



GREETINGS & WELCOME

[Keith Hart \(born in Portsmouth circa 1933\)](#)

In writing this account of my youth in Westbourne some memories may have dimmed and events may have been unintentionally changed from facts. Over the last 70 years as memories have been recalled to children, grand children, family and friends the facts can sometimes become scrambled to make them more interesting. It is like the game we used to play in the scouts called **whispers**. **The lads would stand in a line and the first would whisper a message into the ear of the next until the last lad would say out loud what the message is.**

A famous one is that the message was **'send reinforcements we are going to advance'** and ended as **'send two and sixpence we are going to a dance'**.

Unfortunately the events were never written down or kept in a diary. Unlike when tracing the family history where birth, marriage and death certificates together with census records provide a valuable source of facts, as was the information in wills. An important help has been the many photographs taken over the years. Perhaps part of my dilemma is best summarized as **Donald Rumsfeld (US Politician) said:**

There are known knowns.

These are things we know that we know.

There are known unknowns.

That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know.

But there are also unknown unknowns.

There are things we don't know we don't know.

This web site is one part of my history. The family trees of **HART/WOODCOCK** on my father's side, **TURNBULL/HORTON** on my mother's side and **PIRRIE/SIMPSON** on my wife's side are recorded on another site. If you have one of these surnames in your family tree, **then perhaps we are related.** While researching the family history I discovered that my family was not the only one to live in the former **WESTBOURNE WORKHOUSE**. At one time my **GREAT GRANDMOTHER**, on my father's side, was an inmate in the **WEYMOUTH WORKHOUSE**

WESTBOURNE: A village history in West Sussex

World War II changed the lives of many families. At the time we were living in **Portsmouth** at **56 Alyesbury Road**, in the **Copnor** area. A few streets away at **60 Portchester Road, North End** lived my father's parents with his bachelor brother **Eddie** and spinster sister **Hilda**. His other brother **Lesley** and his wife lived in a house backing onto **Fratton Park**, the home of **Portsmouth Football Club**.

All the homes were within long terraced houses with small front courtyards and short back gardens. Our back garden was dominated by an **Anderson air raid shelter** and adjacent to the back door was the **outside WC complete with squares of newspaper on a string**. Recycling was the order of the day. My grandfather kept 2 carrier bags hanging on the doorknob of the sitting room, one for neatly-tied pieces of string and the other for carefully-folded paper bags.

My short memories of Portsmouth have now dimmed with the passage of time, but some have remained. The occasion when playing with a lad over the street, whose father was a painter and decorator. We had a great time splashing paint around except my father, who spent ages trying to remove it from my hands and arms with paraffin. One Christmas day, we boys woke very early, as you do, and a toy drum woke up the whole family, perhaps the neighbours too.

A major moment, experienced by many children throughout the country, was evacuation. I was at the **Town Station, Portsmouth** with many, many other children. It cannot be recalled whether my elder sister **Mary** and my younger brother **Leonard** were there too. We all had our **gas masks in brown cardboard boxes**, a **parcel label** on our collars probably with our **names** and **where we were off to**. No doubt we had a bag containing a change of clothes and toiletries, as we mingled around scared, but excited with an adventure to come. **But it wasn't to be, for whatever reason, whether the trains were cancelled or it was just an exercise we returned home.**

Maybe the defining moment for a move away from Portsmouth came when my infant school at the top of our road was hit in an air raid. We were shown the classroom with its rubble remains and blackened beams. On some bad raids we would spend the whole night in the **Anderson shelter**.

On one early morning my brother and I found ourselves on a milk float on our way to Emsworth. This took us to the home of our **mother's parents**. This was a first stage of our new

family life in **WESTBOURNE** during the **early 1940's until my widowed mother left in 1998 to live with my family in Plymouth, Devon.**

This web site started off a couple of decades ago by recording the first and later memories of my family life in the village. Since then it has grown to record an interest in the history of some people and notable events of Westbourne. **I have found this later research fascinating and maybe you will too and will visit again to see how it may have grown.**

Thank you for visiting,

Keith Hart

EMSWORTH in HAMPSHIRE

Life here was very different but fun. Our Nan's semi-detached house at 2 Bridge Road had less home comforts than Portsmouth.

There was no electricity and cooking and heating came from a coal range fire. Downstairs it had gas lamps for lighting and a candle for going upstairs to bed. Water was from an outside communal tap with next door and the toilet was up the garden. She was a keen vegetable gardener and thanks to her it is a pleasure that I have enjoyed all my life. Although she was a loving and kind person she was very strict. Children had to know their place.

