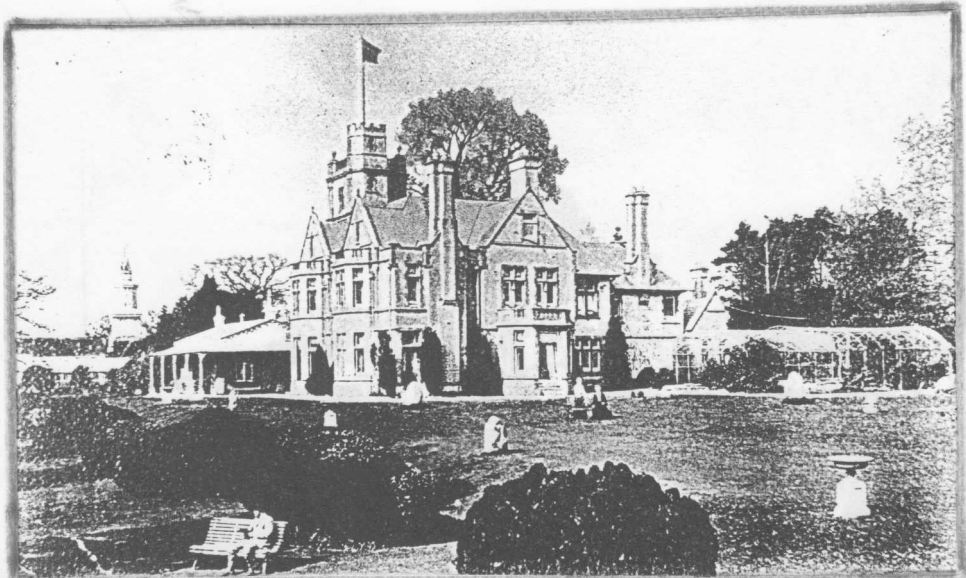
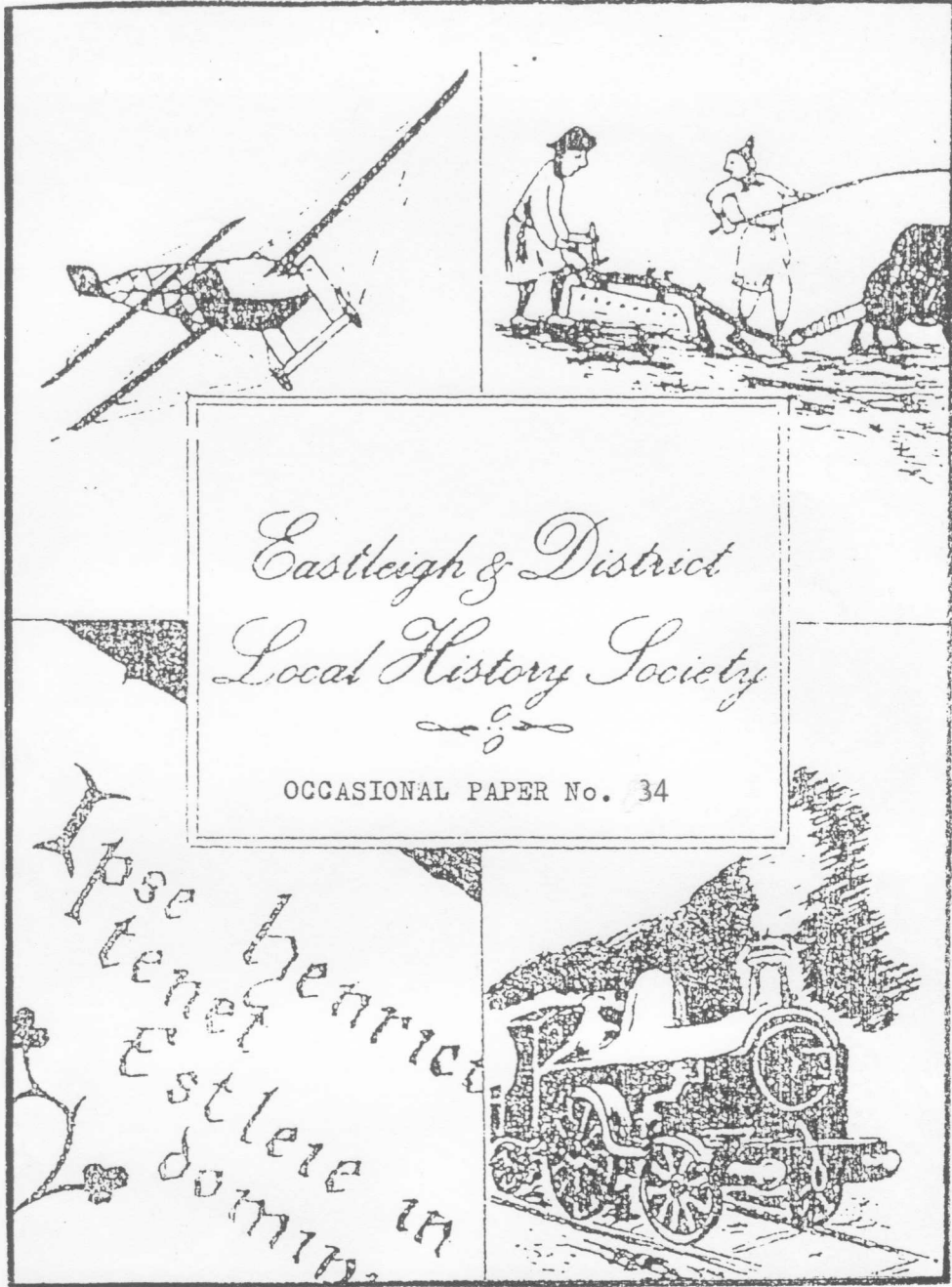


