in 1964, it was converted into a ten-pin bowling alley, but it was all to no avail, and the complex was demolished by Gosport Borough Council in the spring of 1971.

The tower complex was a brave, last attempt to realise the Robinson's vision for Lee-on-the-Solent, but the visitors never came in the hoped-for numbers. It suffered on three counts: no sooner had it been built than World War II broke out; then, when hostilities ceased, it was battling against the austerity years of the 1950s, and finally, when more prosperous times returned, we entered the age of package holidays to Spain. The demolition of the pier must have made Lee-on-the-Solent seem even less like "the seaside", and day trippers and locals didn't bring in enough income to keep the complex going.

The ultimate failure of the tower complex echoes that of the first phase of the resort's development, which was cut short by the death of the three members of the Robinson family who had done so much to promote it, and by the tragedy of World War I. Between the two wars, the one thing that might have changed the town's fortunes for the better was the presence of the railway, but this had probably come too late, and was almost certainly too little. A lightly-engineered branch line springing from another branch line (more of a twig) and taking a very circuitous route to creep into the town by the back door, it never had the capacity to carry visitors in the numbers that were needed. A more heavily engineered direct railway from the St Denys to Fareham line would have been capable of supporting larger trains of main-line locomotives and carriages and might have enticed more holidaymakers as a result.



Figure 21. Milvil Road in 2017.
This delightful row of individually designed Art Deco houses is in stark contrast to the Edwardian properties that make up most of Milvil Road. The one at the extreme right-hand end is now a B&B known as Milvil Corner.

The buildings associated with the railway station are still there, and the promenade, war memorial and remembrance gardens occupy the site of the tower complex, so that it is hard now to imagine what once stood there. Lee-on-the-Solent never was a popular holiday destination, and although there are many guest houses and B&Bs, no large hotels remain. Recent years have seen it develop as a dormitory town for Portsmouth and Gosport and as a retirement destination, with many new flats being built along Marine Parade and further back from the seafront. Some buildings have received sympathetic renovation and many of the original 1930s windows have been replaced. Numbers 6 to 9 Marine Parade have had their balconies removed, and these buildings, together with those that continue round into Pier Street and High Street, form an important part of the Conservation Area. Lee-on-the-Solent continues to attract day visitors throughout the year, but sadly, they can no longer savour the delights of the "monument for all time".

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Overton Silk Mill, 1769-1848

Richard Waldram

Nothing now remains of this mill apart from the weir and the mill pond (*see illustration on back cover*) at Southington, just to the west of Overton Village on the River Test (SU509497). It is hard to believe that a five-storey building once straddled the river here. It was one of four mills on a one mile stretch of the river at Overton.

The first water-powered mill producing silk thread in England was built at Derby by Thomas Lombe in 1721.[1] It stood five stories high and housed 26 Italian winding engines that spun the raw silk on each of the upper three floors.[2] When the patents lapsed in 1732, others were quick to follow at Stockport (1732), Macclesfield (1744) and Congleton (1753).[3] Although the machinery was driven by water power, the work required large numbers of relatively unskilled people, work which could be done by child apprentices.



Figure 22. The only known illustration of the mill, drawn in 1824[6] when Mr Bryan Troughton had acquired the lease. The caption reads, 'Mr Troughton's Silk Mill near Overton employing about 200 women and children. 247 windows.' (Hampshire Archives TOP245/2/4)

The mill at Overton was built in 1769[4] and was almost certainly the first large scale silk mill in the south of England. It was built on the site of a former fulling mill in Southington. Thomas Streatwells, John Bridges and Edward Atkins bought the lease from Joseph Portal,[4] the son of Henri Portal, who was making paper at Bere Mill and Laverstoke Mill further downstream. Thomas Streatwells and John Bridges had connections with the Portal family.[5]

The picture above is only a sketch and cannot be taken as an accurate drawing but it was certainly an imposing structure. The main building was 103ft high and 160ft long on five floors.[7] The artist shows no chimneys and a fire insurance document of 1805 confirms that, '*there is no stove or steam engine in the building.*'[8] It must have been a cold place to work in during the winter.

