



## Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society

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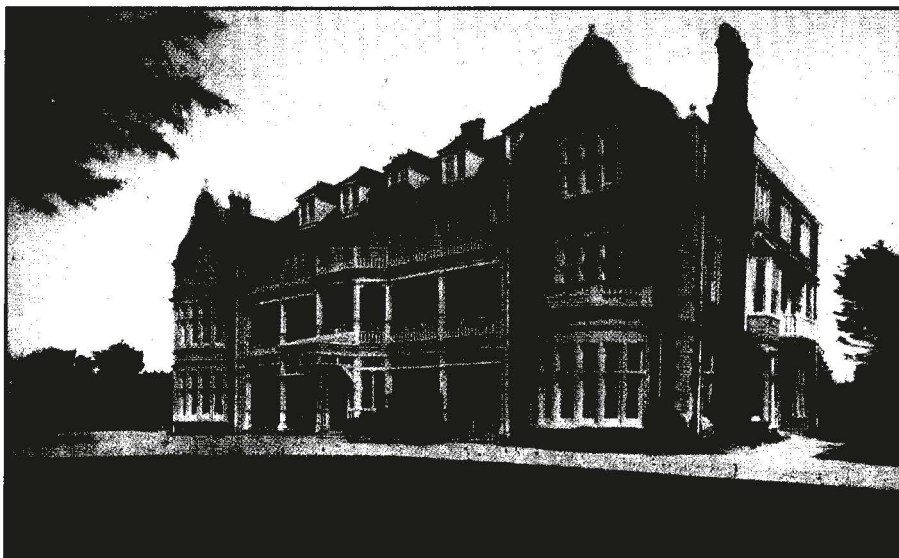
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**Milford-on-Sea  
Historical Record Society**

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**OCCASIONAL  
MAGAZINE**

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# MILFORD-ON-SEA HISTORICAL RECORD SOCIETY

## COMMITTEE 2009

### Chairman

Mr Brian Giles

### Honorary Secretary

Miss Margaret Bennett

### Honorary Treasurer

Mr Roger Hedge

Mrs Sue Baptiste

Mr Bob Braid

Dr Joanna Close-Brooks

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Mrs Jean Meffen

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Margaret Bennett

Joanna Close-Brooks

### Acknowledgement

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# MILFORD-ON-SEA HISTORICAL RECORD SOCIETY

## Occasional Magazine New Series, Volume 3 2009 Centenary Issue

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Front Cover: The Hotel Victoria, Cliff Road (Courtesy R. Braid)

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MILFORD-ON-SEA HISTORICAL RECORD SOCIETY

*by Christopher Hobby and Joanna Close-Brooks*

Our society was founded in 1909 as the Milford-on-Sea Record Society, and in this our centenary year it is thought appropriate to remind members how the Society started, and to give some account of the original members, many distinguished in their professions. Unfortunately no Minute Books survive before 1933, but there are two surviving accounts, one by Dr Vincent Harris, the first Chairman, printed in the first volume of the Occasional Magazine, and the other some notes written around 1960 by Hylda Bruce. Her manuscript is now held in the Society's archive. This note draws on both sources.

Part of Dr Harris's address runs as follows: "For those of us whose lot has been cast in a place like Milford, whose traditions must extend backwards for many hundred years, it is impossible to prevent a feeling of pride in the antiquity of the place, and an intense interest in its history. We have in the very midst of us the ancient Church, which is a standing proof that civilisation must have touched this neighbourhood at a very early date in English History. Such being the case, the idea occurred to Mr E L Agar, that since many of us have from time to time expressed a lively interest in the history of Milford and its neighbourhood, it might be possible to establish amongst us a Society which would systematically investigate and put on record any items of its history which might come within its knowledge and that in addition it might concern itself with any matters of permanent interest, not necessarily ancient, such as the flora of the district and perhaps the fauna. This idea commended itself very much to some of us, and at a Meeting held January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1909, at which seven were present, it was decided to carry it into effect and to form our Society. We had at the commencement one considerable asset, as Mr Ravenscroft consented to be Hon Secretary. After the establishment of the Society came the election of a Committee and the formulation of a certain number of very simple Rules." Dr Harris's paper continued with notes on historical information on Milford and also ideas for future research which members might investigate and put on record.