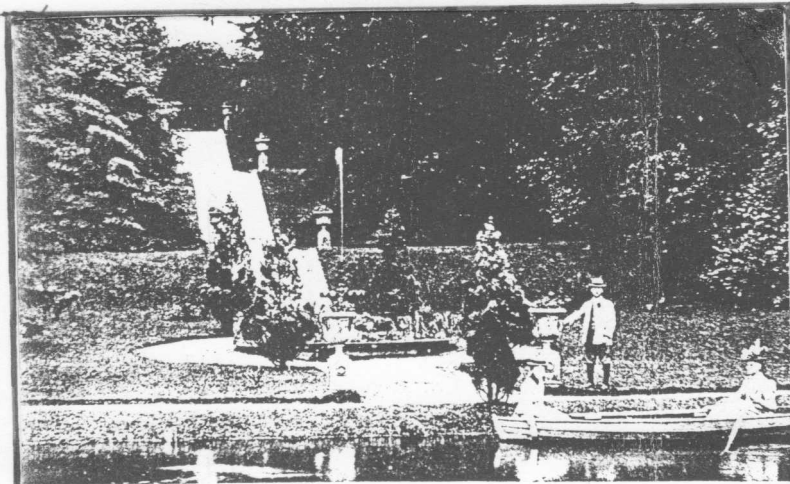
# The Mount Sanatorium - a T.B. Patient in 1940.