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The general plan of the site is shown on the Overton Tithe Map of 1843.[9] The channel shown to the south in the illustration must be the overflow channel. The main river driving the water wheel beneath the building cannot be seen.

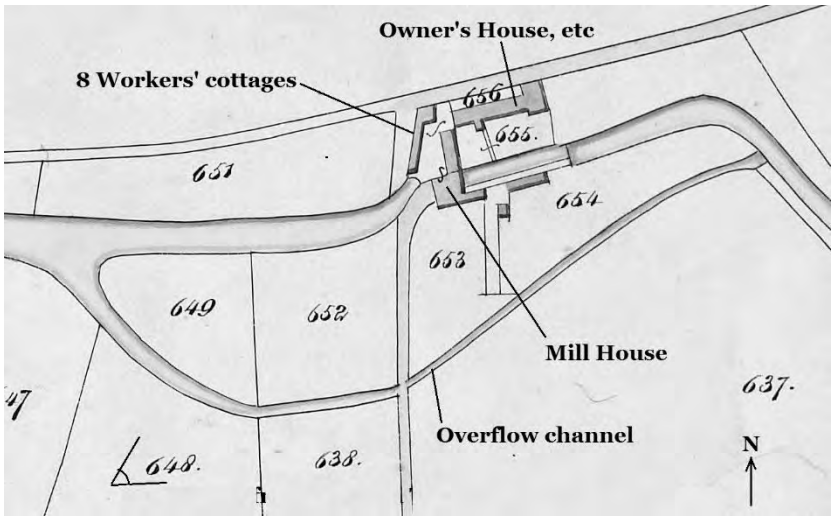


Figure 23. Annotated version of the 1843 Overton tithe map. (Hampshire Archives 21M65 F7/181/2)

The buildings may not have been drawn to scale but do show the general layout. The main mill building straddles the river. The overflow channel with a bridge across it runs to the south. The water wheel was geared to drive a vertical shaft right up to the top floor, with further gearing to provide horizontal rotating shafts to each work room. Altogether there were 11 reel mills with 2160 swifts, nine train engines, 32 winding engines, and seven spinning mills.[7] It is not known who designed and built the mill or what the venture cost.

Three visitors to the mill

Child labour was nothing new in an age when few children went to school. They were expected to contribute to the family enterprise usually at 8 or 9 years old. What was entirely new in the factories was the use of such young children as 'apprentices' for the full working day and for a small weekly wage. Three people who visited the Mill before 1800 had sharply contrasting views about it.

> Richard Sullivan who visited in 1785 saw 140 children at work from the age of six '*so advantageously for themselves and their families'* and a group of 30 even younger children who *'are fed and clothed until they are capable of work.'* Sullivan saw this as a *'highly praiseworthy and sensible exertion of charity.'*[10]
>
> He was followed in 1786 by the Reverend James Fordyce D.D.[11] He saw 190 girls employed and praised Mrs Streatwells for the way she instructed the '*happy children…. in knowledge, virtue and piety.'* There is nothing in the records to show that the Streatwells had any children. Mary Streatwells evidently cared for all these children as her own. These 190 children could not possibly have been recruited from Overton parish alone. Many of them must have been parish apprentices from elsewhere.
>
> John Thelwall, who visited 11 years later in 1797 took the entirely opposite view.[12] He was a radical reformer who took to travelling the countryside to record the condition of the poor. He described Overton as a '*wretched looking place'* and contrasted the factory and the owner's house, *'in one of which the multitude produce, in the other a single family enjoys what we call the wealth and prosperity of the nation.'* He regarded the factory as '*a common prison house'* in which *'a hapless multitude are sentenced to hard labour.'*
>
> He recorded their wages as 9s to 10s 6d a week for a few men and 4s to 4s 6d for women. Children from 5 years of age to 14 or 15 received 1s a week for the first year they were employed and an additional 3d per week for every year they continued. The hours were from 6 o'clock in the morning to 7 or 8 o'clock at night.

