



Guide

Lines

The *Occasional* Newsletter
of the
Winchester Area Tourist Guides Association

Issue of Autumn 2019

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Item: 1	Title: Winchester House, San Jose, California
Date: 11 Sep 2019	Contributor: David Atraghji



I was lucky enough to be traveling in America this summer. I detoured to take in the house that was the inspiration for the 2018 horror film ‘Winchester’, starring Helen Mirren. It is in a suburb of San Jose, California. This suburb is also called ‘Winchester’.

The film is a better than average horror film but it is only very loosely based on the truth. In fact, the guide taking us around the house tried to distance the house from the film. Interestingly though is that they weren’t shy in taking fees from the production company because much of the film was acted-out inside the house.

I won't be spoiling the plot of the film for you by telling you that the son of Oliver Winchester (of the Winchester shirt and later the Winchester Repeating Rifle Company fame) was called 'William'. He inherited his father's company and wealth and married Sarah They had a daughter. Unfortunately, both Oliver and the daughter died of illnesses. Sarah appears to have had a breakdown. She consulted psychics and mystics and concluded that she had to atone for all the lives that had been taken by Winchester rifles over the years by building rooms for each of the ghosts of those killed. So, over 38 years, she built a sprawling, confusing, multi-styled, 161-roomed maze of a home.

Item: 2	Title: "I'm all Winchester"
Date: 06 Aug 2019	Contributor: Pauline Shier

Welcome to Winchester, full of mystery and history,
 Ancient Capital of England, County town, once home of Royalty.
 Nature's gifts endow the site, meadows and hills,
 Black flint, chalk white,
 River Itchen, pure and clear, lifeblood of this vale, coursing everywhere

Many folk have come and gone, bloody battles lost and won,
 VIP's from far off lands fought to have us in their hands
 2000 years of tales unfold, but brief will be my journey told.

In AD 43 the Roman's came to stay
 Neath Iron Age shadows of the Downs, crossed the Itchen Way
 'Venta Belgarum', 5 gates and great wall around
 400 years of civilised plumbing then left without a sound

Deep through the darkness the Vikings strode with rage
 Southwards towards Wessex, but a mighty Anglo Saxon stood on that stage
 King Alfred the Great took his valiant army forth
 Sending Guthrum and his men back North,
 Through God and Gold came a pact of peace
 Danelaw meant this war could cease.

Alfred the Great went to war, but set the stones of English law
 The very roads upon which we tread, pious education the people fed
 In bronze he surveys all on our Broadway, Christian Soldier leading the day.

Duke William conquered next, the French entrenched, English pride denied
 Norman Castle grew up on the hill, but the heart of the city was Walklin's jewel
 The Greatest Minster ensured holy mortals would England rule, Bishop's Domesday golden fuel
 Above the heads of faithful flocks rose the holy tower
 Anglo-Norman City of ecclesiastical power

Saint Swithun looks down on pilgrims and Kings,
Bones in Foxes boxes, near where the choir sings
Churches, convents, friaries holy books
Palaces for prayers surrounded by brooks

Royal rulers graced the Great Hall, tournaments of battle enthral
VIII King Henry's face shone from the magnificent Table,
But 24 knights of Camelot and King Arthur was the fable.
Soon courtroom business and Assizes became the reason
Why Sir Walter Raleigh was tried there for treason.

King Henry sent his men one day, to the Cathedral, but not to pray
They stole the silver and the gold. Ruined stone idols so I'm told.
City people sent a plea, and by God's grace was saved you see
Yet once again when threatened by water, by a heroic diver named William Walker.

Oliver Cromwell's revenge spite the city, as we were loyal to Royal Charles, more's the pity
The castle attacked was razed to the ground,
King Charles via West Gate to London then heaven - bound.

A Princely Palace for King Charles II, designed by Wren almost beckoned,
However, the Military of Britain's forces came soon after, some on horses,
One hundred years of barracks there, the Depot on Peninsular Square.
Warriors brave and bold, mustered and marched until were told
To World War one and two must aim, to fight for peace in heaven's name.

But lighter feet have strolled the streets, artists and poets, like John Keat's
Moved to odes of autumnal pleasure, whilst walking to St, Cross at leisure
Jane Austen's wit most neatly writ, as she lay on her deathbed,
Consumed by fever her soul did leave her, on her tombstone we have read.

Today a vibrant place of past and present, of future dreams and parks most pleasant.
Step softly whilst the ancients sleep, King Alfred's City we shall forever keep.
Full of it's own importance.

By Pauline Shier ©

Editor's note:

Our very own 'Pisces' Pauline wrote this poem as an 'after dinner speech' for 50 international astrophysicists! Clearly a hidden talent to be able to convey the entire history of Winchester on a single page.

