



*Victory Green built in the early 1930's.*

# THE VICTORY HOUSING SOCIETY, TIPNER, PORTSMOUTH

The Tipner Estate was one of the few projects undertaken by Herbert Collins which was not initiated by the Collins family. In 1933 the Canteen Committee of the Royal Naval Barracks at Portsmouth were anxious to provide homes for the lower paid ratings in the Royal Navy, as there were no married quarters and little suitable accommodation for families to rent. The committee approached the Admiralty who offered to sell them land at Tipner at low cost and advised them to form a public utility society. The Victory Housing Society Ltd. was registered in March 1933 and members were restricted to ex-naval officers and ratings, with the Commodore of RN Barracks as ex-officio chairman.

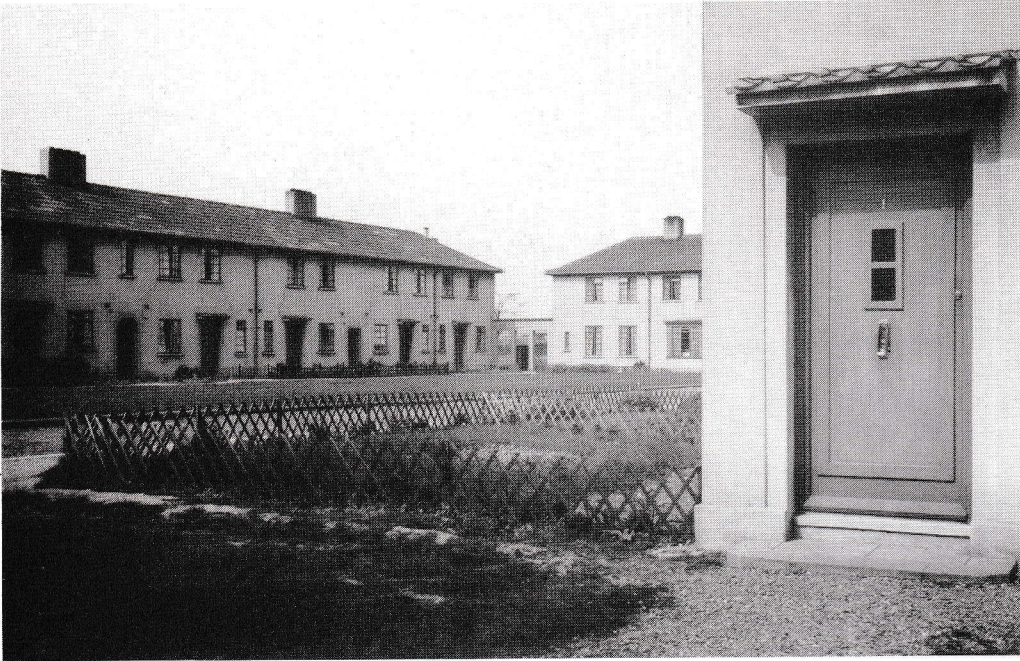
The Admiralty advised that the society should affiliate to the Garden City and Town Planning Association and follow its advice. Mr. Pike, secretary of the association, attended the inaugural meeting of the society and recommended architects known to have successfully undertaken such schemes. The city council wanted to use a Portsmouth architect, but as none of the local firms were known by the association it could not recommend them. A compromise was made with the appointment of the City Engineer as honorary engineer to assist the architect with the scheme. Mr. Pike presumably recommended Herbert on the strength of his work for the Swaythling Housing Society.

The society approached Herbert to prepare a sketch scheme for the nine and a half acre site which it had been offered by the Admiralty at Tipner. It was about one mile north of Portsmouth city centre on Portsea Island, bordering Portsmouth harbour to the west and an area of dense Victorian housing and a glue factory to the east. The site was flat and treeless, in contrast to the undulating, wooded sites Herbert had previously built on in Muswell Hill and Southampton. On 31 March 1933 he sent the society three different house plans to suit different aspects and estimates of £343 to £360 per house. He also asked the committee to consider the provision of a social hall, a few shops, sites for recreation and flats for small families, for which he pointed out a subsidy would be available under the 1930 Housing Act. Herbert also advised the society to employ a clerk of works and stated it would be possible to build the scheme within eighteen months.