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The first of the Factories Acts came in 1802.[13] It banned night work and limited the working day to 12 hours in cotton mills. However, the owners of silk mills argued that they were much less dusty and not injurious to health. Silk mills were exempted, even though children started work much younger at five or six.[14] The Act was ineffective because there was no means of enforcement. Nevertheless, it showed how opinion about the employment of children was changing. What was deemed acceptable and even desirable in 1769 when Mr Streatwells opened his mill in Overton was much less acceptable by 1800, at least to the small band of reformers who thought about it. The poor had no voice of their own.

A change of management

In 1790, Thomas Streatwells was 56. He assigned the lease of the Silk Mill to Bryan Troughton.[15] The Troughtons were a prominent Coventry family where Bryan's father was a silkman.[16] 'Streatwells, Bridges and Troughton, silkmen' were working as a partnership at 108 Bishopsgate in London in 1777.[17] Sometime before 1795, Bryan moved his wife and six young children from Bishopsgate in London to Overton so that he could manage the business.[18]

An argument over water

It must have become apparent that the silk mill was under-powered soon after it was built. Mr Streatwells tried to rectify this by building up the weir of his overflow channel to raise the level of water in the mill pond and the head of water driving the mill wheel. This led to arguments with Mr Small who worked Town Mill half a mile upstream. He claimed that the water had backed up so much that it was slowing down the wheel at his mill.[19]

The argument went on for years. To spite Mr Streatwells, Mr Small took to raising the level in his own mill pond when his mill was not working which deprived the silk mill of water altogether. Eventually, Mr Small put the matter into the hands of his lawyers. In 1790, Mr Troughton was in charge of the Silk Mills and he must have been in contact with John Rennie as he did his survey for a canal passing through Overton to join the Basingstoke and Andover canals.[20] He engaged Rennie as his expert witness for the trial. John Rennie carefully surveyed the levels at the weirs at both mills and did experiments by adjusting them.[21] A second water wheel had been put in at Town Mill ten years before. Rennie concluded that Mr Small's mill was '*very ill constructed'* and wasteful of water. The downstream eddies from the second water wheel had broken down the banks and silted up the river bed. He argued that this was where Mr Small's problem lay and it was nothing to do with the Silk Mill. Eventually it came to court. Despite the evidence of the foremost canal expert in the world, Mr Small won his case. The Hampshire Advertiser reported,[19]

> '*The action was brought by Mr Small for certain erections… made by Mr Troughton and his predecessors, owners of the silk mills, whereby the stream after it had passed through Small's Mill was obstructed and penned back upon it to his hindrance and injury, which being clearly and substantially proved, the said Troughton to pay Mr Small 60 pounds damages, to widen the tumbling bay at his, Mr Troughton's, expense and to keep the Silk Mill head of water reduced by other means*.'

Mr Troughton just had to accept the situation. Lack of power may have been a factor in the eventual economic failure of the mill. The canal plan was revived in 1810 by Ralph Dodd, another famous canal builder, but the local landowners quashed the idea, Thomas Streatwells, Bryan Troughton and John Portal amongst them.[22]

Keeping the mill running

The period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792-1815) were good times for the English silk weavers because import tariffs on raw silk were cut and imports of finished products from France were banned, though this did not prevent smuggling.[3] However, being almost wholly

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dependent on home demand, silk manufacture was liable to serious fluctuations with every change of fashion.[23]