In her younger days she had been a midwife and hence was well known in the village. Our grandfather did not enjoy good health, due to **asthma**, that led to his death when we were quite young. Their house was over the road from the **Emsworth Mill Pond** around which he would take us for walks and helped us to **catch shrimps**. How long we stayed cannot be remembered. The house has since been replaced with a modern one.

The final stage to Westbourne was to live with our mother's sister, Aunt Jude, who lived at Mary Vale at bottom of Monks Hill. Her husband, **Uncle Len**, was a gunner in the **Royal Navy** and was away for most of the war.

The neighbours through the wall were Mr & Mrs Cressweller, whom we called uncle & aunt as was the polite custom to call adults. **The stay with our aunt could have been due to compulsory billeting for evacuees. Better to have family members than strangers and be paid too.**

Again it cannot be remembered how long we were there before my parents and my sister Mary took up temporary residence with the Southwell family who also lived at **COMMONSIDE**, just before the junction with **River Street**.

Later we moved into a former WORKHOUSE now called THE GRANGE.

6 THE GRANGE, COMMONSIDE

At some time we moved from our temporary lodgings to **The Grange**. This had previously been the **WESTBOURNE UNION WORKHOUSE**. It was located between the junction of **Covington Road and Commonside Road**. At one stage in its history it held **100 inmates**, but now this terraced building was divided into independent family units. We lived at number 6 sharing a porch with **MR & MRS GOBLE** and their two children **Harry and Rosy**.

In later years **Harry**, or **Godfrey** as he was often called, worked for **Mr Ambrose, the local high-class butcher**. Later in my 'teens I worked there also, helping in the shop and delivering meat. Next door to them were **Mr & Mrs Dane** with their two boys **Robin and Terry**, who died at a very young age. On the other side of us lived **Mr & Mrs Puntis** and their boys. Further down were the **Paignton and Alder families**.

At the end of the block lived **HARRY GOBLE'S GRANDPARENTS**. I particularly remember him standing under an apple tree near his house, waving his stick and warning us to keep clear as he had just killed an adder. We looked at it most apprehensively as he said that it could still bite until the sun had gone down. At the back of houses were large gardens that overlooked a field and then the **WESTBOURNE CRICKET CLUB** grounds and further on to the woods at **Aldsworth**.

Later in my teens I was a member of the cricket club and played a few games, but not with any great success. To the front of the houses was an open patch of grass intersected by a path. This came through an open gateway in the brick and flint wall opening onto **Covington Road**. The other end of the path led round the buildings and came out opposite **Ivy Cottage** a short distance from **THE CRICKETERS PUBLIC HOUSE**.

On one occasion I was playing on the front garden with other children when a German plane strafed the ground. Fortunately his aim was poor or we were too quick in running for cover.

Our home comprised a large sitting room, kitchen, coal house and toilet on the ground floor and two bedrooms upstairs. A Morrison shelter that doubled as a dining room table dominated the sitting/dining room. It was made of heavy steel and wire sides that could be lifted up for people to crawl underneath. It was large enough to provide sleeping space for several people.

During the height of the blitz in Portsmouth my father's brother and wife would often come to stay at weekends. On occasions we would all be under the table during what was thought local air raids. The windows were covered with black Hessian mounted on a tailor-fitted wooden frame.

The bottom of the front garden was a high flint wall with a doorway that led into sheds used by Mr Ambrose the butcher. They were often full with hay and straw for his cows and horses, working and show. When he wasn't there they made great slides and an excellent place for a general rough and tumble. **In one corner was a simple yellow shrub that always caught the eye.**

It was not until years later that I came to know its name as Kerria. A regular game was marbles or alleys. These were played outside the side gate on Covington Road. David Cripps, son of the local newsagent, was a regular and welcomed player. He could always be relied upon to swap pen nibs for marbles. **Pocket money was scarce in those days.**

Historical Information: The Westbourne Union Life In And Out Of The Workhouse by Ian Watson. Westbourne Local History Group ISBN 0 9507496 4 8



Japanese Kerria

D-DAY PREPARATIONS

While living at THE GRANGE like many village lads the preparation for D-Day was an exciting time.

One evening there was frantic knocking at the back door with the news that a parachute was coming down. Our garden looked towards the **cricket field** and it appeared to be coming down beyond there. As my father was in the **Home Guard** he hurried to get his rifle. Before he got outside there was a terrific bang and the door was blown off its hinges. **It was a German parachute mine.**

When we were allowed to view the the field all we found was a large crater. There was no metal or parachute debris so someone had been before us. It may have been targeted for the troops in the woods, it had probably strayed from elsewhere or released at the wrong location.