The society were worried over the high cost of architect's fees. In April 1933 Herbert sent them a copy of the fees laid down by the RIBA for housing schemes for Public Utility Societies and commented:-

“I think these fees are inclined to be a little high, and I am prepared, if necessary, to reduce them in the case of the scheme you have in mind, by 20%.”

This goodwill gesture was highly unprofessional and even then did not satisfy the society who wrote to the Admiralty and the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association asking if they could expect a further reduction in fees. Mr. Pike,



*A close on the Tipner Estate with simple panelled front doors.*



*Houses in Harbour Way with linking screen walls.*

secretary of the association, advised the society to accept Collins' estimate, saying:-

“You may secure a greater reduction from a local architect, but I am not sure that you would secure the same degree of skill and supervision, and the resultant satisfaction as you would with Mr. Collins.”

Herbert Collins was officially appointed and his plans for the layout of the estate were placed before the committee on 30 November 1933. The first phase of one hundred and fourteen houses was started at twelve houses to the acre, although the town planning committee was prepared to accept a higher density of eighteen to the acre. The layout consists of two main roads at right angles, Tipner Lane and Harbour Way, with three short cul-de-sacs opening off them, Victory Green, Tipner Green and Range Green. The houses are grouped behind communal grass borders and around the greens. Herbert's proposals for tree planting and hedges instead of fences do not appear to have been successful and in 1934 he wrote to the society objecting to the proposal to build a fence along the sea wall at the end of Harbour Way as it would “. . . injure the open effect.” He also intended gravel roads and footpaths to give a more rural appearance to the estate, but the city corporation insisted on concrete as they were going to take them over.

Three types of houses were built to suit north, east and south-west aspects. The roofs were hipped with red double Roman tiles, and the walls rendered. Windows were metal casements with horizontal glazing bars and the front doors were a simple panel design with two small inset glazed panels. Blocks of houses were connected with rendered walls with roofing tile copings.

The estate cost £54,594 and rents were set at 16s.5d. a week including rates. The mortgage on the Tipner Estate was paid back to the Portsmouth City Council in 1967 and since then all the houses have been sold to sitting tenants. Considerable alterations have been made to the estate: some of the communal greens have been taken over to provide car parking; owners have made various changes to the individual houses with extensions, coloured render, new windows and doors; and nos. 26 to 30 Harbour Way were demolished to make way for the elevated M275 motorway which now dominates the estate and separates it from Portsmouth Harbour.



*Houses in Tipner Lane designed in 1933.*



*Chapel Cottages, Cheriton, repaired by the Society and given the 'Collins' treatment.*



*New cottages at Orchards Way, West End built 1937-9.*

# THE HAMPSHIRE RURAL COTTAGE IMPROVEMENT SOCIETY

A member of the Swaythling Housing Society staff, Mr. A. O. Errington, had the idea of forming a housing society to cater for the needs of rural workers. He was one of the founders in July 1936 of the Hampshire Rural Cottage Improvement Society Ltd. which aimed to recondition old cottages and build new ones. A great number of picturesque old cottages were being officially condemned as unfit for human habitation and the Society considered that apart from economic considerations, they should be preserved on aesthetic grounds. In this, it followed the repair philosophy of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, of which Herbert was a member, and the SPAB took up shares in the Society.

Herbert acted as architect to the HRCIS and served as Honorary Chairman and Secretary for some years. The committee investigated cottages threatened with demolition throughout Hampshire. Some proved to be too expensive but the Society bought cottages at West Meon, Cheriton, Buriton, Holybourne and Owslebury. Some cost as little as £25! The reconditioning work was partly funded by the local authority which made a grant of £200 per cottage under the 1926 Housing Rural Workers Act. Rents were kept at a low level; tenants previously paying 4s.6d. per week paid only an extra 1s. per week after modernisation. Tenants also took the opportunity of buying shares in the Society.