The story is taken up by Hylda Bruce:-

"The first meeting was held on April 19<sup>th</sup> 1909 with Dr Vincent Harris in the chair. A Committee of eight was chosen and thirteen members elected, with Mr Ravenscroft as Hon Secretary and Horace Mann as Treasurer. The chairman read a long address in which he stated the purposes of the society.

One was not lightly a member - the question was carefully considered and one's attainments and social position were weighed and to be elected was a real distinction. After the original thirteen members were enrolled only those who

read papers at meetings were asked to join. I was considered a little young being only twenty-three, but as I had compiled a somewhat incomplete list of local wild flowers I was admitted as an original member.

Mrs Reid says that she wishes she could describe the importance and solemnity of those early meetings. They were held at Woodrouffe House in Whitby Road, the home of Dr Vincent Harris. In addition to members Mrs Harris invited many of her friends and entertained us all to tea. A central heating system had just been installed and was most efficient; a huge log fire was banked up and all the windows shut so the temperature was 90° at least.

The committee met just before the members meeting and when we were all sitting and as quiet as though in church, but gently stewing, the door opened and the Hon Sec entered carrying the minute book - not on a velvet cushion but somehow suggesting one - followed by the chairman and the committee members in procession. In Mrs Reid's words 'the whole atmosphere was one of great solemnity and dignity'.

Ladies were permitted to become members of the Society, but sometime before 1914 the rash suggestion was made that Mrs Reid be asked to serve on the committee. The idea was revolutionary and the chairman nearly had a fit, but he pulled himself together and pronounced that it was quite out of the question that a lady should join the committee; "we cannot I am afraid hope to maintain the high ideals and dignity of the original officers but we can be grateful to them for their far-seeing action in forming the Milford Record Society as by doing so they made possible the collection of so much that could so easily have been forgotten and lost."

The Society continued to hold meetings and publish papers, indeed from 1909 to 1955 it published five volumes, each in six parts, known as Occasional Magazines, which are a vital source of information on all aspects of the history of Milford, an unusual achievement for a small village. The membership requirements were gradually relaxed and the society increased in numbers. In 1934 it changed its name to the Milford-on-Sea Scientific and Literary Society, but by 1937 it had gone back to its original name. As the membership grew it was no longer possible to use members' houses for meetings, and from 1934 they were held in the lounge of Milford House Hotel, courtesy of Mr Allen, where tea could be obtained at 1/- a head.

In the same year the Annual Outing commenced with a visit to churches at Ellingham, Fordingbridge and Breamore with a refreshment stop at the Riverside Hotel.

As people undertook research, some books and papers were given to the Society to form a small archive of historical material relating to Milford. In 1922, for

instance, Mr Edwin Noble gave the Society a number of his black and white sketches of Milford. In 1939 a cupboard was given for the records to be stored in, and it was kept in Milford House Hotel. The first archivist was Mr Finzel.

Due to the war, meetings were suspended from 1941 to 1944. When the Society was restarted membership was up to 73, and it was agreed to limit numbers in future to 70.

However, the number of original members had diminished through the years, and membership numbers had declined by the 1950s. With the death of Mrs Reid in 1953 and Canon Sears in 1955 the remaining committee recommended at the AGM in 1957 that the Society be dissolved. They apparently considered that all possible research on Milford had been completed! In the event, the Society went into abeyance, with a small committee remaining to watch over the archive. In 1959 the archive cupboard was removed to the church under the care of Miss Hylda Bruce, Mr and Mrs Bagnall and the Vicar.

A new generation of residents renewed interest in our village history, and in 1972, largely due to the efforts of the vicar, the Rev Marling Roberts, and of Mrs Ursula Danby the Society was re-started under the name of the Milford-on-Sea Historical Record Society. Our Chairmen since then have included Ursula Danby and Jean Bower, the grand-daughters of founder members EL Agar and AB Woodd respectively, and the number of members has increased. The Society again runs a series of lectures each year, has continued to publish the Occasional Magazine and other papers (our publications now total 33), and runs an Annual Outing. The Society has also held exhibitions in Milford about our local history, most recently in 2000 organised by Roy Rees, then archivist to the Society, and in 2009 organised by Chris Hobby and Bob Braid, our present archivist.

