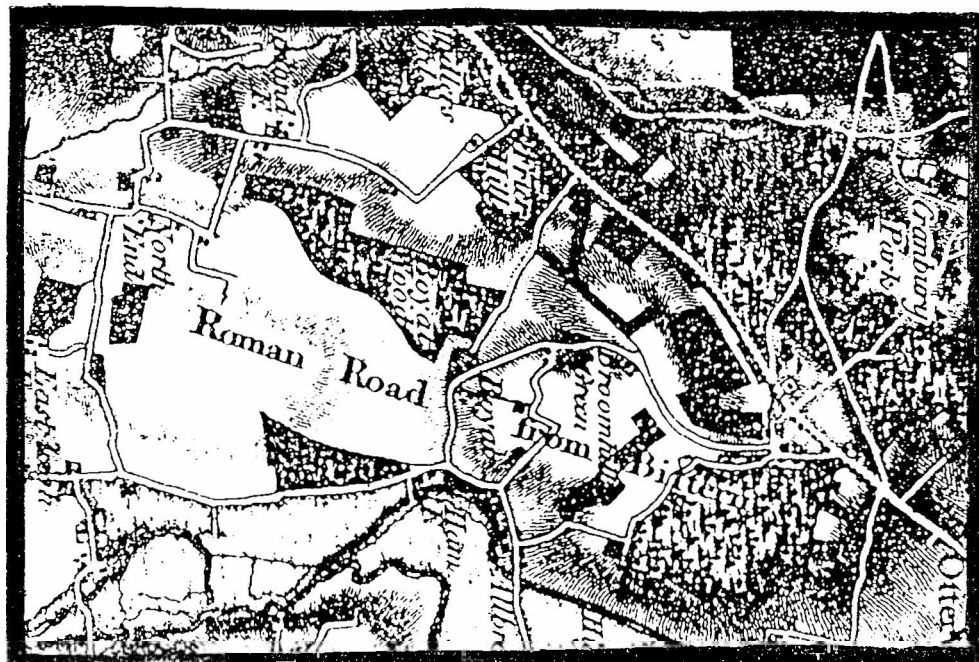
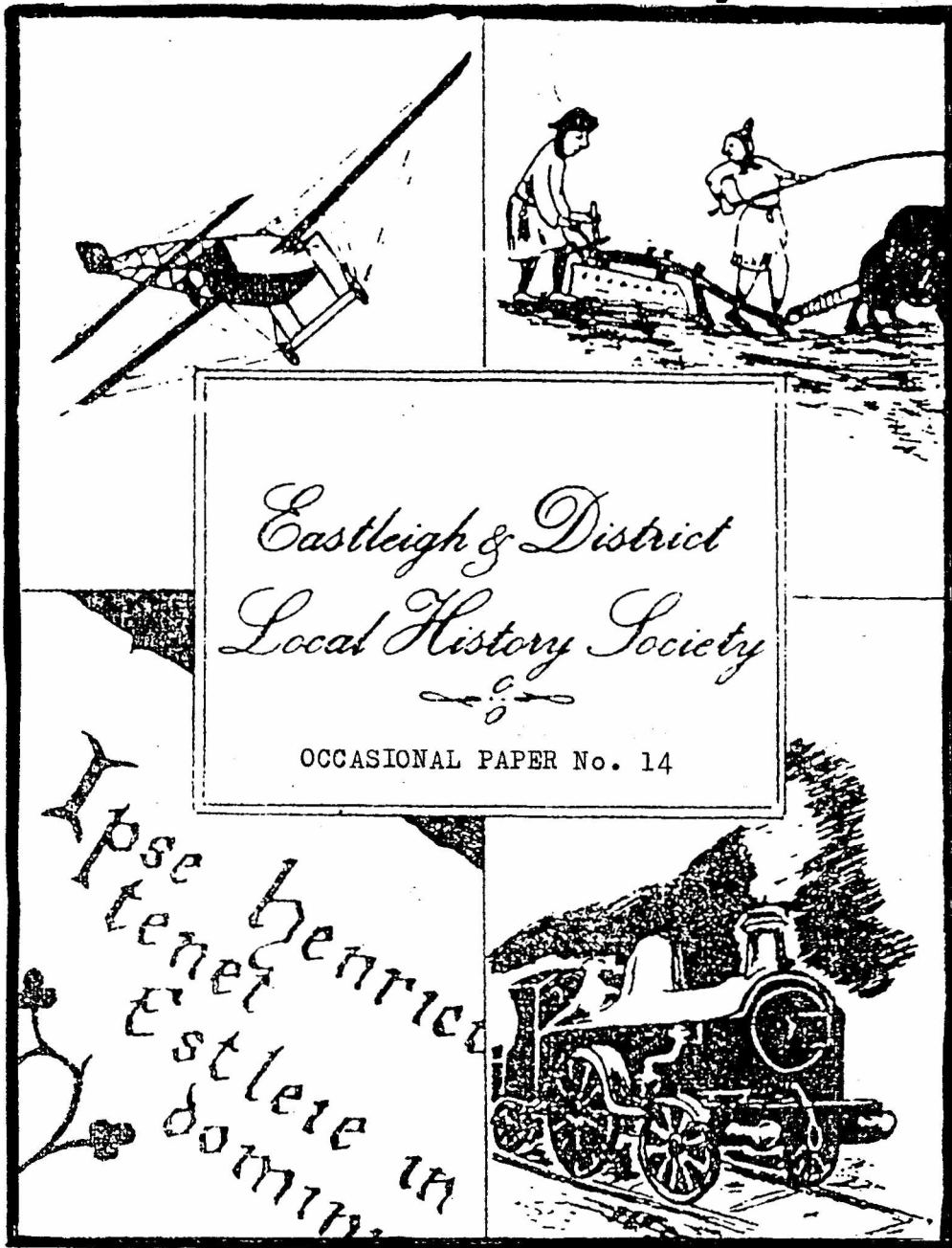