The HRCIS built a group of new cottages, close to Herbert's father's home 'The Wilderness' at West End on the north-eastern outskirts of Southampton. The Society bought an eight and a half acre site and was financed by a loan from the Public Works Loan Board over a fifty year term at  $3\frac{7}{8}\%$ . Building started in 1937 in the road leading off the village High Street which was named Orchards Way, an echo of the Uplands Estate. This is the most rural of the Collins estates, with cottages grouped in short terraces around an irregular 'village green' with fruit trees retained from an old orchard on the site. The cottages themselves are given a rural appearance, with white painted Midhurst brick walls, steeply pitched pantiled roofs with dormer windows and an individual rain water butt to each cottage. Internally, the small two and three bed roomed cottages had ledged and braced doors complete with wooden latches; all the internal woodwork was stained.

Eventually the estate comprised thirty two cottages, two shops (since converted into cottages) and the fire station, designed by Herbert in 1939 at the corner of Orchards Way and the High Street.

Administration of the HRCIS properties around Hampshire proved extensive and the reconditioned cottages were sold. In 1968 the remaining Orchards Way estate was taken over by the Swaythling Housing Society, which has since modernised the cottages, made up the road and installed street lighting.



*Hillside Close 1937 with stone seat inscribed to Herbert's parents and first wife Anne.*



*Bungalows across the green left deliberately rough.*

## **THE COLLINS MEMORIAL TRUST HOUSING, HILLSIDE CLOSE, WINCHESTER ROAD, CHANDLERS FORD**

W. J. Collins used the proceeds from his property developments in London and Southampton to finance many local charities. In the mid-1930s he bought a small plantation at Chandlers Ford, with the idea of forming a trust to provide accommodation for the elderly. In 1937 he financed the construction of twelve bungalows on the site, designed by Herbert and built by Ralph. They were to be let at a rent which would cover rates and the cost of repairs only. However, W. J. Collins died in May 1939 and the scheme was continued by his children, who formed the Collins Memorial Trust in 1940.

The site was a curious choice for building almshouses, as at that time it was on the main Winchester-Southampton road with few other buildings or facilities in the immediate area. However the choice was far-sighted, because Chandlers Ford has since grown into a populous suburb with a shopping precinct built just along the road from the Collins bungalows. A gravel road, Hillside Close, was laid out through the wooded site and the first bungalows were arranged in two groups of six facing each other across a large central green. This green was deliberately left rough, as at Orchards Way, retaining the existing trees and bracken. A stone seat was erected, with a fanciful wrought iron arch over it, and memorial inscriptions carved on the back to W. J. Collins and his wife Mary, also to Herbert's first wife, Anne. W. J. Collins' ashes were scattered on the green.

The bungalows are built of rendered concrete blocks with brown plain tiled roofs. Each two-bedroomed bungalow cost about £400 to build and initially were let at a rent of five shillings a week. An unusual internal feature is a metal pipe picture rail running around the walls of the sitting room instead of the usual timber. Additional accommodation was added in 1960 when Hillside House, a two-storey block of fourteen flats, was opened. Herbert designed this in buff brick, with a shallow pitched copper roof and the block also included a common room with kitchen and toilets. A final block of twenty-six flats, Collins House, was built in 1972 forming a third side to the green between the two rows of bungalows. Although Herbert produced rough sketches of the scheme himself, in 1969, he felt that at 85 he was too old and out of touch with current building regulations to do the working drawings, so he collaborated with the architects Gutteridge and Partners. Collins House was officially opened in October 1972 jointly by W. J. Collins' great grand-daughter, Alison Fisher and Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Bran, long serving committee members of the Collins Memorial Trust. In 1980, the Trust was taken over by the Hanover Housing Society.



## BITTERNE MANOR HOUSE, SOUTHAMPTON

Bitterne Manor House stands on the east bank of the estuary of the River Itchen, about one mile north-east of Southampton city centre.

