

"PIG'S DOWN" OR "PUCK'S DOWN?"

AT the services in connection with the stone laying of a new Wesleyan Church at Pokesdown, the Rev. J. Edward Harlow indulged in some flights of fancy in regard to the origin of that somewhat lugubrious name. Mr. Harlow is a new comer to Bournemouth, and probably not aware of two facts:—First, that the name Pokesdown is not beloved by many of its modern inhabitants; and, second, that the derivation of it has been for a long time the controversy of men who had leisure in this hard world to trouble about such interesting trifles. He, however, like most literary men would be, was attracted by the possible similarity of the word "Poke" with "**Puck.**" and inclined to the pleasant thought that it came from the more fantastic and unreal origin than harder headed people would admit. It was very generous and imaginative on his part, and will perhaps somewhat soften the objections of some folk to the present name, but the blunt villager of the old days, days when Bournemouth was a two mile trudge away, and not much to be seen at that, always stuck to it stoutly that the name had some reference to the keeping of pigs. It is true that sonorously the word "Poke" possesses a similarity to "**Puck.**" and very little to "Fig," but one should not be misled by such similitudes, while Majoribanks is pronounced "Marchbanks," and Cholmondeley "Chumley." This, we know, that Hampshire has ever been a county famed for its predilections for

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"porkers," while it is not certain that "Puck" ever made its home there. If we are to accept the verdict of Mr. Rudyard Kipling, "Puck" is now resident in Sussex, and has been so for a large number of years. There is no reason, of course, why he should not have had his "downs" in various parts besides "silly Sussex," but there is no evidence that he visited the top of Pokesdown Hill. Certainly he was a "merry wanderer of the night, rough knurly limbed, fawn faced, and shock pated, a very Shetlander among the gossamer winged" fairies round him, and Mr. Kipling also gives him "pointy ears," but ancient inhabitants who crawl about with sticks, bask in the sunshine near the smithy, and gaze with lack lustre eyes on the new world of trams, motor cars, and traction engines around them, would shake their heads if asked whether they ever heard of "Puck" holding revels on what is now King's Park. Talk to the ancient one about pigs and his eyes might brighten, for in the joyous time before Pokesdown got its Urban Council, or was incorporated, one could keep pigs at will. Now there are bye-laws and regulations as to the "movements of swine," and a source of income has gone by the board in deference to the superior nostrils of villadom and the spread of health culture.

Meantime, whether it be "Pig" or "**Puck.**" there is an interesting, quiet and unrecorded struggle going on in the old district as to a name. It is true of Pokedown as of the rose—that it would be as nice under any name—but between the older settler and the new-comer there is an insidious campaign. The former are, for the most part, content with the ugly but lawful description. On the ordinance maps it is Pokedown with a capital P. The old governing body was known as the Urban District Council of that ilk, and the initials P.U.D.C. stamped on iron grids and flashing caps are like to stand so long as rust permits them. And moreover, when we use the word "lawful," are we not aware that the old name has the authority of "Mother Church." It is the Parish of Pokedown, and not long ago the late Mr. James Drutt, of Christchurch, in his old age, stoutly protested against any change being made in the ecclesiastical denomination, while the Rev. Dr. Moore White, the late vicar, was one of the leading opponents of the change of name agitation. St. James' Church, Pokedown, was good enough for him, and his view is held by many who stoutly adhere to the name and smile at new-fangled innovations. But it is certainly a little quaint that in this growing township there may be four people living in adjoining houses, each giving a different name to the locality, and each served with willing

indulgence by the postman and the tradesman. One man indites his correspondence bluntly Pokesdown. His next-door-neighbour calls it "Boscombe East." In the third house the young ladies write on scented notepaper "West Southbourne," and the man at the corner of the road says he lives in "Bescombe Park." And we have heard of "Stourfield Park" and "Stourwood." The puzzle is for the resident to know really where he does live, and it is all due to the fact that Pokesdown is not a very dainty name. The railway people have been asked to alter it, but they are not of a very imaginative turn of mind up at Waterloo, and put the ancient name still in letters a foot deep, to the annoyance of the "West Southbournite," or the "Boscombe Parkite," while the "Pokesdowner" chuckles. How the internal struggle will end it is hard to say, but old names have a way of sticking to a place, and there are some who, if all else failed, would defy an Act of Parliament and the Postmaster General and write Pokesdown until the pen was used for the last time. But in this matter of the derivation, has Mr. Barlow any facts to adduce? We rather reluctantly accept "Fig" as the origin, but would hail with joy decent showing that "pointy-eared Puck" had anything to do with it, though we don't believe in him a bit.