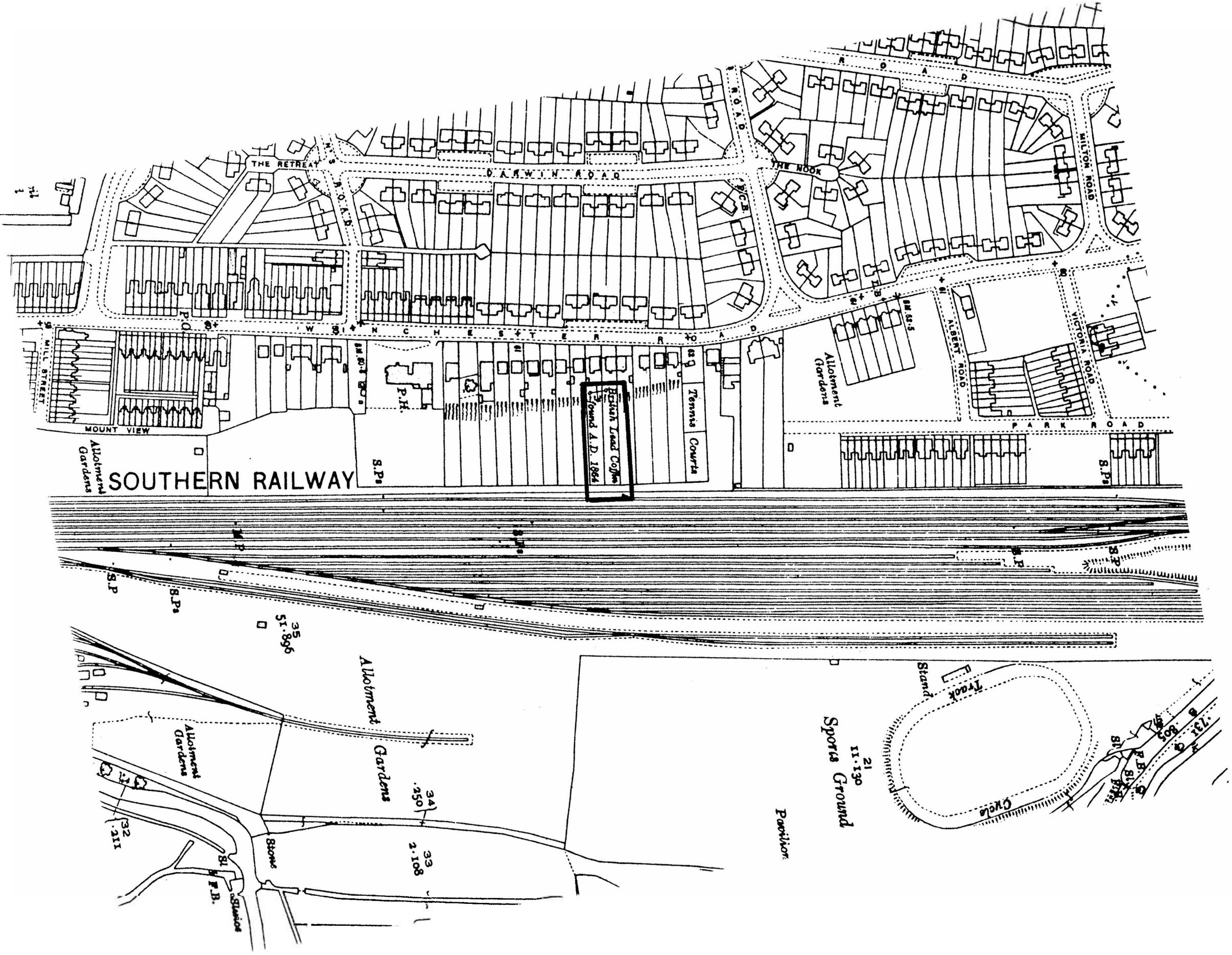


