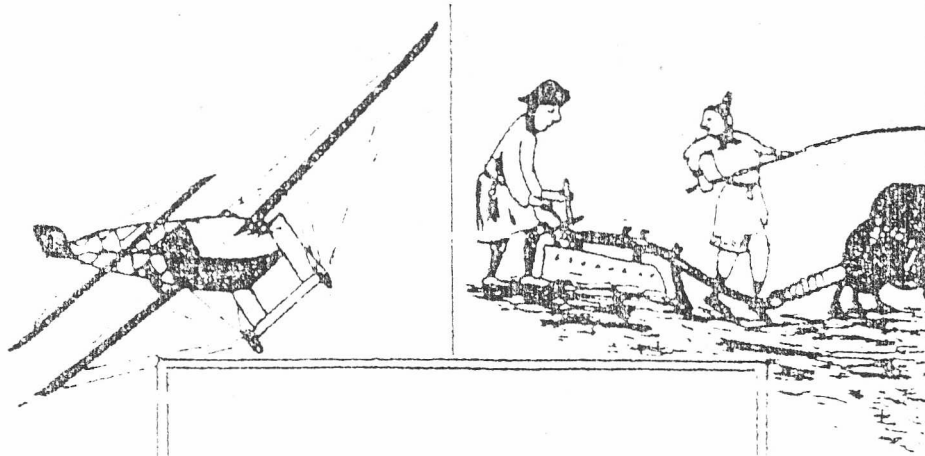


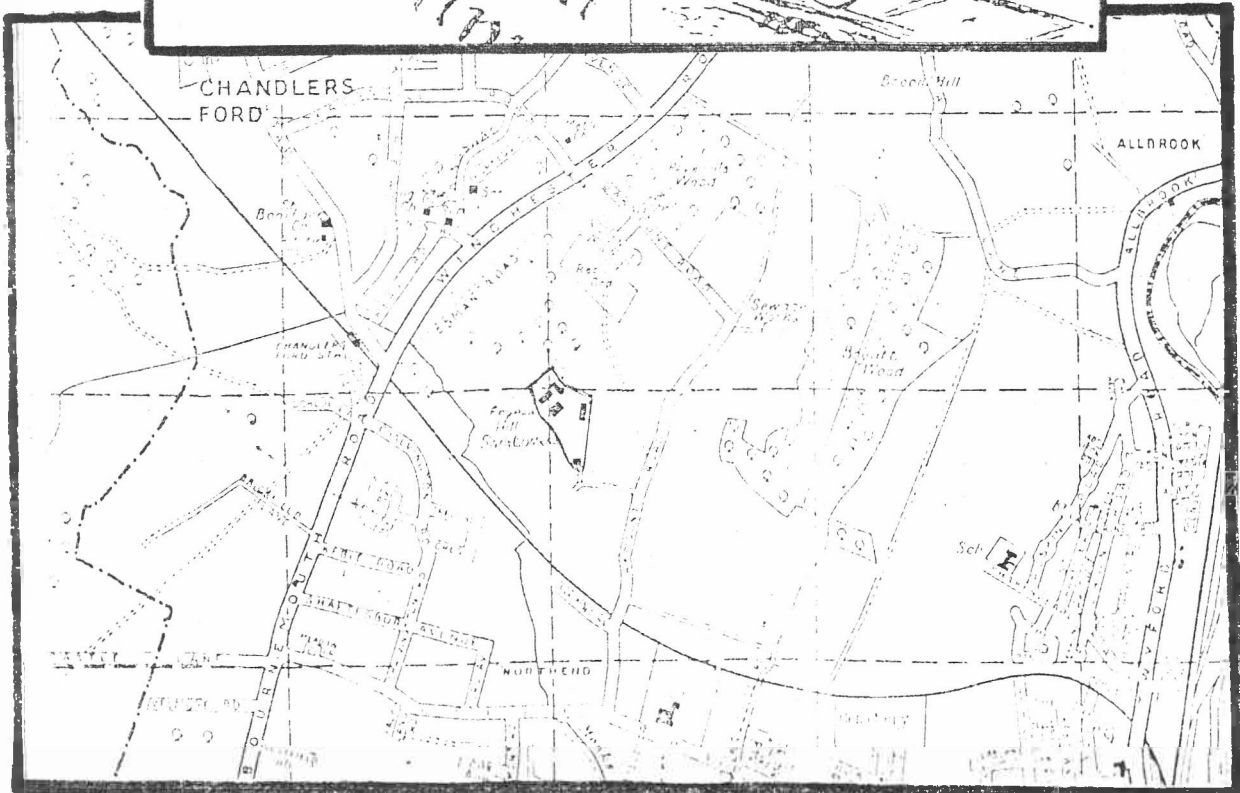
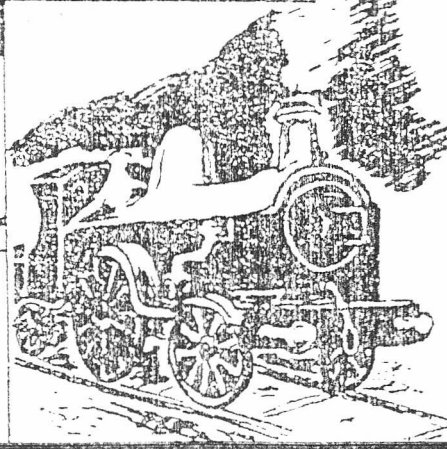
Memories of Fryern Hill hospital.