POKESDOWN.

"PINECLIFF" is the name decided upon by the Urban District Council as an alternative to **Pokesdown**, and the County Council have been asked to approve of it. Even then, the re-named district will still remain "in the parish of **Pokesdown**." A *plebiscite* was recently taken on the subject. No less than 791 voting papers were sent out, of which six were returned undelivered, and 102 blank or spoilt. Of the 102, fifty contained writing in favour of retaining the name of **Pokesdown**. The voting on the seven names submitted by the Council was as follows:—Pinecliff, 192; Boscombe park, 157; Pinehurst-on-Sea, 82; Stoureliff, 25; Avonhurst, 15; Havenbourne, 8; Portman park, 6.

Mr. Alderman Druitt, of Christchurch, on being appealed to as a ratepayer of **Pokesdown** for his opinion respecting the proposed re-naming of the place, wrote a letter in which he said he did not find "a tolerable one" amongst the seven suggested names. He added that **Pokesdown** was not a wood, nor was it a park, neither had it anything to do with the Stour, still less with the Avon, and there was no bourne within its limits. He thought the name **Pokesdown** was much better than any of those mentioned in the circular, and went on to say that **Pokesdown** had been in use a number of years, and that Pokesdown was the name which had been used in legal matters, and if changed future identification might prove difficult. He thought the inhabitants would be ill advised to change the name. With regard to the derivation of the name he said there were a great many downs in the neighbourhood, and instanced Moordown, Wallisdown, and other places. He said he thought **Pokesdown** was derived from Peaksdown, it being the first high ground above the level of the Stour. In conclusion, Mr. Druitt said that if **Pokesdown** had acquired an evil **reputation** let the Council endeavour to raise the character of the place and population, and let them make its name respectable, but to change the name to any one of those mentioned in the circular would cause confusion, and make, if he might venture to say so, a laughing-stock of the Council in the whole district to which its doings would extend.

From the "Parish Magazine."

We take the following from the October issue of "St. Katharine's Parish Magazine":

"The Archdeacon of Winchester paid an 'Official visit' on September 8th to the Vicar and churchwardens, and inspected the buildings and church property in their custody, and made inquiries as to parochial methods and progress. He expressed himself as highly pleased with the results of his visit, and complimented the Vicar on the present state of affairs, and on his 'remarkable and commendable broadmindedness' in the conduct of the parish! Oh, that kind-hearted people living in Pokesdown would realise the importance of learning their official postal address! I must have had hours and hours wasted during September by their thoughtless theft of another parish's address. Only to-day (September 14th) I have had three official inquiries about people living in Kimberley Road, Castlemain Avenue, and Alexandra Road, with a request for confidential information, 'signed by yourself as vicar of the parish in which they live.' And all because they gave their address as 'Southbourne,' and so their prospective employers wrote to the 'Vicar of Southbourne.' An Army official wrote me quite an indignant letter the other day, saying a certain soldier (from one of the above roads) was shown my letter, and declined to have it recorded that he lived in Pokesdown at all. The Army official suggested that perhaps I did not know all the roads in my parish, or perhaps I was unaware of its legal boundaries."