A Roman coffin at Bishopstoke.

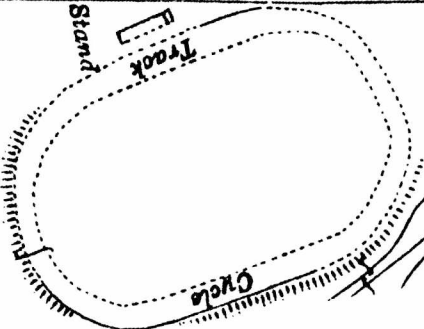




Richard Lead Coffin
Found A.D. 1864

SOUTHERN RAILWAY

Sports Ground
21
11.130



Allotment Gardens

Allotment Gardens

Allotment Gardens

Allotment Gardens

Allotment Gardens

Tennis Courts

P.H.

THE RETREAT

THE MOOR

DARWIN ROAD

MILTON ROAD

VICTORIA ROAD

ALBERT ROAD

MOUNT VIEW

MILL STREET

1

THE EASTLEIGH - BISHOPSTOKE ROMAN LEAD COFFIN.

During March 1985, considerable interest was aroused by the discovery of a six-foot lead coffin complete with skeleton in the Winchester area. An official from the archaeology department there commented: *"We have found hundreds of graves in this area as it was the eastern burial ground of the ancient Roman settlement, but none of them contained lead coffins. The fact that this one was made of lead and buried deep in the ground indicates that it must be the grave of a very wealthy or important person"*

But in the Eastleigh and District area, it has all happened before! Early in 1864, the permanent way of the South-Western Railway passing through the locality was in need of repair. Accordingly, on Saturday 16 January, a gang of men was sent to dig for gravel. The exact location of their operations is variously described as: *".... a piece of land belonging to Mr. Chamberlayne of Cranbury Park adjoining the railway embankment about a mile north of Bishopstoke Junction (now Eastleigh Railway Station) for many years used for agricultural purposes"* and *".... at the rear of the Meadowbank Hotel (later the Golden Hind and now demolished)"*, but the accompanying map purports to give the precise location.