The exhibitions have drawn largely on material held in the Society's archive. Since the re-launch of the Society in 1972, more material has been added to this archive, to create a collection suitable for both research and exhibition. The Society now collects within a defined policy, mostly material directly relating to Milford such as books, photographs, postcards (a prolific source of old images), prints and drawings, scrap-albums and so on. The intention is to supplement collections such as those in the Hampshire Record Office, not to compete with them. The archive also holds some manuscript papers on local historical subjects, not yet printed.

We hope the society will continue its efforts to record the history of Milford-on-Sea in the present century.

Some notes on the founders of the Society follow. They included several notable people distinguished in their professions.

## THE FIRST COMMITTEE

**President, Dr Vincent Harris** (1852-1931), MD, FRCP. He was born in Bedminster, Somerset, where his father was a linen merchant, but he became a specialist in diseases of the chest. He purchased land in the original sale of building plots when the Cornwallis-West estate was broken up, and built Woodrouffe House in Whitby Road, which he and his family occupied in 1901 on his retirement. Later, Woodrouffe House became St George's Nursing Home, before this moved across the road to its present position in a house then called Scotswood. Woodrouffe House has been demolished and Oaktree Court occupies the site.

**Secretary, Mr William Ravenscroft** (1848-1943). He was an architect, a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a member and later Vice-President of the Hampshire Field Club and a keen local historian. He first practised in Reading and came to Milford by chance, having been ordered to have a holiday following the death of his mother. One of his clients informed him that Mr Catley, a local Reading builder, had a bungalow in Milford. He became one of its first tenants and whilst there was put in touch with Col. Cornwallis West of Newlands; a lasting friendship ensued. He moved to Milford in 1908, but during the previous ten years while still in Reading he did much work in Milford, building first Seacroft on the cliff and then Briantcroft in Barnes Lane which became his own home. After the First World War he opened a practice in Milford and took on a pupil, Cecil Rooke, who eventually became his partner.

During his career he was engaged on some 350 houses, many in Milford, and a number of public buildings. These included work on churches, chiefly internal works such as altar seats, screens and reredos, and also visits paid and reports made for the Diocesan Advisory Committee. (He wrote a long paper on the History of Milford Church, illustrated with his own drawings, for our Occasional Magazine in 1911).

Among his notable local buildings are the WI Hall in Keyhaven Road, the Keyhaven War Memorial, the choir vestry and the altar and reredos in the war memorial chapel in All Saints Church, Milford, the Masonic Hall and Parish Hall in Lyminster, Hordle War Memorial, Ashley Hotel in Ashley, New Milton and Messrs WB Mew Langton's off-licence premises in Milford, a timber-framed building which is now the Craft Shop. To this day many of his distinctive properties remain around Milford, a memorial to an architect who had a profound effect on the architectural character of the village in the first four decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He died in 1943 aged 95.

**Treasurer, Dr Horace Mann** (born 1866). He is recorded as a 'Doctor for HMS Britannia' in a Census entry. He lived at Kivernells in Kivernell Road from 1884, where he ran a preparatory school for the navy until Osborne College came into

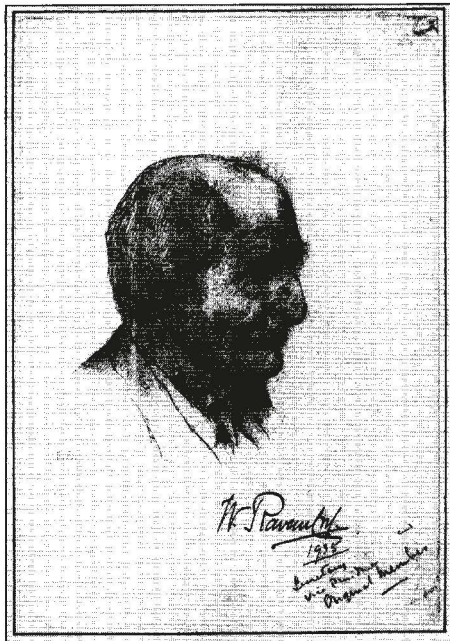




Dr. V.D & Mrs Harris



Horace Mann



W. Ravenscroft.  
Sketch by Dr. Fuller England in 1935

being. In 1901 he employed two assistant masters, a matron, housemaid, cook, kitchen maid, gardener and under-gardener, looking after 24 pupils, Sadly Kivernells, like so many of our larger properties, has been demolished with Holly Gardens built in the grounds (Nyria Dawson remembered croquet parties on the lawn) and then Kivernell Place on the site of the house.