Item: 3	Title: Jane Austen at The Close, Winchester Cathedral
Date: 29 Aug 2019	Contributor: Geraldine Buchanan



No 11 The Close

Image: British Listed Buildings

Did Jane Austen stay from late 1814/early 1815 at what is now (2019) 11, The Close, formerly 12?

Whilst my generation of Winchester guides were being trained, Elizabeth Proudman, the doyenne of all things Jane Austen in Winchester, told us that the current No.11 was where Cassandra and Jane Austen had stayed for a few days in late 1814/early 1815. However, I found that the Cathedral Guides had a different view, even though Elizabeth herself was a Cathedral Guide. As far as they knew, the Austen sisters had stayed at the original No.11 which was demolished in 1842 and the number transferred to No.12. So after about 15 years, I thought it was time someone established the facts. I researched no primary sources. It was already all there in secondary sources, written by those who had looked at the original records.

1 – Evidence for Jane Austen visiting Winchester late December 1814 /early January 1815

Cassandra and Jane Austen arrived on 26th December 1814 to stay with Mrs Elizabeth Heathcote nee Biggs (1773-1855) and her sister Alethea from Manydown Park, until 2nd January 1815. They, and their sister Catherine, were childhood friends of both Cassandra and Jane. The information about this visit comes from a letter written by their mother, Mrs George Austen, on 26th December 1814 to her granddaughter Anna, James' daughter. "They go today to Winchester to stay with Mrs Heathcote and Miss Bigg for a few days." It further stated that they would then go onto Steventon and were not expected home at Chawton until mid-January. This information appears in Deirdre Le Faye's, *Chronology of the Austen Family* and the letter is at Princeton University Library.

2–Evidence for Mrs Heathcote & Alethea Bigg living in Rev. Williams’ house in the Close

- Elizabeth Bigg had married Rev. William Heathcote of Hursley (b.1772) on 11 January 1798. He was the rector at Worting, near Manydown Park, and a prebend of the Cathedral from 26 May 1798. Their son William was born on 17th May 1801. They first “lived” at No.10, The Close until March 1800 and then at No 2, which was demolished in 1856. It must be remembered that prebends only had to be “resident” and on duty for three months in a year.) Her husband died on 29 March in 1802. She and her young son William returned to Manydown until her father died on 24th February 1813 and her brother, Harris Bigg-Withers, Jane’s erstwhile “overnight” fiancé, inherited and moved in with his family.

Her son, William Heathcote, wrote, “In April 1814 my mother fixed herself in the Close at Winchester, in the Prebendal House of the Rev. Philip Williams, an old friend of her father”.

Lovelace Bigg (-Withers) and Philip Williams had met as boys at Winchester College and remained life long friends. From: *Barry Shurlock, The Speaker’s Chaplain & The Master’s Daughter.*

Rev. Philip Williams had, as well, the living at Compton which had a large comfortable rectory and so was able to let his house unofficially in the Close, especially to daughters of an old friend who could no longer stay in their childhood home. However Rev. Phillip Williams was most conscientious in attendance in The Close when it was his annual 3 month period of duty. He rode in daily from Compton. No. 12’s location would be an advantage to Mrs. Heathcote who would be close to her son, William, who was still at Winchester College. Elizabeth and Alethea stayed in the house before they moved in. Jane Austen refers to them finding so much in the house to approve.... It had been fitted out to the taste of Charlotte Williams,” She was one of Philip Williams’ daughters. (From letter No. 91, dated 11th-12th Oct. 1813, *Deirdre Le Faye, Jane Austen’s Letters, OUP, 1995*) Elizabeth Heathcote and Alethea Bigg moved in during the following April in 1814.

3 – Was Rev. Philip Williams’ house the former No.11, demolished in 1842, or the former No.12, now No.11?

John Crook, in *The Wainscot Book* lists the known occupants through the centuries of the twelve canonical houses in the Close. For the original No.11, there is no mention of Rev. Philip Williams ever having “lived” there during the relevant period or at any time.

The records that John Crook quotes are that Philip Williams was installed as a Canon on 25th March 1797 and was “resident” at No.12 until his death on 27th December 1830. Also there is a reference. to Rev. Mr. Williams paying money to Mr. Rennell for matters to do with No.12.

How might the Confusion have Arisen?

People who have written or spoken about this subject in the past may have used the modern numbering of 11 without mentioning it used to be 12. Easy for people reading or listening to such material, to surmise it was the former 11 that was being referred to, which was demolished in 1842.