Some time after work had commenced and at a depth of about five feet below the surface, one of the diggers drove his pick into a 'foreign substance' which, on examination, proved to be lead. Proceeding with more caution, they carefully scraped away the surrounding material and eventually uncovered a lead cist (or coffin) which showed some signs of damage due both to the pressure of the earth and the implements of the excavators. Excited by the novelty of their find and, possibly, some thoughts of cupidity, they attempted to prise off the lid of the coffin, thus causing further harm. Fortunately a person with some authority was on hand and upon his instructions the remains were carefully removed to a workshop near the Station.

The Railway authorities then contacted a noted Hampshire antiquarian and a scholar of some repute, Mr. F. J. Baigent, who visited the workshop on Tuesday, 19 January, and much of what follows is the substance of his report.

The original burial had consisted of a WOODEN chest into which had been placed a LEAD coffin whose interior measurements were:

Length 5 feet 6 inches: Breadth 16½ inches: Depth of sides 9½ inches.

The width was uniform throughout and it was made of one piece of lead by the corners being cut out and the sides turned up and lapped over for about an inch. The lid was constructed in a similar manner and overlapped the top of the coffin to a depth of three inches. The lead itself was originally one quarter of an inch thick. No external inscription or decoration was discernible nor any signs of handles ever being attached to either the chest or coffin.

The alignment, when discovered, was nearly due east and west with the head lying towards the west (possibly indicating a non-Christian burial?). There was little sign of any grave goods - no coins or other objects - apart from the broken remnants of three or four lachrymatories (small glass vessels romantically said to be for holding tears but more probably containing perfumes or sweet smelling ointments). These had been made of very thin yellowish or pale green sparkling glass with no handles and only little evidence at decoration. Originally these had been placed above the right shoulder.

The lower extremities of the skeleton were missing, probably lost in the original excavation. The sinking of one side of the lid had depressed the right ribs causing an early decay of that side of the body. The left ribs remained intact.

Mr. Baigent came to the conclusion that the remains were, in all probability, those of a noble Roman lady, of small and delicate frame, who had died at an early age - not more than 25, if so old. He further conjectured that as at this time (1864) much of the surrounding land was undisturbed, there was every hope of further finds being made. Time has so far proved this to be wishful thinking.

Rumours exist that 'a coffin' was on display at one of the public buildings in the area for a number of years and that it was eventually given to one of the Southampton museums but, after investigation, these have proved impossible of verification. The disposal of the remains of the 'Roman lady' are unknown. It is to be hoped that they were given decent re-burial.

Although both Winchester and Southampton have, quite rightly, received considerable attention from the professional archaeologists, the area between the two towns has evoked small interest. Such finds that have been made are of a purely chance nature such as the incident related above. There have been several others within the general area.

It is known that the Romans, and later the Romano-British, were in the habit of building themselves villas, some of them quite palatial, in the countryside surrounding the main towns. One at Twyford has been quite substantially excavated. From an aggregation of more random finds, little documented, evidence is building up of several other possibilities.

In the late 1930s, during the construction of the by-pass at Compton, where the road goes under the railway, the steam digger being used smashed through a probable Roman burial. From later reconstruction it appears that there were two bodies inhumed in a wooden coffin. At Otterbourne, one site in Poles Lane, close to the present incinerator, has produced over the years a number of random finds, which in toto point to the existence of a Roman or Romano-British inhabitation site. Possible confirmatory evidence has been unearthed within the last few years by the again chance discovery of two distinct hoards of Roman coins adjacent to the original site. All archaeological evidence has long since been destroyed but perhaps we may surmise that the inhabitants of this area were caught in a Saxon raid and, in imminent danger of capture whilst fleeing towards the relative safety of Winchester, hurriedly buried their portable wealth, hoping in vain to recover it at a later date. Even scantier finds in the same village indicate the possibility of a villa at the eastern end of Kiln Lane.

To the south of the Eastleigh - Bishopstoke burial, reports are extant of the site of a Roman villa half a mile east of Swaythling and, even closer, to another site under what is now the sewerage works at Chickenhall. Incidentally, another coffin was found here in 1911 and is reputed to be in the Tudor House Museum at Southampton but details and confirmation have not been recovered to date.