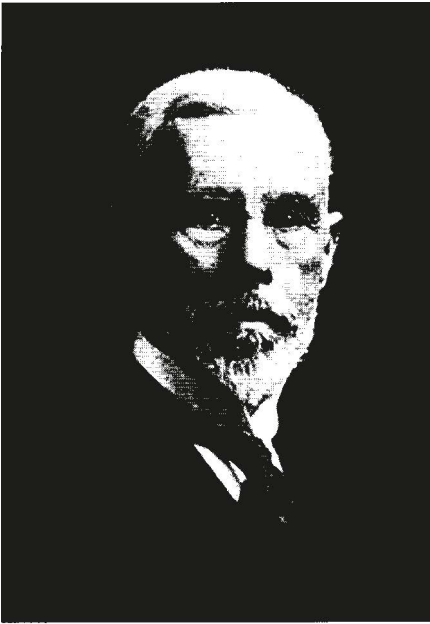
**Edward Larpent Agar** (1847-1927). He was the son of WT Agar who had made a fortune selling land to a railway company for access to their new Kings Cross Station, and then bought properties in Milford, including Milford House in 1867. When his father died in 1906 EL Agar took up residence there with his wife and nine children. He was the first to suggest the formation of the Society and contributed to the Magazine. His grand-daughter Ursula Danby was involved in re-starting the Society in 1972 and also served as chairman.

**John Charles Nike King** (born 1840) lived at Wisteria House, St Thomas Street, Lymington, though his father and grandfather had lived in Milford in Rose Cottage, Barnes Lane. He was a business man, dealing in corn, malt and manure. He served as a Lymington Borough councillor, alderman, magistrate and as Mayor of Lymington in 1894. He contributed a paper on smuggling to the Occasional Magazine (Vol 1, No 5, 1912, pp 25-6), where he describes how as a child in 1848 or 1849 he saw six captured smugglers with their little casks of brandy in the Guard Room at Hurst Castle.

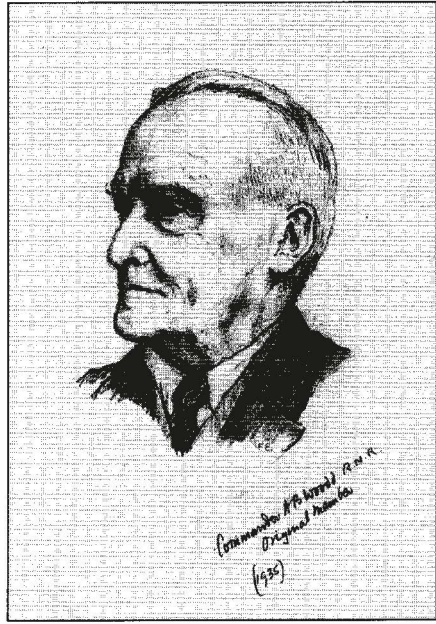
**Ferdinand (or Frederick) Albert Shaw**, (1847-1912). He lived at Carringtons, Keyhaven Road.

**Dr Robert Bruce**, (1855-1917). He was a Scotsman, born in Aberdeen, though his mother was a Miss Colborne from Lymington. He sold his practice in London as a result of his wife Emma's poor health, and arrived in the village in 1890. The 1891 census lists the Bruce family at Waverley House, Cliff Road, with their children Hylda and Margery. A son, Hamilton, was born in 1894. By 1901 they had moved to Ellaland and then to Hillyfield where Dr Bruce had his surgery. He made an outstanding contribution to the welfare of the village. He belonged to the Village Improvement Committee and instigated the building of the Social Club in 1905, was a first rate GP and persuaded WT Agar of Milford House to give land in the High Street for the building of the Cottage Hospital in 1900; this was the first hospital between Boscombe and Southampton. He died suddenly in London in 1917, but his daughter Hylda continued his tradition of work for the community.