Further Reading

As well as John Crook’s and Barry Shurlock’s works mentioned above and also Deirdre Le Faye’s Chronology and Letters:

- Philip Barrett’s article on Rev. Philip Williams in the Winchester Cathedral Record No. 57, 1988

Item: 4	Title: Wilfred Owen, Winchester November 1917
Date: Sep 2019	Contributor: Patrick Craze

It is a little-known fact that Wilfred Owen, arguably our greatest First World War poet, visited Winchester in November 1917, and a walk over the surrounding downs inspired him to write one of his most descriptive and evocative poems “Asleep”.



Wilfred Edward Salter Owen was born to Thomas and Susan Owen on the 18th of March 1893 near Oswestry, Shropshire. In 1907, his father, Thomas Owen, was appointed Assistant Superintendent of the London and North Western and Great Western Joint Railways, and the family moved to Shrewsbury where Owen’s education continued. Upon leaving school at 18 Owen spent a period of months working as a pupil-teacher at Wyle Cop School. Later he worked as lay assistant to the Vicar of Dunsden near Reading. In his spare time, he attended University College, Reading, and is known to have studied botany and poetry. Between 1913 and 1915 Owen travelled to Bordeaux, France, and taught at the Berlitz School of English. He was tutoring in the Pyrenees when war was declared.

Owen returned to England in autumn 1915 and enlisted in the Artists' Rifles. His training was completed in Hare Hall Camp in Essex, but this allowed him time to make trips to London, notably to the Poetry Bookshop run by Harold Monro. On 4th June 1916 Owen was commissioned as a second lieutenant with the Manchester Regiment and in the last days of 1916 he was posted to France. In January 1917 he and his men held a flooded dugout for fifty hours under heavy bombardment. In March, he suffered concussion and spent time in hospital. In April he returned to the front again, only to be caught up in fierce fighting. At one point he was hit by a shell blast at Savy Wood, and lay semi-conscious in a shell crater with the dismembered remains of a friend. On the 30th April 1917 whilst on parade he was noted as being 'shaky' and on 1st May he was diagnosed as suffering from shell-shock ('neurasthenia') and evacuated to England.

After a medical examination Owen was sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital in Edinburgh. There he met Siegfried Sassoon, also a patient and already a noted poet. Owen was to gain immeasurably from the friendship which developed between them. Sassoon's poetic voice, with its strong emphasis on realism, influenced Owen's developing style.

When Wilfred Owen appeared before a medical board at the end of October 1917 he was deemed 'permanently' unfit for General Service, also unfit for Home Service for four months, and was given three weeks leave. In early November he went home, to visit his parents at Shrewsbury, and it was from here that he wrote to Sassoon on the 5th November, "getting Colvin's new Life of Keats, no priced advertised, but damn it, I'm to enjoy my leave."

After a flying visit to London, on Sunday 11th November 1917, Owen boarded a train for Winchester to visit his cousin and childhood friend Leslie Gunston. Leslie, a budding poet and artist in his own right, was not fit for General Service and was carrying out his War Service managing the YMCA at Hazeley Down Camp near Twyford. Owen arrived in Winchester at 8.30pm and thence to Hazeley Down Camp, where there were no home comforts, and he spent the night on a camp cot.