6th AUGUST, 1940

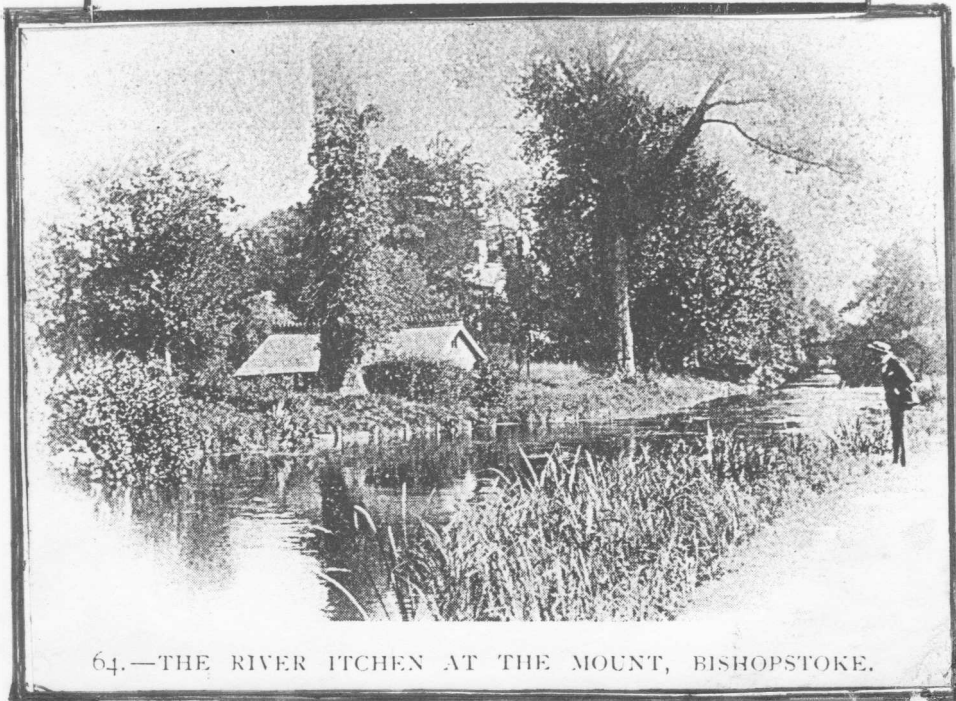


TAKEN AT MCEVOY'S STUDIOS  
EASTLEIGH



THE MOUNT GROUNDS, BISHOPSTOKE.

J. Kennedy, Eastleigh.



64.—THE RIVER ITCHEN AT THE MOUNT, BISHOPSTOKE.

## THE MOUNT SANATORIUM - A TB PATIENT IN 1940

A month before my 16th birthday on 29th September, 1939, I took a holiday with several of my friends - all lads of approximately the same age. We all lived in the parish of Hyde, Winchester. It was our first holiday after leaving school, and we decided to have a "Ten and Sixpenny" ticket which entitled us to seven days unlimited railway travel to certain seaside resorts on the south coast. During the week we went to Southsea, Hayling Island, Bognor, Littlehampton, and after spending most of the time on the beach and swimming, each day we would return to Portsmouth before catching the train home. At Woolworths we had a hot meal, usually consisting of sausages or bacon, egg and beans for sixpence. After that we visited Verrecias Ice Cream Parlour near Portsmouth Railway Station to buy a penny wafer nearly two inches thick. On the railway station one of us would put a penny in the record player to hear "Roll out the Barrel" which was the hit record at the time. I remember weighing myself on some scales and the ticket saying 10 stones 1 lb. One day we each had an instant photograph taken (I still possess mine). The other lads said I looked like an escaped convict! This was because I had suffered a broken nose and facial scars in a cycle accident eighteen months previously. Another time we spent a penny on a machine which engraved our names on a strip of aluminium; the maximum number of letters was twenty-two, as I remember.

Half way through our holiday the second world war broke out, on 3rd September, 1939, and an immediate black out was imposed. The parents of two or three of the lads forbade them to continue the holiday, but several of us finished out the week. I remember well how difficult it was finding our way about in the dark, and how relieved my mother was on my reaching home just after 9 pm.

The football season had now started and my pals and I all played for the YMCA. We had all managed to get a job with Saturday afternoon off to allow us to play the game we all lived for. However, I had started what I thought was a very bad cold, but continued to go to work from 8 am - 5 pm Monday to Friday, and 8 am to 1 pm Saturdays for eight shillings per week in an office. I wasn't feeling well but continued playing football. Visits to the doctor followed, and I was prescribed three different lots of cough mixture and cod liver oil and malt. These had no effect on my "cold" and my mother eventually told the doctor that she thought I had Tuberculosis. I knew nothing about the disease but my mother was worried about my sweating at night and incessant cough. The doctor was persuaded to let me have a sputum test to put my mother's mind at rest! The result of the test was positive, and the doctor came immediately to see my mother to tell her. When I arrived home from work my mother in turn broke the news to me. "You have a spot of lung trouble", she said, "and you'll have to go to hospital for about six weeks". I just didn't realise the seriousness of the disease, and I wasn't at all worried by the diagnosis. (Where ignorance is bliss ....). My poor parents must have been shattered, but they didn't show their true feelings to me. I left work forthwith, and entered the Mount Sanatorium, Bishopstoke, on 21st December, 1939. We had our family Christmas party with my aunts and uncles and cousins two days before. Nothing was said about my illness that I remember, and we all had a very happy time.