In 1821 there were debates in Parliament about reducing the import duty on raw silk and removing the ban on foreign imports.[24] Bryan Troughton was so concerned about it that he wrote to his MP, fearing that the trade of silk throwsters would be annihilated.[25] Nothing happened until 1824 when the whole system was changed with a view to *'lessening the fluctuation in demand and to meet the altered state of commerce attending the return of peace*.' The high duty on raw silk was abandoned, that on thrown silk reduced by half and the admission of foreign manufactured goods was rendered legal after 5th July 1826.[3] At this point, the minister, church wardens and inhabitants of Overton petitioned Parliament[26] but, despite similar petitions from all over the country, the Act came into effect.
In 1834, the lease of the Overton silk mill came up for sale by auction '*by order of the mortgagees by a power of sale*'.[7] About 1830, Bryan Troughton had transferred the lease to his son Charles[27] and maybe he had raised money by mortgaging the property and was unable to repay it. Charles was declared insolvent in 1834.[28] It is not known who the highest bidder was, though it is likely to have been Mr John Corrie since he was the proprietor of the lease in 1847.[29] Bryan Troughton died just after the sale at the age of 83 and was buried in Overton Churchyard.

John Corrie lived at Southington House just south of the Silk Mill. He was a widower who married Bryan Troughton's daughter Martha in 1836.[30] Charles Troughton remained the mill manager and he was at the Mill on census night in 1841. The census reveals that the eight tenements at the mill were occupied by families and not by child workers. Only four silk throwsters actually lived at the mill. There were at least 25 others who lived in the village. They were almost all women, the youngest being 15. It seems that by then the practice of employing very young children had gone. The need to employ more adults at higher wages may have been a factor in the economic failure of the mill. However, one child, Jane Nash, who was 11 at the time of the census, worked at the silk mill. Born in 1830, she started work, age 6, perched on a little stool to enable her to reach her task.[31]

Closure and demolition
John Corrie closed the silk mill on January 2nd, 1848[32] and let it be known that the buildings would be demolished. On February 24th, all Mr Troughton's possessions were sold at an auction held in the house. The furniture, china, glass, sheets, tablecloths and even the beer in his cellar were sold and he was left with nothing.[33] Two days later, he wrote a formal letter to his brother in law.[34] It is clear that he was a year behind in paying the rent. He acknowledges that the business is in difficulties but still thinks he can turn it round. He claims that his relatives will always look after him financially and bases his appeal to stop the closure on behalf of the workforce.

Two weeks later, John Corrie received another appeal from the Minister of Overton Congregational Church, John Moreton[35] saying that, '*My decided conviction is that the down-taking of that building must be the most calamitous event that could befall the poor of this place and neighbourhood*' His employees would find themselves in the workhouse and become a further burden on the ratepayers. He also wrote that closing the mill had been advocated on moral grounds, without saying what these were, but the parish christening records reveal that the 'silk girls' had a tendency to produce 'baseborn' (illegitimate) babies. Twenty of them had done so in the previous seven years.[36]

It seems there was quite a head of steam behind these protests. Mr Corrie was warned by his legal adviser to '*abstain from any act of demolition at the Mill'* until he had the Bishop's 'Licence to Demolish' in his hands in case those who disagreed might persuade the Bishop to withhold it.[37] If Charles Troughton was mismanaging the business and John Corrie had lost patience with him, why could he not have sold it to a new investor at auction as had happened 12 years before? The answer is that in 1846 the duties on foreign silk products were reduced from 30% to 15%, making the

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fine and abundant French silks only marginally more expensive than their inferior English counterparts. The decreased demand and a simultaneous increase in weavers' wages crippled manufacturers, and many were driven to bankruptcy.[38] 1847 saw a banking crisis and credit became unobtainable.[39]

Mr Corrie could not hope to find a buyer. The assets of the machinery and the building had to be sold to pay creditors. He took advice on what the sale might raise and on April 29th 1848 he received the opinion of John Money. It was not optimistic.[40]. He estimated the quantity of building bricks at 720,000 with 40,000 plain tiles and upwards of seventy loads of Memel timber. He thought that, '*the machinery is worth but a trifle and will not answer to remove to a distance.'*


OVERTON, HANTS.