On the side of the Roman port of Clausentum a substantial stone manor house was built in the 12-13th centuries, one of many belonging to the Bishops of Winchester. It later declined in status, although still the centre of a large farm, but in the 19th century the house was "restored", enlarged and embellished as a Victorian country mansion. Bitterne Manor was for several decades the home of Sir Steuart MacNaghten and, after his death in 1895, of his daughter Lettice MacNaghten, who continued to live there until the outbreak of war in 1939.

Herbert Collins first became familiar with the house and grounds through Miss MacNaghten, who was an active campaigner for the humane slaughter of animals and in 1932 wrote a handbook on the subject entitled *Pistol v Poleaxe* (the original manuscripts were discovered in the cellars during his restoration of the house).

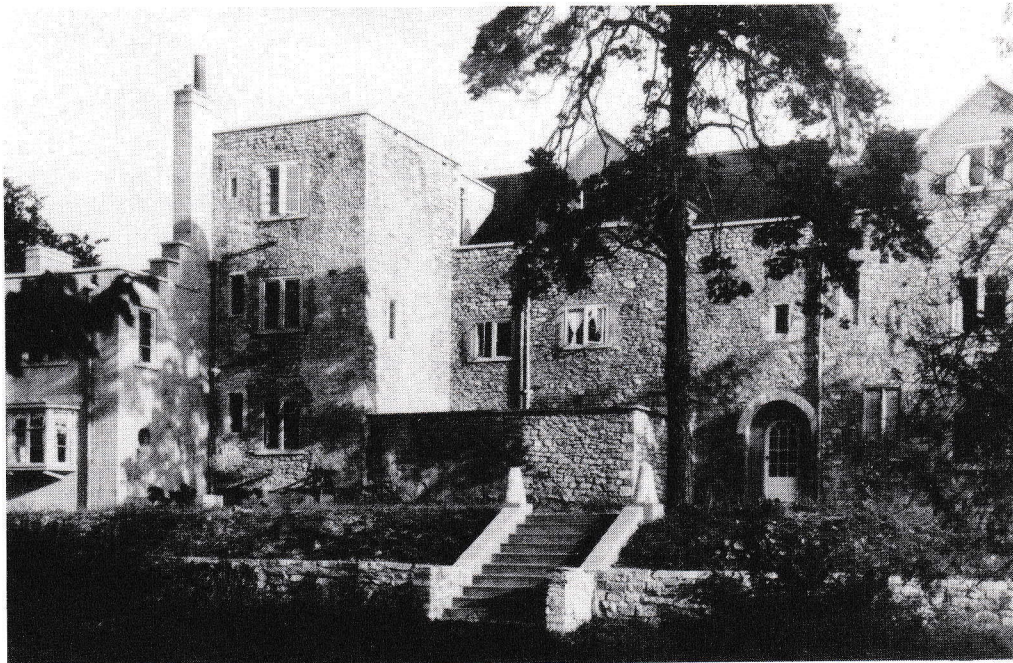
In 1899 most of the grounds were sold for suburban development and there were plans to demolish Bitterne Manor House to make way for more building and a recreation ground. However, the house survived, covered in ivy and hidden by trees from the main Southampton to Portsmouth road.

During the war incendiaries landed in the roof and a land mine fell in the garden, leaving the house in ruins. No attempt at shoring or temporary repairs was made and consequently the house rapidly decayed. Vandals destroyed much of the interior and the Victorian stucco peeled off to reveal the medieval walls. The house became a ruin and inspired a collection of sonnets by John Arlott and drawings by Michael Ayrton, which were published as the book *Clausentum* in 1946.

Miss Lettice MacNaghten applied for cost of works compensation under the War Damage Act but this was refused on the grounds that the building was beyond repair. Undeterred, Herbert prepared a scheme in 1948 for Miss MacNaghten to convert the house into fourteen flats. The local authority had scheduled the whole estate of about four acres, which was well wooded with a long river frontage, as a public open space in which the ruins were to remain. However, Herbert considered that sufficient of the medieval walls, including the north tower, remained intact to make a restoration worth attempting. His scheme used all the medieval stone walls as far as possible and also the remains of the two Victorian wings. Also included in the original scheme were a lodge cottage on Bitterne Road, two blocks of flats and garages between the house and main road, and an amphitheatre in the public open space facing the river.