Eastleigh & District Local History Society

OCCASIONAL PAPER No. 5

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PREFACE

Mrs Clara Fooks died on 20th January, 1984, aged 83. Her parents, Henry and Alice Searle, had moved to Eastleigh with the transfer of the Carriage Works in the 1980s, and Clara was born in Cranbury Road, the youngest of eight children. She left the Crescent School and went into "service" at the age of 15, being for a while at Chawton House in the village where Jane Austen lived. When she was 21, she married George Fooks and they lived for two years in two rooms at Locks Heath before moving to Fryern Hill Hospital, where George had obtained the job of "Porter and Gardener", to which was later added the task of driving the ambulance, horse-drawn at first. They were a happy couple and helped to cheer the patients sent to the Isolation Hospital. Their mode of transport changed from cycles to motor cycle and sidecar, and then to a little Austin Seven Tourer bought for £7. Being a professional gardener, George soon transformed the Hospital surroundings from a wilderness into attractive gardens, supplying both vegetables and flowers. Among other things, Clara was responsible for the laundry, carried out in a large and cold wash house at the Hospital.

George retired in 1957 and died one year later. Clara moved into Meller House, Bishopstoke, and it was there that she wrote down her memoirs specially for the Eastleigh and District Local History Society, the meetings of which she attended regularly.

Although the land was purchased in 1899, Fryern Hill "Infectious Hospital" was not built until 1912, the plans having been drawn up by W W Gandy, Engineer and Surveyor for the Urban District of Eastleigh and Bishopstoke. It was situated in five acres of land, "on a beautiful spot, sloping to the south-west, nice and airy, well open to the sun and protected by a plantation from the north wind; while the south-west corner would provide a good promenade for convalescents".

Despite efforts by the Eastleigh Borough Council to preserve the Hospital, they were overruled by the Wessex Regional Hospital Board. It was demolished in 1974 and the land sold for housing development.

The attractive plantation of conifers which surrounds the area and a few of the trees planted by George Fooks are still there.

FRYERN HILL HOSPITAL

MEMORIES

One summer evening in 1924 my husband, George Fooks, and I drove up a rough land off Oakmount Road in an old Rover Motorcycle Combination to the gates of Fryern Hill Hospital, and peeped through the galvanised iron gates to see what we were coming to view, for that day George had answered an advertisement for a "Porter and Gardener" there.

The plot of land between Eastleigh and Chandler's Ford had been purchased in 1899, but it was not until twelve years later that a decision was finally made to build an Isolation Hospital there. This was completed and opened officially by Mr Whetmore, Headmaster of Chamberlain Road School, in 1912, and named Fryern Hill Isolation Hospital - the place where George and I were to spend so many happy years of our lives.

On that evening in 1924 we looked around a very unkempt six acres of grounds, a Nissen Hut in a very rough state (the gardener's "residence"), and the Hospital itself, consisting of two wards, each with a stove in the centre for warmth, kitchen and office (the wards were used for Scarlet Fever mostly, and very serious it could be!). Nearly were four Observation Wards and a kitchen used for Diphtheria and other serious cases. I believe the Matron at that time was Matron Crawshaw, but we did not meet her that day.