Whilst it is true that the Roman road from Winchester to Bitterne passed less than half a mile to the north of the main site discussed, it would appear from the material available that this was no casual burial and most unlikely to have originated from this source. The Romans were given to extra mural burials - either outside their town or residence. Just possibly this could be a somewhat distant interment from the Chickenhall site or even from an undiscovered villa on the now Eastleigh - Bishopstoke boundary. Some small support for this theory may be found in the discovery of a small bronze coin of Claudius (268-270 A.D.) nearby. About the year 1878 a considerable hoard of Roman urns and about 200 coins and other material was reported at Bishopstoke, but it has proved impossible to ascertain their present whereabouts.

From these vague indications it is possible that even in our modern day town we may be sitting on past history. It is not suggested that every garden be dug to a depth of five feet but when a trench for the foundations of new buildings is being opened, the possibilities should be borne in mind. If, by another of these 'occasional chances', something should be discovered, DO leave it where it lies and call in an expert from one of the museums.

Norman Barber.

May 1985.

A ROMAN COFFIN AT BISHOPSTOKE - ADDITIONAL NOTES

Since the writing and publication of Norman Barber's paper, further research has revealed more information about the discovery in 1911 of the Roman coffin at Chickenhall. An issue of the Eastleigh Weekly News for 1st December of that year makes the following statement:

“During the carrying out of operations at the sewage works at Chickenhall last week, the workmen came across a stone coffin at a depth of about two feet. Mr. W.W. Gandy, the surveyor to the Council, reported the discovery to the Council, and Mr. Cotton, the chairman, communicated it to Sir William Portal, Bart., and at his suggestion Mr. Wm Dale, F.S.A., hon. local secretary for the Society of Antiquaries, London, was communicated with, and he, together with Mr. Cotton, visited the spot.”

In his report, Mr. Dale observed, *“The coffin was covered with a massive lid of Ham-Hill sandstone eight inches thick. The lid is much larger than the coffin itself, and is in two pieces. No one was present but the workmen when the lid was removed, but the coffin does not appear to have contained anything but a few scattered human bones and the jaw of a rodent. The sarcophagus is certainly Roman, for the manner of the Romans was so to bury. A solitary shard of Roman pottery lies with the bones. So far as can be seen, as it lies in situ, the coffin is carefully and symetrically hewn. It will be taken up and placed in the Council Offices.”*

A fortnight later, the Eastleigh Weekly News reported: *“During the week the stone coffin recently unearthed at Chickenhall has been removed to the Council Offices, and has been deposited in a corner in front of the buildings, where it has been the object of much curiosity, one anxious individual, eager for information, being led to ask whether there were many funerals in those days, and if so, was it not a stiff job for the ‘undertaker’?”*

The coffin appears to have remained on show at the Council Offices for about a year. The Tudor House Museum in Southampton was opened in 1912 and a receipt has been found indicating that at some stage the coffin was removed to that museum.

Receipt 271 21.2.1913

Eastleigh D. S. Through 1 White

1 Roman stone coffin. ON LOAN.

“returnable any time upon application” .

Note: The Romans had a stone quarry at Ham Hill, near Yeovil.

Both the coffins mentioned in the Paper have now been found.

The lead coffin at 'Bishopstoke' was sent to the Hartley Institute in Southampton, which in the last century seems to have received most relics found in the area, and later to Tudor House Museum.

It has ended up in store at God's House Tower Museum - at least, the remains are there.

Not having been properly looked after in early days, there now exists only a small piece of lead about the size of a hand and a piece of glass phial.

The stone coffin was taken out of Tudor House and 'lost'. However, it has been found in the mason's store on the Western Esplanade. With the help of Karen Wardley, Archaeological Collections Manager, I have been able to identify the coffin with its cover. Sadly it has been dropped and broken into several pieces. We are assured that it can be repaired and the matter has been referred to the Hampshire Museums Service in the hope that it will eventually be put on display in Eastleigh. Recently, the Local History Society has been asked to suggest a suitable site for the coffin to be put on view. It weighs something like two tons.