At the innocent age of 16 years 3 months I made the journey to Bishopstoke with my mother on a Hants & Dorset bus, to start my treatment at the Mount Sanatorium. My weight on entry was 9 stones 1 lb, so I had lost a stone since my holiday!

The Mount with its extensive grounds had been a private residence from 1893 - 1923. The house was now the living accommodation for nurses and domestic staff. Wards and single and double cubicles had been built in the grounds to provide for about 50 - 60 patients. The chest physician in charge was Dr Alexander Capes, whose authority was unquestioned. I entered the ground floor ward of B Block. There were eight of us in the ward. In the bed next to me on my left was "Arky" Arkenstall. When I told him I was in for a six weeks rest he laughed when he replied "You'll be lucky, I've been here three months and I haven't been out of bed yet!" There was "Mitch" in a bed opposite who had been on HMS Royal Oak when it was sunk in Scapa Flow. "Joby" was in the far corner, a real country bumpkin who hadn't been in hospital before and got a rebuke when he called a nurse "Mrs"! Quite a number of patients were service men.

The winter of 1940 was very cold and we had a lot of ice and snow. Visiting days were Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons, and my parents had many unpleasant bus journeys when they came to see me. The windows of the wards were always open; fresh air was part of the treatment, and it was necessary to have hot water bottles in our beds day and night to keep us from freezing. One of the pleasures to break the monotony was to put crumbs on the floor and watch the birds fly through the open windows and slide when they landed on the highly polished floor.

There were two male orderlies, Alec and Skelton who, I believe, had been patients there. The nurses were especially kind and uncomplaining. They had to be special to put up with things like emptying our sputum mugs and sometimes having to clean up after an accident of a spilt one. One of the nurses, a Czechoslovakian washed us all over when we had a blanket bath.

After a few days of settling in, Dr Capes explained to me the treatment I was to have. My left lung was affected and I was to have it collapsed by artificial pneumothorax, by means of a weekly injection of a needle between the ribs and air forced in between the lung and cavity wall. The initial injection by an induction (larger) needle was made under local anaesthetic and all the subsequent injections (called refills) with smaller needles were made without anaesthetic, and these continued, in my case, over a period of almost fifteen years, with increasing longer periods in between, after the first two years of weekly refills.

Of all the injections for refills I had over the years, I remember only two unusual experiences. One was when a new lady doctor, during an out-patients surgery said to me "This hurts me more than it does you, Mr House". The other occasion was when an outpatients' doctor, who wore dark glasses, tried to get the upper part of the instrument in between my ribs without the needle, which caused some pain and bruising.

The first intimation that I was improving was when I was moved to the ward upstairs after about six weeks, and I was allowed up for an hour a day, just to sit in a chair.

At no time did I think that I might not get better, but when someone died we all got to know about it. During the thirteen months I was at the Mount, there was an average of two or three deaths a week, and the total in that period was well over a hundred.