Eventually, in early September, we drove up from Locks Heath (our first home) in a horse-drawn van belonging to George's father; my mother-in-law sat with him, clutching my toilet china! After living for two years in two rooms, we were thrilled with our new home - leaky roof and all - surrounded by weeds; we were young and full of enthusiasm and soon got busy putting it to rights. George was in his element and had great plans, all of which he was to achieve in the years ahead. I worked with him for many hours, pulling waist-high thistles! The Council cut the grass for a time, but soon there were lawns and flower beds, and the vegetable garden flourished so well that within a year we were self supporting. Mr Gandy, the Surveyor, decided to build the Lodge as our "residence" was falling down. It was a joy to see it built brick by brick.

Our milk was delivered in cans with pint and half-pint dippers. One of my jobs was to have the gates opened at 6 am for the milk truck, which for years was pushed up the hill from the Dairy until "Harry Hann", as everyone knew him, acquired ponies and floats. Another of my jobs was to take parcels at the gates for the patients (NO VISITORS ALLOWED), and this linked us with many people, some of whom I had been to school with in the old Crescent School (now demolished).

In due course we met our neighbours at North End Farm, Mr Kyles and his family, who became our life-long friends. They saw the Hospital built and correspondence for Mr Gandy was left there during that time. Mr John Kyles, one of the sons and a veteran of the First World War, was a regular visitor in his wheel-chair to the Lodge. Miss Janet Kyles, the youngest daughter, has been an operator at the Regal Cinema for Mr George Wright for 40 years and, at the time I write, she is only waiting for the Regal to be rebuilt before she returns, albeit part-time only - a small concession to the passing years.

Another 'character' I remember well was Miss Lou Meadon, who lived in one of the cottages which was eventually demolished to build the "Mother's Pride" factory. She used to peep in at our gate to shout "Goo' mornin'" in her Hampshire brogue, and then go off the pick the best mushrooms and blackberries to sell at "Casey's" greengrocers in Leigh Road for pin-money - quite a character to all who knew her, and is still, I believe.

The purpose of the Isolation Hospital was to treat and prevent the spread of infectious diseases, which in those days could be very serious. Scarlet Fever was often fatal, and our Mortuary was a sad addition to the Hospital. Diphtheria, typhoid and meningitis were nursed there, and often ended in sorrow and death. When we first arrived the ambulance was a wooden box-like vehicle, pulled by a pony, and driven by Mr Thornback (as many older residents will remember), but later a motor ambulance was supplied and George was taught to drive by Mr Coote, the Sanitary Inspector. "AMBULANCE REQUIRED IMMEDIATELY" was the dread order - quick change for gardening clothes and off to fetch a case! Such was George's life, but he was always ready - and unfailingly cheerful.

With the memory of three matrons, Miss Young is prominent, as we were nineteen years in her care. She was the most efficient and kindly person one could hope to meet, always ready to help in trouble. At the time of writing she is still alive at the age of 90, being cared for in a Nursing Home.

I remember the dedicated staff, many cycling to work through all weathers from Eastleigh until Derek Sherwood started a taxi service for them several times a day, and also for the night duty nurse, for the sum of 2/6d per journey. (I recall one occasion when the ambulance had to pull him out of the snow at midnight!) One member of the staff, Miss Beatrice Oliver, is still working today, doing voluntary Auxiliary Nursing at the Mount Hospital, several years after her retirement. During the war years she walked from Hursley to Fryern Hospital in all weathers.

The Nurses' Home consisted of good staff accommodation, with Sister Bliss in charge. The Councillors and their wives visited the Hospital once every month, and the wives stayed at the Lodge for a cup of tea with me. They were always friendly and admiring of the gardens. Mr Coles stands out in my memory always, together with Mr Rogers, Mr Stone, and many others.

The Medical Officer was Dr Garrett, and he was a regular visitor to the Hospital patients; also Dr Batho (who married Miss Garrett). Dr Proverbs and Dr Wilson followed on from them. I think of Dr Garrett particularly as it was he who over-ruled the "No Children" restriction, assuring us that no-one had ever contracted a disease there, and in 1928 our son Norman was born (many may now know of him now as a prominent pigeon fancier in Eastleigh – all of which began from his loft at Fryern Hill).

One of the big events of the Hospital's year was the Christmas Party. George, dressed as Father Christmas, was brought into one of the wards on a sleigh pulled by the nurses. A Christmas tree was hung with presents for all, to be distributed by Father Christmas. One never-to-be-forgotten year, Matron Young decorated Santa's red gown with cotton wool; reaching for the gifts George soon became aflame! The children, dressed up in paper dresses, were soon rushed out of the ward, while Matron and George put out the flames. Luckily, only a burnt hand and arm resulted (not serious) which Dr Batho, who was a guest that night, soon dealt with – and, of course, George carried on regardless!