A CATALOGUE
OF THE SUPERIOR

BUILDING MATERIALS
AND
MACHINERY,
COMPRISED IN THAT
NOBLE BUILDING,
KNOWN AS THE
SILK MILLS, at SOUTHINGTON,
Erected in the most substantial Manner, and regardless of Expense,
Which will be Sold by Auction,
By Mr. PAICE,
On FRIDAY, the 26th of MAY, 1848, on the PREMISES, at ONE o'Clock, in LOTS.

Figure 24. Advertisement for the sale of materials following demolition. (Hampshire Archives 34M87/27)



Figure 25. An old photograph of the tenements known as 'Silk Mill cottages'.

The auction was held on May 26th.[41] On June 7th workmen started to demolish the building to allow the successful bidders to cart away their purchases.[32] Much of the machinery remained unsold and good winding engines went for a few shillings. The mill wheel raised just £4. The total proceeds amounted to £193 6s 6p.[41] Nothing was left on the site except the eight tenements.

At the 1851 census, after the mill had closed, there were 39 young women living in Overton working as silk winders and throwsters, including Jane Nash. They were presumably working at the Whitchurch silk mill (opened in 1819) with a three mile walk each way added to their working day. Did the silk mill workers have to go to the workhouse as Charles Troughton and the Minister predicted? There were 29 people at the workhouse on census night in 1841. By 1849, the Overton workhouse had closed and Overton paupers were sent to the new Union Workhouse at Whitchurch. On census night in 1851 there were 59 people there of whom only 19 were born in Overton. Closing the silk mill was not the 'great calamity' that had been feared.

What became of Charles Troughton? At the 1851 census he was living by himself in a boarding house in Winchester. His family had not supported him as he had hoped.

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The eight tenements became known as 'Silk Mill Cottages' and were still occupied in 1957[42] but they were demolished soon afterwards because they were considered insanitary.

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A Note on Snuff

Tony Yoward

In Tudor and Stuart days a pomander or perfumed pouncet-box was carried by gentlefolk so that the aromatic perfumes could be inhaled to counteract the unpleasant odours of the community. The pouncet-box was a small silver box, the sides of which are "pounced," or pierced, with holes. It contained a sponge soaked in pungent vinegar to ward off diseases and offensive odours. The box was carried by English gentlemen from about the mid-16th century to the early 17th century.

Tobacco was first brought to England in 1565 by Sir John Hawkins. It was Sir Walter Raleigh who introduced the tobacco smoking habit from the North American Indians and made it popular in court circles. Smoking certainly reached Bristol about 1593, within eight years of its introduction into England. It almost immediately spread to the neighbouring county and throughout the realm. The swift development of the smoking habit despite restrictions and the high duty imposed upon tobacco, led to systematic smuggling.



Figure 26. A small silver pouncet-box compared to a £1 coin. Note the 'strawberry' pattern of holes!

The tobacco industry throughout the country experienced great difficulties owing to persistent smuggling and adulterations, and the Treasury was frequently petitioned to reduce the duty with a view to rendering the activities of smugglers unprofitable.

King James I was very hostile to the tobacco habit and wrote a pamphlet, "A Counterblast to Tobacco", in 1604 and imposed a tax on it of 6/8d a pound.

Snuff taking was a European invention, prior to this tobacco had only been smoked but the snuff habit was flourishing on the continent by 1620 and was brought to England by Charles II when he returned from exile in 1660. Thereafter, snuff taking became fashionable. Tobacco chewing was later, having started about 1730.

In the early days, snuff was made by hand, the whole leaf being used. When heavy excise duties were imposed, the best parts of the leaf were used for smoking and the waste together with the stalks and root were reserved for snuff. Snuff was prepared by a `carotte', a carrot shaped plug of tightly rolled tobacco leaves, which was rasped (powdered) by the user.

