

APPENDIX A

Sir William Randal Cremer – a man of Fareham

William Randal Cremer was born in West Street Fareham on the 18th March 1828 - just before Victoria came to the throne. He was the youngest of three children (there were two older sisters) but brought up into absolute poverty as his father had left the family soon after William was born. His mother was a devout Methodist and he attended a Wesleyan school.

He dropped his first name William and preferred to be called Randal. He proved to be a bright boy and well mannered. He was for a time a choirboy in the nearby Holy Trinity Church. Randal left school at 12 years old, first finding labouring work as a pitchboy in Saltern Shipyard, Fareham for 12 hours a day, six days a week until that business collapsed and his uncle took him on as an apprentice carpenter where he developed his skills to become a joiner cabinet maker.

The conditions under which he had started life were the real influence behind his burning desire to improve conditions of work and pay of ordinary working people such as himself.

His education was rather limited but he augmented his knowledge by attending free lectures but was particularly affected by the speeches and new ideas that he heard when he attended lectures at Institution Hall in Fareham - now Portland Chambers.

At the age of 24, now a journeyman carpenter, he was able to offer himself for hire to any employer and decided that - like Dick Whittington - he could make a better life for himself in London and so it was that in 1852 he found himself in the East End of London, which not only was overcrowded, there were violent extremes of poverty and above all stench from sewage from rotting entrails and so disease was rampant.

Cremer was inspired by another acquaintance for time, Karl Marx, to become part of the early trade union movement as he was so appalled at the working conditions in the building trades in which he was part and he is credited with helping to form the Amalgamated Union of Carpenters and Joiners and for campaigning for workers' rights and a nine hour day. This didn't make him popular and he, as they say, became a marked man and found it difficult to find work as a result.

However, in the midst of it all - and perhaps as a result of this - he became the leader of the Carpenters Union and a member of the London Trades Council which was later to evolve as the TUC.

Ironically too, London's East End had started to become the home of refugees escaping the turmoil of national conflicts in Europe. This was the time when Poland was fighting for Independence from Russia and Garibaldi was consolidating the city states in Italy. In fact, Cremer was instrumental in arranging the first visit of the new Italian President to London. This was critical time in the Franco Prussian War and Cremer was making his mark by advocating the solution to international problems was diplomacy rather than the force of arms. And so it was that the International Forum of Arbitration was formed through which Cremer was instrumental in persuading Parliament to keep Britain neutral during that War.

Although Britain wanted to exploit - and export - the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, Cremer was increasing anxious for our neighbouring countries who had fled from war torn Europe that the

conditions of their workers were even worse than those being experienced in Britain. As a result he founded the Workers Peace Association and throughout Europe, he persuaded Trade Unions to negotiate for better conditions without violence to encourage their governments to adopt these same principles.

This was all to be the starting point for Cremer's real International activities. He led a delegation to the USA and was instrumental in persuading the Senate to incorporate those principles in the Bill of Rights and whilst he was there he met the famous philanthropist and reformer, Andrew Carnegie. Cremer however, was a man on a mission. In London, he was a regular speaker at Speakers Corner in Hyde Park and there was only one place to go after all this crusading - and rebel rousing - the House of Commons.

Increasingly, it occurred to Cremer that labour should be actively represented in Parliament. He was defeated then and again in 1874. But after the third Reform Bill of 1885 created the new constituency of Haggerston in suburban London, which consisted almost entirely of workingmen, he was elected to Parliament in 1885, 1886, and 1892. Defeated in 1895, he was re-elected in 1900, retaining his seat until his death in 1908.

Randal Cremer was a pacifist and reformer who believed in dialogue as the means to peace and when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1903, immediately donated the prize money of £8,000 to the International Arbitration League.

In 1907 he was knighted but typically of the man he at first refused to accept the honour but relented only when he was formally excused from wearing Court Dress in order to receive it - and the assurance that he would not have to wear a sword - so strong were his peaceful beliefs.

Despite the acclaim he received during his lifetime, he never forgot his Fareham roots and in his will he bequeathed a financial settlement for four almshouses to be built in memory of his mother who had continued to live in Fareham watching from some distance how her early nurturing had guided his approach to life. His will states that these homes were to be provided for "the deserving poor of Fareham without reference or regard to race politics or creed".

The original almshouses were built on a site in West Street near to Fareham Fire Station but these were demolished to make way for the road widening and the new bridge over the A27. Under a 'land swap' arrangement with Fareham Borough Council and Hampshire Highways a deal was struck to build new almshouses in Stubbington Lane, Stubbington.

The financial terms under which residents occupy the cottages are determined by the trustees as a contribution to the present and future maintenance of the premises. However, as the 'new build' of the cottages in 1970 required little immediate capital outlay and with good financial management over the past 50 years the Trustees have established funds which allow further investment in the provision of more homes as decreed by Sir Randal himself. The development instigated by Fareham Borough Council in Portchester provides a perfect opportunity to achieve that end.

Apart from Cremer Cottages in Stubbington, the only public acknowledgement of his name as a 'son of Fareham' can be found in a blue plaque near his birthplace in West Street (nr to Kings Road) and 'Cremer Mall' in the Market Quay development.