

Bathing Box

by Mike Rogers and others

The EM&HT leaflet *Warblington Walk – from shore to sea* distributed in late June/early July has prompted me to add to the Pook Quay/Wharf debate.

When I was editor of the *Langstonian Newsletter* for the Langstone Village Association, I was given a copy of a map dated 1870 and a press cutting from the *Hampshire Telegraph and Post* dated August 2, 1929 showing a photo of the proposed Havant Bathing Pool Scheme.

I published part of the 1870 map which showed a Bathing Box at the end of Pook Lane together with the press photo in Issue 18, May 2003 and asked:-

“What does this mean? Was it a box that filled with sea water for bathing, an area for mobile bathing huts (for ladies’ modesty) or was it, as most local people think, a wooden quay for unloading barges.”

I had replies from local historian, Ann Griffiths, and Dr John Chapman, retired lecturer in historical geography. They were published in the following issue of the *Langstonian Newsletter*.

From Ann Griffiths

“There does seem to have been a bathing box at Pook Lane Quay in 1856, as Charles Longcroft describes it in his *Hundred of Bosmere*, as ‘the remains of a hard or landing place’. However, in 1929 a Havant councillor proposed that the quay should be made into a swimming pool. It was to be enclosed by a concrete wall, with a sluice to enable the pool to be filled and emptied at each tide. Changing cubicles were to be operated by penny-in-the-slot automatic doors, which would help to cover maintenance costs and also ‘do away with some of the unseemly sights that were witnessed at the jetty’. The scheme was soon abandoned, as the site was found to be unsuitable.”

(There was a similar concrete swimming pool at Emsworth where I had school swimming lessons at the age of 10. Mike Rogers)

From Dr John Chapman

“On the subject of the ‘bathing box’ on the shore at Warblington, the enclosure map of Warblington fields of 1819 marks a ‘bathing house’ at this site. Bathing houses were built in many seaside resorts in the 18th and 19th centuries for those people who wanted the supposed health benefits of sea-bathing without actually venturing into the sea. The baths were filled with sea water when the tide came in, and the patrons could bathe in seclusion.

One existed at Point in Portsmouth, hence the street name ‘Bathing House Lane’. Possibly the one at Warblington was a speculative venture by someone attempting to cash in on the fashion. If so, the speculation obviously failed, and one assumes that the ‘box’ on the site was for the use of locals, rather than the fashionable clientele for whom the ‘houses’ were intended. It would be interesting to know who financed the original bathing house, and when, precisely, it ceased to exist in its original form.”

Mike Rogers continues

I was told by Noel Pycroft, the Hayling Island brick maker, that barges would collect local dredged sand, unload at the Pook Lane Wharf and load into horse pulled carts for onward journey to the Oval cricket ground. Such sand was reputed to be the best sand for maintaining the cricket pitch.



Pook Lane Quay in 2013