One group of servicemen was stationed in the woods between **Hollybank Lane** and **Emsworth Common Road**. I particularly remember helping them reinforce the road by breaking stones for hard-core; somehow I slipped and gashed my hand on a flint. They took me to the **canteen** put on a field dressing and gave me a cup of tea and cake. Better still they took me back to The Grange in an ambulance that scared my mother. **My "war wound" is still visible after all these years.**

In the field next to the **COMMON** some tanks may have been exercising for the grass was all churned up into turves. They were soon stacked up into a barricade and used to play soldiers storming a gun emplacement. **In the next field up was a group of trenches that remained for a while after the war.**

At about this time most of **Emsworth Common Road** was lined with **TANKS** and it was exciting to visit them. At the junction with the road to **Stansted** the woods were filled with troops including a canteen. They were very kind to me supplying tea - without sugar or milk.

I remember one evening in the field opposite sitting under a tree talking to a soldier. Perhaps he had a son like me he sadly missed. The next day on 6th June was my 10th birthday and I went to see them again. **They had all gone; D-Day was in operation. I did not know at the time, but my father was involved in the war effort with the building of Mulberry Harbour project in Portsmouth Dockyard.**

After D-Day I was still reminded of the war by some Italian prisoners of war. They had a shack North of the village off **Woodberry Lane** close to **Cockburn Cottage**. They were working in the woods and made baskets that they sold in the village for onions. I cannot recall for certain, but they may have had a heavy horse for pulling logs out of the woods. They were always friendly as perhaps they were remembering their families back home.

Looking back now I was an infant school lad who wandered alone among these events. I was never afraid and my mother would never worry about me being late home. How very different now in the 21st Century when I have worried about my children and grandchildren.

Finally one way the children helped the war effort was the collecting of conkers and rose hips. Since then I have always had roses in the garden and my daughter occasionally makes rose-hip syrup; delicious!

ROSEBANK, COMMONSIDE, Westbourne, Sussex

The family moved from 6 The Grange to Rosebank, Commonsides on 20th January 1946. The handwriting on the rent book is that of Mr Johnson, the landlord, who charged a weekly rent of 20 shillings (£1) .

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

CHIRM'S
TENANT'S
RENT BOOK
1946.

Tenant.
Name *Mr. Hart*
Address *"Rosebank" Westbourne*

Landlord or Agent.
Name *B.S. Johnson*
Address *General Stores, Westbourne*

Medical Officer of Health for the District:

LONDON: W. H. SMITH & SONS, LTD., DUNDEE HOUSE, LANCHESTER, S.E. 1.
MANCHESTER: J. HEYWOOD, LTD., DEANSGATE, 3.
PUBLISHED BY E. CHIRM, 74, NEWBELL STREET, BIRMINGHAM, 3.

He also owned **Johnson's Stores** a Grocery Shop further down the Village. Perhaps we were fortunate in obtaining our new home as it is believed that **Mrs Johnson** was a distant cousin of my father. Whatever, we were pleased with our **semi-detached house** with our own front garden. It looked across the road to **Mrs Hellyer's shop** on the corner of **School Lane**.

Entering the front on the left were the stairs, a passage to the back of the house and on the right, the Front Room. This was only used for special occasions like parties when we had a sing song round the piano and dancing. Along the passage was the living/dining room and on a Friday evening the bathroom. This was in front of the coal fireplace with a tall chest of drawers on one side and a radio on top. On the other side was a china cabinet with cupboards underneath. Off this room were 2 cupboards. The one under the stairs served as a cloakroom and contained the gas meter with a stack of emergency pennies. The other was the larder with a marble shelf for keeping foodstuffs cool. Other shelves contained household cleaning materials. The kitchen/washroom had a butler sink and gas cooker and a door into the toilet, but no fitted bath.

Upstairs there were 3 bedrooms. The one at the front was the width of the house and were used by our parents. At the back was a double room that my brother and I used in a double bed. Our sister had her own small bedroom. With no central heating it was a cold house in the winter with hot-water bottles at bedtime. Under the beds were potties because it was too cold to use the downstairs toilet.

Outside a long back garden overlooked the apple orchard belonging to Ellesmere Nursery. It was a very productive garden. Between the kitchen wall and what is believed was once the outside toilet was a 6 foot wall. At waist height were rabbit hutches stacked 2 high that would be dispatched as required by my Uncle Len. (He was a country-born lad from Old Bosham used to small-holding farming and gardening.). On the opposite side was a wooden shed where I kept my pets. Three white rats, 5 white pigeons and 20+ mice, they started at 3.

The garden was divided into a lawn and a vegetable patch. It was here that I learned gardening skills from my mother's mother and Uncle Len. A pleasure that remains to this day.

At the bottom of the garden was a small enclosure with a sunken tin bath for the 2 geese for the Christmas plate. Speaking of baths, the long tin bath used in front of the fire, hung on a nail inside the former outside loo.