An interlude was the Basque Camp, when Velmore was used. All blankets had to be fumigated, and George had the steam fumigator going day and night for many weeks. I remember Matron Young refused to have the children there, and a house was opened – I think in West End – for Isolation.

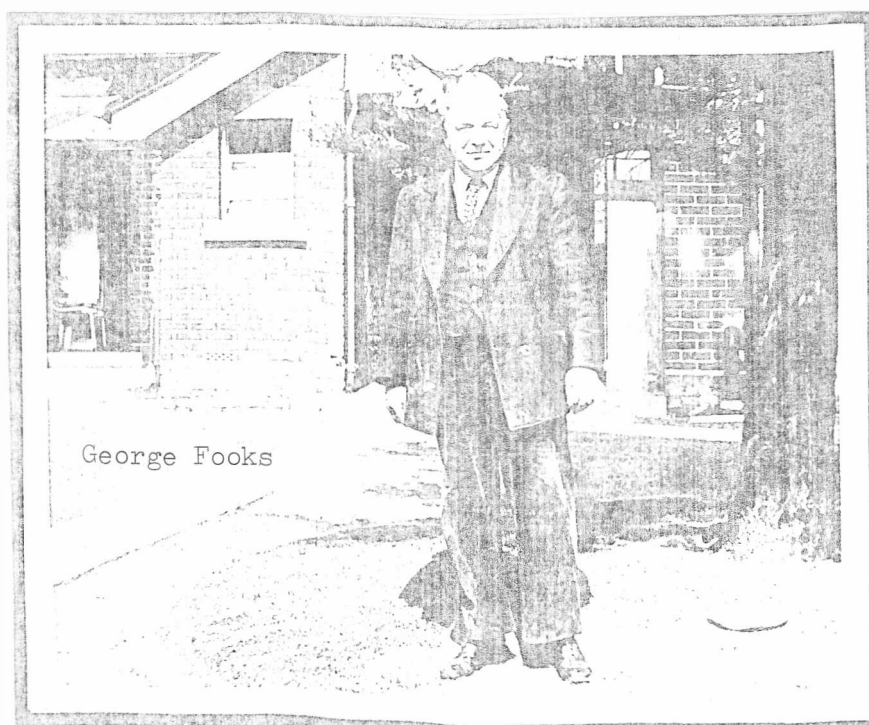
Then came the war. We had no air-raid shelters when Southampton was bombed, and George was the only Warden! We had anti-aircraft guns in the lane; soldiers camping nearby; staff shortages; gates having to be left open all night in case of raids; Mr Harry Thornton, the grounds-man at Fleming Park, arriving at night to sleep 'somewhere' in our two-bedroomed cottage, away from the danger of a raid on the park, which looked so much like the airfield: saucepans of brown ale warmed over an open fire (no electricity or gas at Fryern Hill Hospital then) one could write a book on those years alone! Eventually, a diesel engine was installed in an outhouse for electricity. What a luxury that was – previously 24 oil lamps had to be tended (by the gardener of course) each day. Later still, overhead lines were installed, and we were really modern.

The function of the Hospital was to change with the passing years: science gradually conquered most of the infectious diseases and, in 1948, the need for an Isolation Hospital was no more. Fryern Hospital closed and remained empty for three years, to re-open as an annexe to the Hursley TB Sanatorium. It was during this time that we acquired our first television set. It was installed by Mr Jack Fudge, Bookmaker, for the patients and staff to watch our Queen's Coronation. Mr Fudge's wife was a patient at the time, and I joined them all to enjoy the great thrill. Later he gave the set to the Hospital in gratitude for the care Mrs Fudge had enjoyed as a patient there.

The Hospital closed again in 1950, was purchased by the Winchester Hospital Group and opened as a Convalescent Home, but eventually closed for good. The Authorities decided that the building was no longer useful and, after months of vandalism, it was bulldozed down, and our old Lodge also, to make room for houses – another part of old Eastleigh gone, but many older people will remember that Hospital.

George retired in 1957, owing to ill-health, after 32 very happy years at Fryern Hill Hospital. As I write, so many memories come to me: the lovely cornfields that used to lie around us; blackberries and mushrooms for the picking; the grounds George had created and which were admired by all. Reading these pages, I wonder if I have dwelt too much on our personal life – 32 years is a long time to live in one place, and I only wish I could remember all the staff and the people we met. But this much I am sure of, life was not as easy then as it is today, but those years were good!