Indeed, it was discovered that the tobacco plant could be grown in the southern counties of England and some English farmers found tobacco a more profitable crop than corn. So, its cultivation was prohibited by Acts of Parliament of 1660, 1663, and 1671. Tobacco growing was again permitted in England in I910, and a Mr. G. J. Brandon of Church Crookham began its cultivation**!**

Perfume was succeeded by coarse ground tobacco powder in the pouncet-box from about 1590. This powder was sniffed up the nostril, hence to sniff, or snuff.

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The popularity of snuff increased in the 17th century and mills took over from the hand making methods of rasp or mortar and pestle. The main method of milling was to use 'Mullers' which were massive wooden bowls cut from solid elm, around the inside of which a heavy steel pestle was made to roll, producing a much smoother texture to the snuff than the earlier methods.



Figure 27. Nineteenth century 'Mullers' arranged in a ring and driven by a waterwheel. (Wilson's Sharow mills)

Though originally seen as medicinal, snuff taking became a general habit with both men and women by the end of the 17th century. After sniffing, the person would sneeze and spit. In contrast, snuff boxes were often objects of great beauty. Snuff was often adulterated by the dealers with the addition of starch, fine sawdust, peppers, herbs and other vegetable matter to increase profits.

Usage began to decline during the reign of William IV (1830-37) and by the mid-19th century it was no longer fashionable.

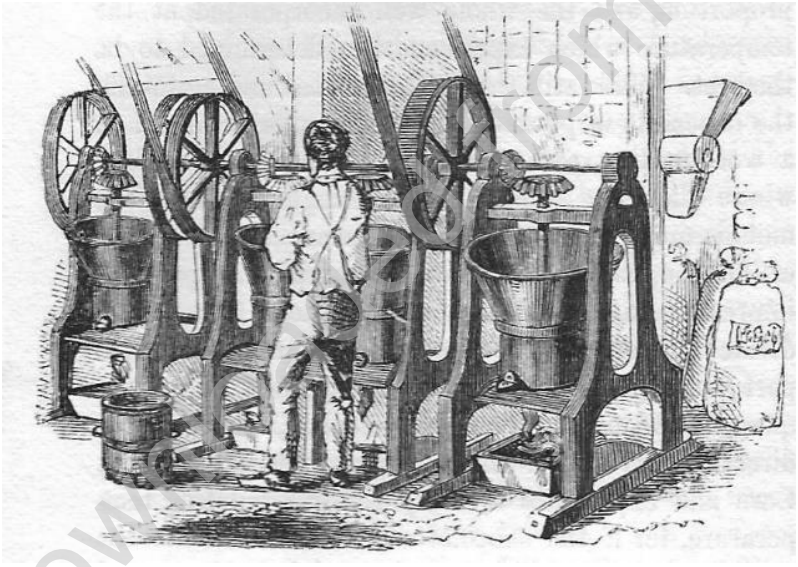


Figure 28. Conical metal snuff mills illustrated in an early nineteenth century encyclopaedia

Disruption caused by the American War of Independence between 1752 and 1775 had directed tobacco imports towards Scotland where the outlay required to set up a snuff mill was small enough to be within the means of a wide range of other persons and many small snuff mills appeared for a time.

Some of the better known snuff mills in the twentieth century include:

Helsington Mill on the River Kent at Kendal in Cumbria. This was an ancient fulling mill which was converted to a snuff mill in 1792 and was been run by the same family for 199 years. Sadly, it closed in 1991 when the miller retired.

The undershot waterwheel which powered the machinery is believed to date from the 1860s when the mill was damaged by fire. The machinery included two ball mills, an eccentric sieve, wooden single-pestle mortars and an iron mixing pot.