*South elevation of Bitterne Manor House after reconstruction as fourteen flats.*



*North elevation, Bitterne Manor House after reconstruction incorporating the medieval square tower.*

Lettice MacNaghten died before the scheme could be carried out and in 1951 the house and grounds were put up for public auction with planning permission for three blocks of flats. Herbert remarked that he 'might go along to the sale to see who buys it', and ended up buying the property himself for £2,150! The local authority eventually approved his proposals on the condition that three-quarters of the estate was made a public open space.

His scheme, carried out in 1952-54, aimed at restoring the house to its original medieval form. All the Victorian features of porch, turrets and crenellated parapet were scrapped, the walls were restored to their original height, and the Portland stone corbels were sawn up and used as paving stones in the entrance hall. The stucco was removed, to reveal a thirteenth century pointed arch and six square-headed medieval openings in the north wall.

The walls, varying in thickness from 3'9" to 4'6", were made good with 1'6" wall faced with stone recovered on site and backed with a 4½" brick wall. A cement and lime mortar with grit aggregate was used. The new window frames and the architrave to the main entrance are of cast stone, giving the facade a neo-Tudor appearance.

Cutting into the old walls to form new windows was avoided as far as possible, which resulted in a wide variety of room sizes. All the flats have a living room, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms, except one of the flats in the attic storey which has only one bedroom. The plans of the west wing were amended to preserve the foundations of a Roman bath discovered on the site. The bath is divided into four sections and is left exposed, with a waterproof coping placed on the walls to preserve them. In contrast to the formal south entrance front, the north front facing the river is irregular and incorporates the remains of the medieval square tower.

The Ministry of Works took an interest in the building during the restoration and in 1953 the Inspector of Ancient Monuments wrote:-

"The work is going well, and I think you have succeeded in giving Bitterne Manor another lease of life without destroying or concealing much of the old which remained. The house must be approaching its eighth centenary.

"There is evidence of six major building periods including the new one, and you still have visible traces of five — all except that of the early nineteenth century.

"There can be few Norman houses which have so much old work to show after such a complicated history and you have caused it to flourish once more."

## THE COXFORD AND ROMSEY ROAD ESTATE, MAYBUSH, SOUTHAMPTON

After the Second World War, the local authority approached Herbert to design its first permanent post-war housing scheme at Maybush, on the north-western outskirts of Southampton. The site was bounded by Romsey Road and Coxford Road and sloped down to a small stream, Tanners Brook. Realising the potential of the site, Herbert produced a sketch scheme incorporating many different house types and variations, as on his earlier Uplands and Bassett Green estates. However, this was rejected by the local authority as unnecessarily complicated and expensive. Herbert largely handed over the scheme to his partner J. Norman Calton, who had recently returned to the office after the War.

J. Norman Calton produced a more acceptable standardised scheme using only four different house types — two mid-terrace and two end-terrace designs to suit both northerly and southerly aspects. They could be linked in pairs or in short terraces and arranged in a variety of groupings. The site layout follows Herbert's usual pattern, with cul-de-sacs, grass-bordered winding roads and open plan front gardens. Many of the houses are positioned to take advantage of open views over trees and allotment gardens towards the stream. Groups of houses are linked by brick walls enclosing the rear gardens and there is a system of footpaths in addition to the roads. The houses were built in a simplified 'Collins' style, with rendered concrete block walls, metal casement windows and simple panelled front doors. Building started along Coxford Road, and nos. 32-34 bear a plaque dated 1948. Nos. 17-19 Thorndike Road and nos. 7-8 Hardwick Close are both dated 1950.



*Thorndike Close, with housing arranged to overlook open space and stream.*