I continued to make progress, and the time that I was allowed up each day increased until I was up all day. In March 1940 Dr Capes told me he wanted to send me to the London Chest Hospital for a minor operation to cut adhesions preventing the total collapse of my lung. This needed my parents' consent which was granted with my persuasion. Although I had only recently been allowed up all day I had done no walking apart from visits to the toilet. I walked the couple of miles to Eastleigh Station and caught the train to London via Winchester from where my mother and Uncle (Sid) accompanied me as this was my first visit to the big city. I found the long journey nearly too much for me, and on my arrival at the London Chest Hospital I was exhausted and had a most terrible headache. I recovered and duly had my "adhesions" operation under local anaesthetic. I lay on my side and sandbags were placed to keep me in position. I remember a nice nurse holding my hand during the operation, and I felt no real discomfort from the surgeon's incision and severing of the adhesions. The operation had the intended effect and my sputum increased as the lung collapsed further. I sometimes wonder what happened to a particularly attractive blonde nurse, and another who always came into the ward singing "Somewhere over the Rainbow". I quite enjoyed the change of three weeks at the London Chest Hospital but then it was back to the Mount again. My progress accelerated after my London visit and I was soon transferred to A Block where Sister MacNamara was in charge during the daytime, and Sister "Biddy" ? was the night sister. We now made our beds, but I was advised by the older patients never to turn the mattress. They were so hard it was best to leave them impressed with our own shape.

As we progressed, we were allowed to go for graded walks in the extensive grounds. Since private ownership, the grounds had been let go somewhat but we enjoyed the increased freedom. It was inevitable that walks had names like Sputum Hill, Frenic Way, Thorax Grove. We also had to do an hour's ward duty in the morning. This was, initially, damp dusting lockers, tidying wards and cubicles, and later on bumping (polishing) floors. It was during the summer of 1940 that I had progressed to floor bumping, and I took the work so seriously that the action caused fluid on the lung. I felt ill and was in considerable pain and confined to bed again with a high temperature. After a week or two Dr Capes told me he would take off the fluid. While one needle between the ribs was letting in air, a needle in the back was syringing off the liquid - a pint and a half. After this set back I recovered and quickly went through the graded walks, and started morning ward duties again though not so strenuously!

Patients in A Block were allowed to go to the dining room for meals. No choice of menu in those days! If you didn't like what was served, you went without. As I've never been a "fussy" eater I cannot remember refusing anything except perhaps burnt porridge or custard.

We also had the use of the games room where I learnt to play billiards and snooker. As we were not allowed to stretch across the table "Joby" coined the phrase "The rest is best for your chest".

There was also a small chapel at the Mount, and the parish Rector, the Rev Oswald de Bogue came occasionally to take a Communion service. There were usually about ten of us, and of course we weren't allowed to drink from the chalice; the rector dipped the wafer in the wine and placed it on our tongue. Having been in the church choir back home I missed the Sunday services. I remember being "moved" by the ringing of the bells at nearby St Mary's Church, but after June 1940 bell ringing was discontinued, and bells were to rung only in the event of an invasion.

Weekly refills and screening took place, and the daily routine of breakfast, ward duties, walk, hour's bed rest, lunch, walk, hour's rest, supper, games room, bed at 9 pm continued. I remember one very cold evening we shut all the windows of the games room. The doctor came in unexpectedly and was furious; he sarcastically remarked "You forgot to block up the keyhole"!

As previously hinted, Dr Capes was a strict disciplinarian and there were occasional cases of expulsion for disobeying rules. I remember three men being discharged because they were talking with nurses in a part of the grounds which were out of bounds for patients. We weren't allowed to socialise to that extent! I nearly got discharged once myself. During an air raid warning the main electric light and power switches of the ward were switched off. As some of us wanted to listen to the wireless, someone shouted to me to put the power switch on. I pressed the wrong switch! Sister "Biddy" came rushing into the ward and shrieked, "Who put the lights on? - do you want us all bombed". I owned up and added my apologies. The other lads stood up for me and said it wasn't my fault alone. No more was said until the morning when I was summoned to see the doctor. He treated this undeliberate incident with more severity than I did, and after a good telling off told me I was lucky not to be discharged.

By the summer of 1940, I had made, I thought, good progress (not that the doctor ever told us so), and was fit enough to do grade work. Instead of morning and afternoon walks, we did various gardening jobs in groups of four. This was mainly using reap hooks to cut down long grass and brambles, and weeding paths.

One day we were working in the grounds and one of our group, Sandy, who I still write to every Christmas, suggested we pinch one of the next door neighbour's chicken and cook it on the bonfire we had raging. I didn't want anything to do with this, but the other two lads agreed to go with him. The prank mis-fired and the three of them owned up to trespassing after the owner reported the incident to the doctor. The three lads were discharged the next morning!

