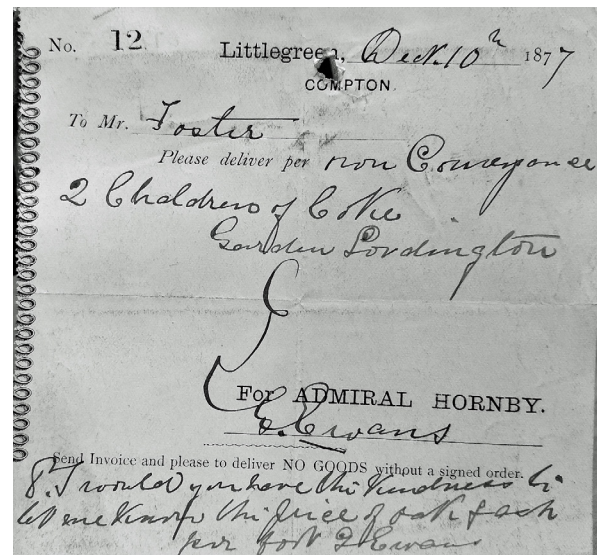


The Foster Collection by Philip Magrath

The Foster surname and its association with local coal and timber supply first appears in the 1852 Hunt & Co Directory under Havant but listed as Packer & Foster of King Street, Emsworth. By 1880 the business minus Packer – and flourishing – was run by William Foster who was listed in Kelly's 1880 Directory as a ship owner & timber & coal merchant of King Street, Emsworth. It is to this William Foster that much of this Emsworth Museum collection refers.

Broadly speaking, the collection features requests to the business for the supply of coal and timber not only to a variety of local venues but interestingly to some further afield. For example, to the Army & Navy Lamp, Signal & Binnacle Works, London Docks; the Harbour Dockyard, West Hartlepool and Earle's Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. in Hull. With a small fleet of coasters working out of Emsworth these must have represented good business opportunities for the company assuming that the vessels were laden with other supplies as well.



An order to Foster for 2 chaldrons (c.3 tons) of coke for the garden at Lordington, 10th December 1877

However, my personal interest lies in the local dimension with requests for supplies to two local manor houses, Lordington at Racton and Little Green at Compton both owned by the Phipps Hornby family.

Lordington House was built around 1500 with Sir Geoffrey Pole listed as an early owner. Other owners have included Hugh Speke in 1609, Sir John Fenner in 1623, Phillip Jermyn in 1630 and Richard Peckham c.1689 and his descendants. In 1734 the estate passed to Sarah Peckham who married Thomas Phipps in 1742. It then passed to her son Thomas Peckham Phipps, who died unmarried, but had bequeathed the estate including Little Green to his godson Admiral Sir Phipps Hornby (1785-1867).

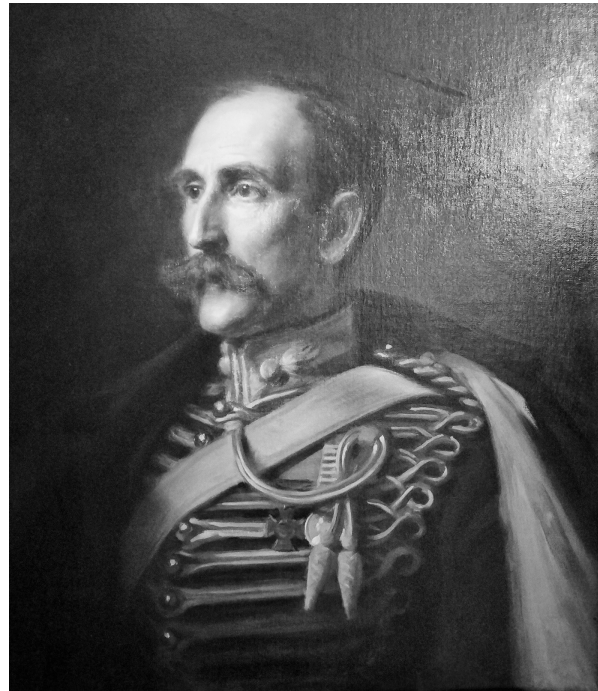
One of the Admiral's sons was Sir Geoffrey Thomas Phipps Hornby (1825-1895) who as a junior naval officer saw action at the capture of Acre in November 1840 during the Egyptian-Ottoman War.

As a captain, he was assigned to Vancouver Island with a naval brigade where he found a unit of United States troops ready to take over the San Juan Islands in a dispute that became known as the Pig War. Hornby used his powers of diplomacy to facilitate a peaceful handover of the islands to the United States.

He went on to enjoy a glittering career serving as Commander-in-Chief of the West Africa Squadron, the Flying Squadron and Channel Squadron. Later he became Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, President of the Royal Naval College, Greenwich and finally Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth.

Edmund John Phipps-Hornby, one of Sir Geoffrey's sons, was born at Lordington in 1857. He was to emulate his father's stellar career, this time in a military capacity with the Royal Artillery receiving the Victoria Cross along with four others for their action at Sanna's Post during the Second Boer War (1899-1902).

Following his return to the United Kingdom, Phipps-Hornby served as aide-de-camp to the Commander-in-Chief Lord Roberts and served during the First World War seeing action at Mons and at the battles of the Aisne and Armentières. He was granted the rank of Brigadier General upon his retirement in 1918 after 40 years of service and died in 1947.



Brigadier General Edmund John Phipps-Hornby VC, CB, CMG, DL (1857-1947). Photographed by H von Herkomer in 1903 as a Major. (By kind permission of the Royal Artillery Institute)

Lordington was sold to Sir Michael Hamilton in 1960 and it is now run as a Bed and Breakfast facility under the management of the Hamilton family. West Sussex County Council bought Little Green in 1948 and it was used as a children's home until it closed in 1956. Three years later it opened as Little Green Academy which it remains to this day.