**Arthur Bethune Woodd** (1852-1938) MA. He and his wife Alice (née Peache) came to the village in 1902 from London, where he was a wine merchant. They built three houses in Cliff Road, Heckfield for themselves, and Eversley and Mattingley for two of Alice's brothers. Her father, the Rev Alfred Peache, had been rector of the three villages with these names near Stratfield Saye in Hampshire. Arthur and



Clement Reid



Commander A B Woodd  
Sketch by Dr. Fuller England in 1935



Dr. Bruce



Hylda Bruce

Alice had three children, two girls and a boy, Peter, who died in the war in 1918. Their grand-daughter Jean Bower (1927-2007) was active in the Society, and was Chairman for several years in the 1990s and then President.

## FOUNDING MEMBERS

**Mrs Agnes Agar** (1847-1930), née Henty, wife of E L Agar.

**Miss Hylda Bruce** (1886-1969), daughter of Dr Bruce. Her description of the early meetings of the Society is quoted above. She had a particular interest in the local flora and wrote several papers for the Occasional Magazine.

**Lt.Col Fitzmaurice Creighton** (born 1841). He was born in Platoff Cottage, Woodside, Lymington and became a Lt Col in the army (31<sup>st</sup> East Surrey regiment). He lived at 6 Brunswick Place, Southampton.

**Arthur Connolly Gage Heygate** (1862-1935) was the third son of Sir Frederick William Heygate, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet. He went to Eton and St John's College, Oxford, taking his MA in 1891. The same year he married Frances Evelyn Rowley in St George's, Hanover Square. He was an assistant master at Eton from 1887 to 1918, and in 1900 purchased Saltgrass, Keyhaven as a holiday home. He was much involved with the village school in Milford. He had two sons and a daughter, the younger son becoming the 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet. Arthur Heygate was an active member of the Society and contributed several papers to the Occasional Magazine.

**Miss Amelia Magnay** (1859-1922), daughter of Sir William Magnay, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet, lived at Milford Lodge, which she inherited from her cousin, Major Henry Goodwyn. In 1901 she was the only member of the family in the house, but employed a butler, three female servants and a coachman and groom. Her cousin, Sir Christopher Magnay was also living there in 1923, and her aunt Margaret, Lady Magnay in 1927.

**The Rev Arthur Hardcastle Melvill** (1849-1932) and his sister **Miss Evelyn Hester Melvill** (1850-1936) were the children of James Cosmo Melvill, Under-Secretary of State for the India Office. They lived at Ivy Bank from 1894. Their brother, James Cosmo Melvill (1845-1929) BA, DSc, FLS, was a nationally renowned botanist, and though not a local resident, contributed a paper 'A Catalogue of Marine Algae or Seaweeds collected at Milford-on-Sea and Hordle' to the Occasional Magazine for March 1910. His research had been carried out on visits to his brother and sister during June and July 1901.

**Clement Reid** (1853-1916) was a professional geologist, a Fellow of the Royal Society and served on HM Geological Survey. As a result of family circumstances he did not get much of a formal education, but this did not hold him back. After studying in his spare time and joining the Geological Survey in 1874 he was employed in mapping one district after another for many years: this experience

## LIST OF MEMBERS.

### Committee :

DR. VINCENT HARRIS, Woodrouffe House, Milford-on-  
H. MANN, Kivernells, Milford-on-Sea. [Sea.  
W. RAVENSCROFT, Briantcroft, Milford-on-Sea.  
E. L. AGAR, Milford House, Milford-on-Sea.  
A. B. WOODD, Heckfield, Milford-on-Sea.  
F. A. SHAW, Carringtons, Milford-on-Sea.  
DR. BRUCE, Hillyfield, Milford-on-Sea.  
JOHN C. N. KING, Wistaria, Lymington.

### Members :

MISS MACNAY, Milford Lodge, Milford-on-Sea.  
CHARLES RIVETT-CARNAC, Fawley Lodge, Hythe,  
Southampton.  
MISS STEDMAN, Westover House, Milford-on-Sea.  
MISS HYLDA BRUCE, Hillyfield, Milford-on-Sea.  
COL. CORNWALLIS WEST, Newlands Manor, Milford-  
on-Sea.  
REV. H. A. & MISS MELVILL, Ivy Bank, Milford-on-Sea.  
LT.-COL. FITZMAURICE CREIGHTON, 6, Brunswick  
Place, Southampton.  
MRS. ABDY WILLIAMS, Keyhaven Road, Milford-on-Sea.  
A. C. G. HRYGATR, Saltgrass, Milford-on-Sea.  
CLEMENT REID, 7, St. James Mansions, West End  
Lane, London, N.W.  
MRS. AGAR, Milford House, Milford-on-Sea.  
MRS. WOODD, Heckfield, Milford-on-Sea.