CLARA FOOKS, 1983

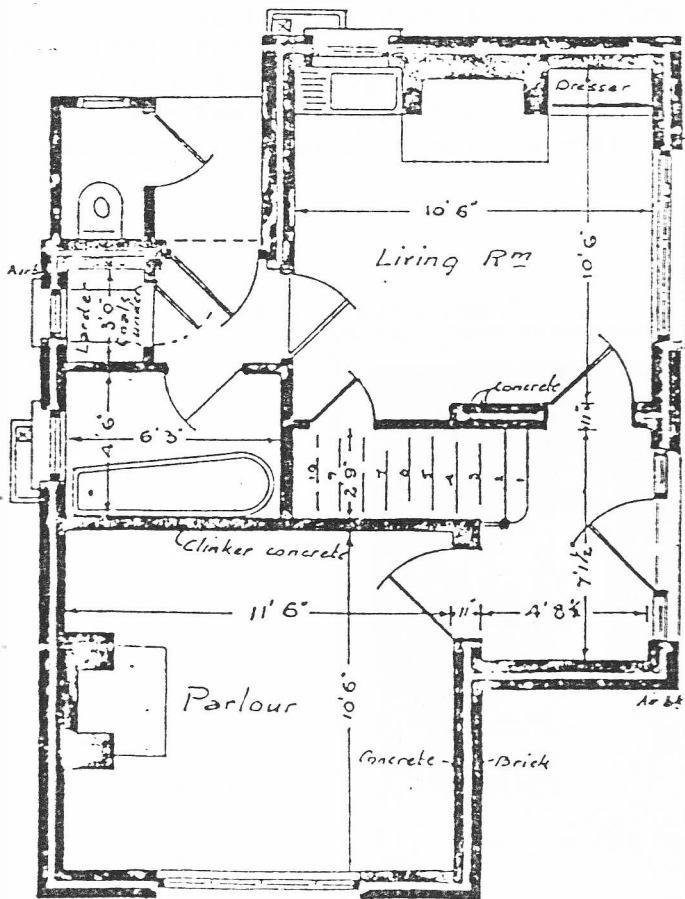




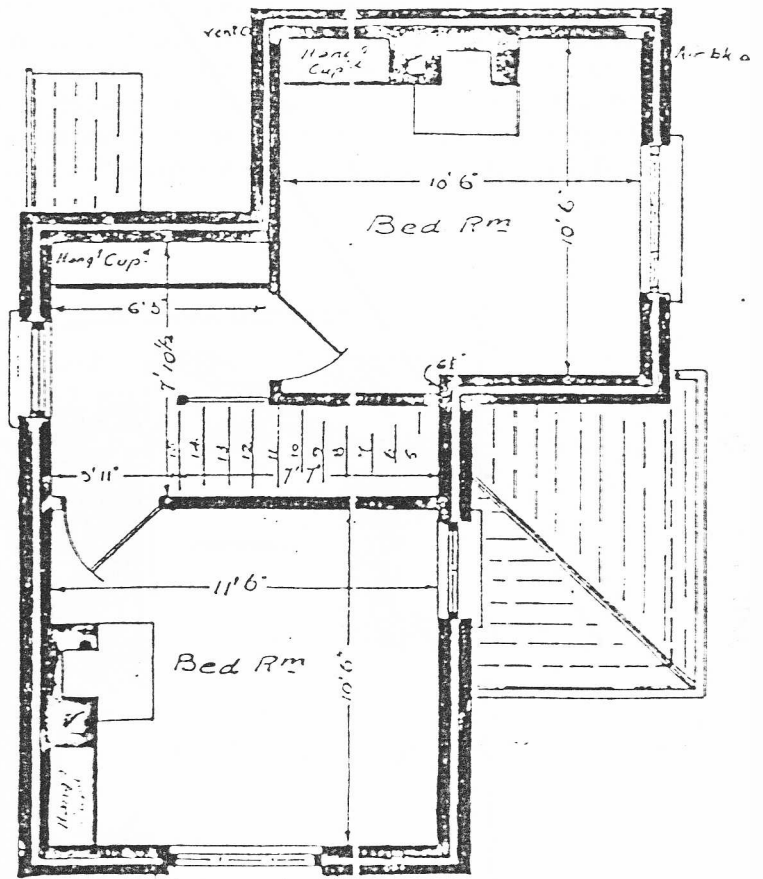
THE LODGE



Elevation



Ground Floor



First Floor