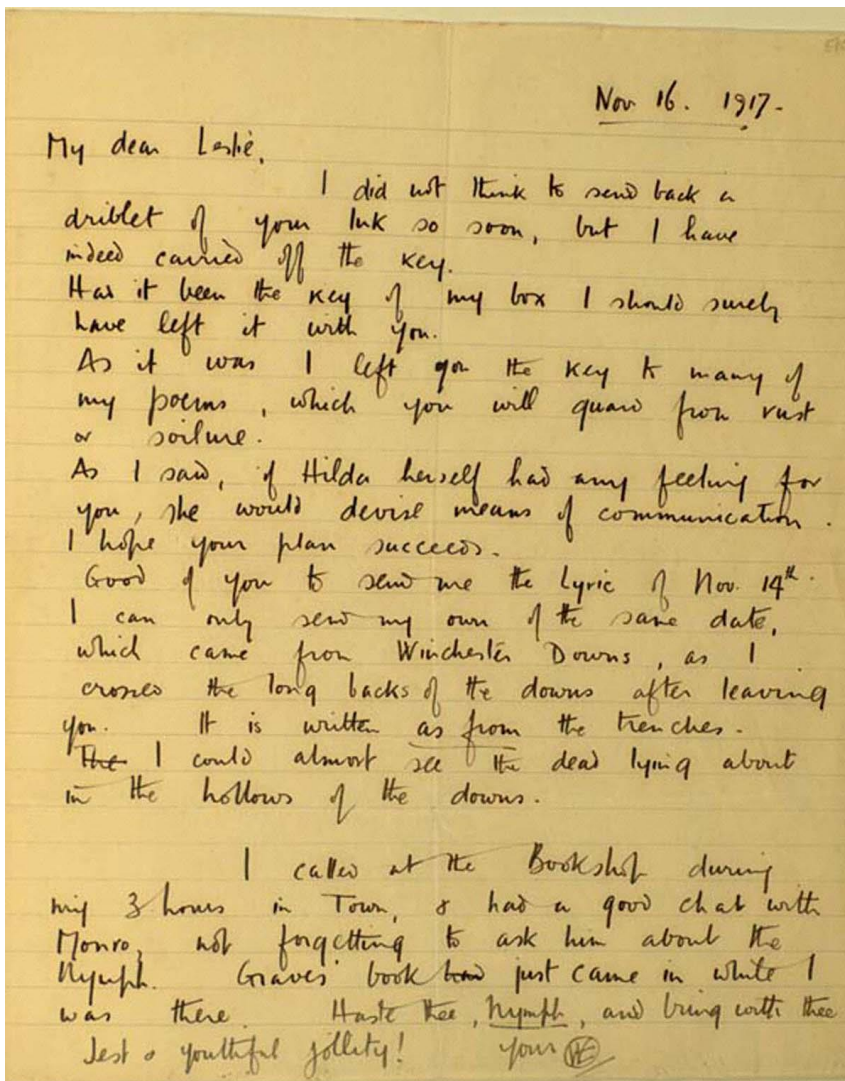
Inside the YMCA at Hazeley Down Camp, Twyford. Author's collection

The following morning, Owen helped serve coffee to the men at the YMCA before setting off across the downs to have lunch with Leslie, in Winchester. The two men spent the afternoon in the Cathedral and Owen's poem about a chorister, "A Tear Song", drafted between November 1917 and January 1918, may have been inspired by Winchester Cathedral's 250ft long Nave, in its opening line.

Out of this endless nave
Chorus tremendous
While the gruff organ gave
Sponges stupendous

There is clearer evidence that Owen's poem "Asleep", written on 14th November 1917, was inspired by his visit to Winchester, and more specifically his walk over the downs between Twyford and Winchester. In a letter to Leslie dated 16th November 1917 he wrote:

"Good of you to send me the lyric of Nov 14th I can only send my own of the same date, which came to me from Winchester Downs, as I crossed the long backs of the downs after leaving you. It is written as from the trenches. I could almost see the dead lying about in the hollows of the downs."



Wilfred Owen's original letter sent to his cousin, Leslie Gunston, at Hazeley Down Camp, Twyford.

Image: University of Oxford Wilfred Owen Literary Estate

Owen’s Poem “Asleep” was originally called “Killed Asleep” and graphically illustrates the death of soldier whilst sleeping and the ultimate escape from the horror of war.

A virtual recitation of Wilfred Owens poem “Asleep” can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/uoHJ7ux-zrA>

As Owen recovered from shellshock, he worked for a short time as a teacher in Tynecastle High School, before returning to light regimental duties, first at Scarborough, then Ripon.



In June 1918 the twenty-five-year-old officer rejoined his regiment at Scarborough and in August was again posted to France. He was awarded the Military Cross (posthumously) for his leadership and bravery during the attack on Joncourt on the 1st October, storming enemy points and turning a German unit’s own machine gun against them. On the 4th of November 1918, leading an attack by the Sambre Canal, near Ors, Owen was killed in action. The news of Owen’s death reached his family on Armistice Day.

Sources:

1. Wilfred Owen by Guy Cuthbertson, 2014
2. Wilfred Owen Biography, BBC History, Historic Figures, 2014

Item: 5	Title: Best Tip
Date: Jun 2019	Contributor: Clare Dixon



I thought we might ask guides what is the best tip they have ever been given (as in a gratuity, not a piece of advice!) Mine is a balloon flower which one passenger made for me at the end of a recent coach tour. My other contender was a £1 note which someone gave me some years ago, but still about 30 years after it had ceased to be legal tender!

Editor’s note:

Fabulously entertaining suggestion from Clare. Over to you to send in details of your “best tip” although looking at the balloon flower it is going to be tough one to beat! Or is it?

Guide Lines Dates

- Summer Issue
 - submit copy by 20 June 2019
 - publish 30 June 2019
 - Autumn Issue
 - submit copy by 20 September 2019
 - publish 30 September 2019
 - Winter Issue
 - submit copy by 20 December 2019
 - publish 31 December 2019
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