The site of the villa near Chickenhall remains a mystery. There is a report in the Eastleigh Weekly News dated 1st December 1911, which reads: *"Mr. Dale's attention was also called by Mr. Gandy to some traces of foundations about 500 yards east of the interment. These were at once pronounced Roman and a part of a villa of the period. Mr. Gandy set several men to work to make further excavations and on Wednesday part of a well preserved hypercaust was laid bare. The pilae is made of square tiles so familiar to visitors to Silchester in the past. A box tile scored for plaster remains upright in position and the flooring of large tiles with a thick layer of opus signinum was supported by the pilae. The chamber uncovered looked much like a bath, resembling that at the Twyford villa. There is, however, a small rounded apse at the west and it may have been the end of a living room. Some perfect flooring tiles, a mass of opus signinum and some portions of fine tiles will be preserved at the Council Offices."*

Mr. Dale advised that the remains should be buried, marked and left for further exploration at a more convenient time. Has that time ever arrived and was the site correctly marked?

The villa is marked on O.S.O. maps. There should be supporting evidence for its inclusion but it cannot be found. I have been in touch with the organisation in London dealing with Historic Buildings and have had several conversations with a lady there who has failed to find the evidence and admits that she is as baffled as I am.

However, the treasures taken to the Council Offices seem to have gone to Tudor House.

There is a receipt which reads:

Receipt 282 21.3.1913

Eastleigh.

4 large Roman tiles

1 portion Roman mortar-concrete

Roman bones from coffin

Indefinite loan.

In 1912, H.G. Westwood, Chairman of the Southampton Archaeological Society, wrote a survey of Roman remains in the Eastleigh area making special reference to villa sites on the airfield. This survey exists in manuscript form in the Southampton Museum archives. Sadly, the author is dead and it is unlikely that his work will be published.

Gordon Cox
1999

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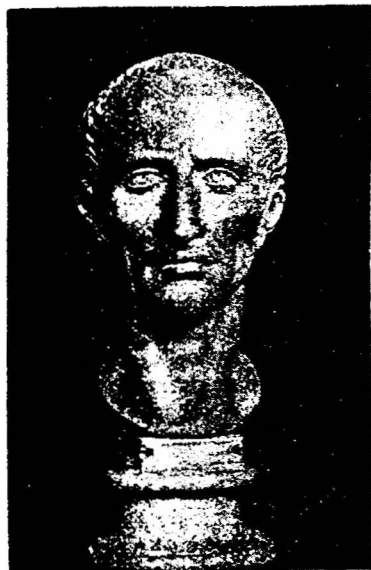
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Winchester Quarterly Record, July 1864.



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1. Hadrian, an emperor whose reign was the most splendid era of Roman architecture. 2. Cicero, orator, philosopher, man of letters, statesman. 3. Hannibal, greatest of all Carthaginian generals, and the most formidable foe that ever threatened Rome up to the day of its downfall. 4. Trajan, the soldier-emperor under whom the Roman Empire reached its greatest extent. 5. Julius Cæsar, orator, soldier, empire-builder, "the noblest Roman of them all." 6. Augustus, the heir of Cæsar and the first emperor in name. 7. Scipio Africanus, great general, victor at Zama over Hannibal.

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Eastleigh Weekly News AND HANTS GAZETTE.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1911.

LOCAL NEWS.

WHY BUY FOREIGN-MADE GOODS?—Balusters, Nails, and Head-Balls in stock, and all classes of Joinery made on the premises; all English.—TRUSSARDI'S Newtown Building Works, Eastleigh.

MEAT PURCHASERS.—Orders now being booked for Selected English Turkeys, Geese, &c. Prices on application. Dear Bros., Ltd., Pork Butchers and Poultryers, 65, Market Street.

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS.—An interesting paper on this subject was read at the meeting of the debating society held in connection with the Congregational Church on Thursday last week by Mr. J. Marshall, who dealt with his subject in a most intelligent manner.