When there was no fear of us being positive TB, we were allowed to go into Eastleigh on Saturday afternoons where we had tea in a cafe in Leigh Road. This was a great delight, mainly because the lovely, young dark haired assistant, we named Milly, made us so welcome and we all had a soft spot for her.

The original Mount building had a tower like church, open at the top, and we had to take turns to climb the stairs to the top to do fire watch duties when there was an air raid warning. Unbeknown to me at the time one of the maids became attracted to me, and I had noticed her charms when passing through the house to do my turn of fire watching. Even if I had had the nerve to stop to speak to her it would have been instant dismissal for me if I had been seen, so I admired her from a distance. We saw several dog fights over Southampton, but thankfully no bombs fell near the Mount.

Apart from regular visits from my mother, and father when he wasn't working, I had a brother and sister, uncles and aunts to come to see me. The lads of the football team also came occasionally as a group on their bikes. I also received regular letters from a girl who worked for the same firm as myself, and an occasional letter from my former headmaster and another master.

In those days there was no sick pay and I never had a penny from my firm or hardly an enquiry of my progress. At least my parents didn't have to pay anything for my stay at the Mount, but there was little available for luxuries apart from a daily News Chronicle or Daily Sketch to read.

It was now getting near my seventeenth birthday and I had been making good progress and looking forward to going home. At long last the doctor pencilled in a date for my "release" in a month's time provided the next X ray was OK. I was overjoyed, as everyone was when they got "a date", but the elation was tempered with caution. Stories were told of men having "a date" and being thwarted at the last minute because of a fresh outbreak of the disease. One such story was of a patient, after having had two successive negative sputum tests, got his brother to supply the third. It turned out to be positive!

I carried on with the normal routine of grade work, etc, but suddenly developed a cough. It didn't worry me for I thought it was just a cold. I had what I thought was my last X ray before my date. Shortly afterwards the doctor broke the news - the X ray showed a "spot" on my right lung. I was devastated. Because of my great disappointment, Dr Capes said I could go home for four days. Those four days were some of the happiest of my life. To be home again after nine months with my family and friends was sheer bliss, but I came to wish I had never agreed to the break. My returning to the Mount was traumatic; I was terribly unhappy and homesick. To have to start all over again was more than I could bear, I thought. I came to terms with my disappointment by my parents stressing that it was better to have the discovery of my other lung being affected before I was discharged than to have it happen just after I returned home. It was back to bed. I shared a double cubicle with "Mac" another Wintonian, with whom I became good friends.

"Mac" frightened me one night. The clock on the nearby tower was striking the hour of eleven, and "Mac" called out in his sleep after each stike of the bell - "one, two, three ...." After ten strikes he exclaimed "Eleven? I must be daft". He then got out of bed and walked down the path in his pygamas and bare feet. Not knowing quite what to do I rang the bell to summon the night nurse, but before she arrived "Mac" returned and got back into bed. When in the morning I mentioned the incident he knew nothing of it, nor that he had been known to sleep walk before!

The same treatment as before followed and I was now a "double AP". At least the new infection was caught early and I responded to treatment without the earlier complications. I began to think I would be home for Christmas but time seemed to drag because of my impatience and dashed hopes.

I was disappointed in having to spend my second successive Christmas at the Mount but I made the most of it. We had a lot of fun preparing for a concert. It was surprising the talents that emerged. Sandy produced a sketch "In the Doctor's Insulting Room", and I was one of the patients. It brought the house down.

The new year (1941) came and towards the end of January I was well enough to be discharged - honourably!

I caught a Hants and Dorset bus back to Winchester and rejoined my family - more permanently this time.

However, it wasn't goodbye to the Mount for ever as I had to continue visits, weekly at first, for refills as an outpatient. With longer periods in between I was to continue visits for treatment, screening and x-rays for the next fifteen years, and a further three weeks (it seemed like three years) as an in patient in 1943 after Meningitis. But that is another story.

ALAN HOUSE  
October, 1988