Wilson's Sharrow Mills. The first Wilson came to the Sharrow Mills in Sheffield about 1737 when Thomas rented the water wheel and buildings from the Duke of Norfolk. He was followed by his son Joseph who carried on the trade, alongside various other trades such as scythe-making, at the Sharrow

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Mills. Sometime in the 1740s he came into possession of the secrets of snuff-making.



Figure 29. A twentieth century set of Mullers at Wilson's Sharrow mills.

A fire in 1746 at the Mills destroyed some of his stock which included "tobacco snuff", but by 1750 the snuff business had become the most important part of Joseph's activities at Sharrow Mills and it was then that he started making S.P., a snuff for which Sharrow has been famous ever since.

A further six generations of the Wilson family have followed Thomas at Sharrow Mills and the business which is now known as 'Wilsons & Co. (Sharrow)" is still wholly owned and run by members of the Wilson family. Steam-power was introduced in 1797 and the capacity of the mills has been gradually increased over the years. However, the water wheel is still working, deriving its power from the little river Porter.



Figure 30. Modern tins of Wilson's snuff.

Sharrow snuffs were originally sent out in barrels and boxes but today a wide range of packings is available and snuff is made in an increasing number of flavours.

Anstie's. One of the oldest established snuff mills in the country, however, was the business of Anstie's in Devizes. The founder, Richard Anstie, who was a Devizes townsman in 1696. Although no trustworthy date can be assigned to the actual production of snuff at Devizes, it is known that use was made of the two windmills, set up on the ruins of the castle to power two mills, one being an edge runner set of stones. The mills were originally built to express rape seed oil. Later the windmills passed into the possession of William Ludlow of Hillworth House, who used them for snuff-grinding in the 1780s.



Figure 31. Advertisement for snuff made at the two windmills in Devizes.

Perhaps the most momentous years in the history of the Anstie business were the 1830s. The changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution made the brothers Paul and Benjamin Anstie realise it was useless spending further money on the renovation of wind and water-mills, which were rapidly becoming obsolete. A 10 hp Boulton & Watt steam-engine was purchased for £700 and installed by Haden's of Trowbridge. The premises were enlarged and equipped with new plant, much of it designed by Paul Anstie, who is said to have devised the first successful tobacco-cutting machine.

The raw product tobacco leaves were imported through Bristol and transported in barrels to be stored in a bonded warehouse. On arrival at Anstie's the staves were removed so the tobacco was taken out in a lump, the leaves were separated and steamed. In the early 19th century Paul Anstie introduced a tobacco and snuff drying plant and

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Figure 32. Advertisement for Anstie's snuff

a machine which uniformly moistened the leaf. This damp mixture was cured when salt was added and it was left to ferment for 3-4 weeks. The temperature was controlled and the mixture turned.

The mixture was then placed in the Mullers, large elm-wood bowls set in heavy, flat tables. Each had a steel and stone pestle attached to overhead gear. Flavouring and perfuming was carried out in secret. Flavourings included orris, bergamot, oil of rhodium, essence of violet and rose water.

Anstie's acquired John Rutter's tobacco and snuff business in Mitcham in 1925 and then, in 1944, Louis and George Edmond Anstie wished to retire. Having no successor to carry on the business they approached the Imperial Tobacco Co. Ltd., who agreed to purchase the business in 1944. The buildings were sold to a printer and so ended the family's control of the business which had lasted for six generations.

While researching mills in Dorset and Hampshire I have not found mention of any snuff mills, due no doubt to the ease of smuggling the snuff ashore.

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Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society

Hampshire Industrial Archaeology Society was founded as the Southampton University Industrial Archaeology Group in the 1960s from members of the University Extra-Mural classes who wished to continue their studies in industrial archaeology. Recording has included surveys of mills, breweries, brickworks, roads and farm buildings. Restoration work is undertaken by associated groups such as the Tram 57 Project, the Hampshire Mills Group and the Twyford Waterworks Trust. In addition to the *Journal*, the Society publishes a newsletter (*Focus*) twice a year and lecture meetings are held every month throughout the year.

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