THE BROWNS AND COOPER.—Such was the title of the play staged on Wednesday evening at the Institute entertainment by Miss Amy Miller's dramatic company, when, despite the fact that several other attractions were going on in the district the same evening, there was a full house. Miss Miller is no stranger to Eastleigh audiences, and on Wednesday the audience gave the piece a fascinating reception.

EASTLEIGH'S ANTIQUITY.—During the week the stone coffin recently unearthed at Chichenhall has been removed to the Council Offices, and has been deposited in a corner in front of the buildings, where it has been the object of much curiosity, one anxious individual, eager for information, being led to ask whether there were many funerals in those days, and if so was it not a stiff job for the "undertaker?"

LOAN SOCIETY.—The first share out of the newly-formed Eastleigh and District Loan Society (Registered No. 1,022, Hants), took place on Thursday evening, the 14th inst., when the sum of £223 12s. 1d. was divided amongst the members. A very successful year has been experienced in all respects, the sum of 2s. 6d. being added to each yearly share. Anyone of age desirous of joining for the new year can obtain full particulars of the Secretary, 75, Cranbury Road, Eastleigh.

LOCAL RUNNERS HONOURED.—Messrs. L. O. J. Southwell and L. A. G. Paddington, members of the Hampshire Amateur Athletic Club, and the latter of whom hails from Eastleigh, have been asked by the Amateur Athletic Association of England to put themselves in training with a view to representing England in the great Olympic games at Stockholm next spring. Messrs. Southwell and Paddington are to be congratulated on the honour conferred upon them.

JEWELLERY BOOK.—Among the many new books to hand is a copy of "Jewels," a charmingly illustrated handbook just published by Messrs. J. W. Benson Ltd., of 62 and 64, Longgate Hill, E.C. Not only does it give full instructions and expert advice as to the purchase of a watch, but all the new models for 1912 in jewellery are fully dealt with, including those charming and attractive yet inexpensive jewels, the aquamarine, tourmaline, amethyst, and peridot. The book will be sent to applicants post free by the publishers.

SHOOTING MATCH.—On Friday evening the Eastleigh Mechanical Engineers' Rifle Club journeyed to Alford, where they engaged the local team in a shooting match, which they won by 44 points. Scores:—

Mechanical Engineers.	Aldershot.
Mr. F. Ritchie ... 97	Mr. Hazelgrove ... 88
" R. Holmes ... 96	" Handey ... 82
" W. Ramsay ... 84	" Hunt ... 82
" F. Willcocks ... 82	" Grainger ... 81
" W. Cousins ... 82	" Blakeman ... 80
" J. Hazeldine ... 81	" Smith ... 80
" L. Ealer ... 80	" Rowell ... 81
" F. Smadley ... 83	" Kille ... 81

PRESENTATION.—At a meeting of the committee of the Eastleigh and District Band of Hope Union on Tuesday evening, Mrs. T. A. Cotton presiding, it was decided to present Miss Allen, in connection with her forthcoming marriage, with some token of the esteem and respect in which she is held. Miss Allen, who is secretary of the United Methodist Band of Hope, has been a zealous worker in connection with the Union from its commencement, and her co-workers are pleased to think that her marriage will in no wise sever her connection with the organization. Messrs. E. J. Gambin, R. Dean, and G. Codrere, were deputed to purchase a suitable present, and a Queen Anne capot has been selected. Miss Allen has, we understand, also been made the recipient of presents from her own band of hope.

The Bishop of Birmingham was on Wednesday bitten in the right hand several times by his own dog, which the Bishop tried to separate when fighting with another animal.

of song and dance being very smart. Miss J. Victoria is the possessor of a beautiful contralto voice and knows how to use it; the songs selected by this lady have swinging choruses, and are taken up eagerly by the audience, scores being the general order. Miss Emily Schofield also sends the audience away delighted with her dancing, singing, and whistling. We hear these ladies will return at an early date with all new songs. Good houses are the rule, and should certainly be so when we look at the bill of fare provided in the near future. Next week Mercill and McAulay are the principal turn. Cyril, we are informed, is a ventriloquist of the highest rank, and Jess is described as Scotland's rusty-voiced vocalist. Also there is to be yet another local film taken on Thursday next, and shown on Friday and during Xmas week, so that the public should look out for the camera and then go to the Palace and see themselves. Should the weather be fine a grand picture is assured; while Dara will show patrons how to get a Xmas dinner for nothing. The Jeffries-Johnson fight will be shown during Xmas week, the date to be announced later, and the management regret they are unable to show this great picture on Monday. On Sunday will be seen the exploits of the famous Lieut. Darling.