### Honorary Members :

REV. M. C. H. COLLET, The Vicarage, Milford-on-Sea.  
MRS. COLLET, The Vicarage, Milford-on-Sea.  
REV. A. R. D. PATTERSON, Rose Cottage, Milford-on-Sea.

gave him a broad knowledge of the country's geology and he soon became regarded as one of the foremost experts on British geology and palaeobotany. His most intensive studies were on Tertiary deposits, and by association the study of fossil seeds and pollen, and palaeolithic evidence of mankind. His wife Eleanor, a mathematician whom he married in 1896, was his co-worker on many projects. The Reids originally lived in London, but in 1910 he built a house in Milford called 'One Acre' overlooking the valley of the Dane Stream and adjoining the old pine woods at the end of Sharvells Road. (Now Cosgarne in Blackbush Road, it was designed by Ravenscroft). From 1911 he spent weekends there and was in London or on field work during the week. In 1912 he retired and they lived permanently in Milford, collecting on the cliffs. He engaged Hylda Bruce (see above) as general assistant, and she learnt to mount specimens. The Reids had built up a famous reference collection of recent fruits from various botanical gardens including Kew and commercial firms to compare with fossil examples that they found. Hylda learnt photography and took pictures of many fossils with a camera (Mr Reid's own invention) made of waste paper, wood, a tape measure, bellows (professional) and lenses. It was constructed by Keeping's Garage in the village.

Clement Reid was buried in Milford Churchyard where his wooden memorial board, by then much decayed, was removed in 1965.

**Charles James Rivett-Carnac** (1853-1935) was related to the family who owned Rookcliff for 19 years, but he was living at Hythe in 1909. He is buried in Milford churchyard. See page 47 for more on his connection with Milford and our Society

**Miss Margaret Edith Stedman** (1855-1929) lived with her father at Beach House in 1901.

**Col William Cornwallis-West** (1837-1917) lived in Newlands Manor and in Ruthin Castle in Wales. He was a competent and gifted water-colourist, some of whose paintings were used in Milford-on-Sea guide books in the 1920s. He inherited large family estates in Milford and sought to develop the village as a resort, and so coined the name 'Milford-on-Sea'. It was his friendship with the Duke of Devonshire who was developing Eastbourne that inspired him to do the same with Milford. He instructed architects to prepare plans for a pier, bandstand, hydropathic establishment, a large hotel and pleasure grounds and to lay out roads and building plots suitable for gentlemen's residences. The sale was advertised and special trains laid on to convey prospective purchasers to the village. Here fate took a hand, for an outbreak of typhoid in a local boys' private school caused suspicions about the local water supply and kept many prospective purchasers away. Some development still took place but in a smaller way. The new roads were constructed with names such as Cornwallis Road, West Road, Whitby Road, Pless Road, De La Warr Road and Westminster Road all having connections with the Cornwallis-West family. The Victoria Hotel was built on the

cliff and later renamed the Solent Court Hotel, only to be demolished in the 1960s and replaced with blocks of flats named Solent Court, Totland Court and Hurst Court . One permanent reminder of the original development is the Pleasure Grounds, though we now appreciate this large area of public open space for its natural environment rather than as the manicured gardens with rhododendrons and a monkey puzzle tree that it was intended to be.

**Mrs Ellen Margaret Abdy Williams** (1849-1924) lived in Keyhaven Road and was the wife of Charles Abdy Williams. South Mead was built for them.

**Mrs Alice Augusta Woodd**, wife of Arthur Bethune Woodd (see above).

### **HONORARY MEMBERS**

**Rev M C H Collett and Mrs Collett**, of the Vicarage, Milford-on-Sea

**Rev A R D Patterson**, Rose Cottage, Milford-on-Sea

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We thank Jude James for supplying biographical details and other information on the founder members