BOTLEY.

TERRITORIAL PRIZE DISTRIBUTION.—On Wednesday evening the annual dinner and prize distribution in connection with the C Company 4th Hants Territorials took place at the Dolphin Hotel, Botley. There was a good attendance, and the distribution was performed by Lt.-Col. Stilwell, V.D., commanding the 4th Hants Battalion. The Company Challenge Cup was won by Sergt. B. Kilford; and the 20th Century Cup (presented by the late Mr. Trinder) by Private C. Chester. Drill attendance medals were won by Sergt. Johnson and Sergt. Kilford; while Sergt. Johnson took the first prizes in series one and two.

PARISH CHURCH

SUNDAY NEXT

MEN'S

At 3.4

Speaker—THE ARCHDEA

Subject, "How can we

ALL MEN CORD

FASHIONABLE WEDDING AT COMPTON.

Yesterday afternoon the marriage took place at the parish church at Compton and Shawford of Mr. Walter White, third son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry White, of Oak Bank, Bishopstoke, and Ethel Mary, eldest daughter of A. Messervy, Esq., M.A., of Norton, Shawford (late head of Mauritius College). The bridegroom had recently returned from Nigeria, where he holds an appointment on the railway, and is well-known in Eastleigh, having for a time served in the engineering shops of the S.W.R.

The ceremony attracted a large congregation, the church being nearly full. The bride was given away by her father, and she looked charming as she passed up the carpeted aisle. Her dress was of white satin, covered with white chiffon and pearl trimming; and white net veil. She carried a lovely bouquet of lilies and carnations. Miss Freda Messervy (sister), acted as bridesmaid, and was attired in apricot satin and lilac chiffon in chrysanthemum colours; while she wore a black hat trimmed with chrysanthemums, and carried a bouquet of the same flowers, chiefly in autumn tints. Mr. Barnum M. White was best man. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. Cecil Cooper, of Winchester, assisted by the Rev. — Durham, of Compton, the service being fully choral. The hymns rendered by the choir were "Lead us, Heavenly Father," "O perfect love," and "O Father all creating," and after the register had been signed, and as the newly-married couple left the church, the Wedding March was played by the organist.

Later on a reception was held at Norton, the residence of the bride's parents, where a large company of guests assembled to speed the happy couple in their newly-wedded life. Amongst the company were Mr. and Mrs. Henry White, jun., Mr. T. A. Cotton, Mrs. and Miss Cotton, the Rev. and Mrs. Cooper, and others, including a couple of the bridegroom's friends from Nigeria, and one from Persia.

The happy couple left shortly afterwards for London, where the honeymoon will be spent, after which they return to Shawford, where they will reside till the bridegroom returns to Nigeria.

The presents were many in number, and of a costly as well as useful character.

DEC 15th 1911

RECEIPT 271 21 2 1913
EASTLEIGH D S THROUGH I WHITE

1 Roman stone coffin ON LOAN

"returnable any time upon application"

Receipt 282 27 3 1913
Eastleigh...

4 large Roman tiles
1 Portion Roman mortar-concrete
Human bones from coffin (this may not be the
same coffin as referred
to in receipt 271 - JN)
Indefinite loan.

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Mr Gordon Cox
21 Clanfield Drive
CHANDLERS FORD
Southampton

18 October 1993

Dear Mr Cox

I thought you might be interested to know that I think I have located the two glass Roman Unguentaria bottles found in association with the Eastleigh coffin, in our stores. I have had no luck with finding any trace of the original occupant however!

If you would like to see the bottles at any time, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Karen Wardley', written in black ink.

PP Karen Wardley
Archaeological Collections Manager