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THE CHANGE OF NAME.—The proposal to alter the name of Pokesdown to Stourbourne has given rise to much comment. The proposal does not seem to be popular. With some authority, the *Express* remarks :—" 'Stourbourne' is a very pretty name, is it not? Quite the reverse of the word 'Pokesdown,' and is one which we venture to say will meet with general approbation. This was the name selected in preference to many others submitted at a committee of the whole council, and at the next meeting of the Council that name will, we presume, be adopted by the Council. The name originates from the river Stour, which runs through the village of Iford, which will undoubtedly form the boundary line of the district in the near future, and the river Bourne, which runs through the centre of Bournemouth. One reason which guided the selection of this name was that there is no other town in the United Kingdom of the same name, and, considering all things, we think a more suitable one could not be found." The *Guardian*, on the other hand, falls foul of "Stourbourne." It says: "Pokesdown—said to be derived from 'Pigedown' of former times—is certainly not an attractive name for a pretty place, but the substitution of 'Stourbourne' which has a somewhat repellant sound about it, would simply be an alteration without any improvement, in addition to which the similarity in title to the adjoining suburb, Southbourne, might lead to some confusion. If this is the best effort of the committee, after calm and long consideration at a special meeting, it may be said that verily the mountain, after being in labour, has brought forth a mouse." Mr. Editor goes on to offer a half-crown prize to a schoolboy to suggest a suitable name, promising to submit the list sent in to the District Council. "An Old Resident" also writes to the Press upon

the subject. In his letter, he says: "In the first place, the Stour is a fair sized river, and 'bourne' signifies a stream or rivulet, consequently it would be absurd to combine the two. Secondly, we have no end of bournes, then why add another to the long list? Boscombe park is generally applied to a considerable portion of the parish, and it is pretty generally known as such. People in giving their addresses usually write 'Boscombe park, near Bournemouth,' but if this name does not satisfy many residents, why not have Portman cliff? Lord Portman has been liberal in giving us the 'Fisher-man's Walk,' also donations on two occasions for the construction of the steps down the cliff, and this would be a favourable opportunity to make a graceful return for his lordship's kindness." To say that there is no other place in the kingdom of the same name as Stourbourne is quite correct, but there are a host of place names with which it might be confounded, because of its similarity of sound, to wit, Stourpaine, Stourbridge, Stourmouth, Stourport, Stourton, Stourhead, &c.; whilst 'bourne' might be found as a part of the name of scores of places, there being six river Stours in England.

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a change of name for that rising district to the west of Christchurch, known through long years as **Pokesdown**. Some inhabitants have begotten a fancy that their locality suffers through a name they have got to believe is deficient in euphony and attractiveness; others declare that the place is without a "down," and are gulled by the far-fetched association of "pokes" with "pigs"; others continue to love the old name, and quote from "The Deserted Lover" that "often change doth please a woman's mind," insinuating that the new-fledged government is as yet still in its days of effeminacy and caprice. The local authority is taking a *plebiscite* for a new name, and rumour has it that "Pinehurst-on-Sea" is popular. **Pokesdown** boasts of its pines, its wood, and its sea-front—all of which are indicated by the proposed new name. But, will ever "Pokesdown" sink into oblivion? Nay,

"When this body falls in funeral fire,

My name shall live, and my best part aspire."

Old names, like old prejudices, die hard; the major part of mankind loves everything that's old. The origin of most proper names, which came down to us from remote times, is lost in an obscurity impossible to penetrate. Ingenious cogitation may do its best, selecting some specimens to work upon, and yet have to confess itself baffled. An enthusiast like

RE-NAMING POKESDOWN.

SIR,—Should our neighbours at Pokesdown decide on changing the name of their district they might consider the suitability of

BROOKSDOWN.

I forbear argument because, unless the appropriateness of a proposed name is fairly obvious, it should be discarded as a failure.

N.W.

Boscombe, October 2nd, 1898.

SIR,—Will you allow me in your columns to refer to the above matter. There have been several suggestions which have taxed your space already, but you will no doubt, on what is unquestionably an important topic within the confines (and perhaps outside) of the district ruled over by the members of our Urban District Council, allow still a little more room for ventilating the matter. We want a name of good substantial and attractive sound, also one which shall add status to our rapidly rising district. If the present name is not satisfactory (and of course on this point opinions differ, and will continue to do so) let us have a change and that a good one. Now, Mr. Editor, in thinking of a name and one which has not yet been brought forward, Richmond-on-Sea occurred to me as being one that would answer the requirement and the demands to be made upon it.

It has also the status given it by its being the name of one of the prettiest and best known Thames side resorts out of London. It has further the advantage of being on the same railway system, nearly the end in one direction, whilst we should as a neighbourhood with the sister name be a seaside resort on the same system, but on the south coast. I would suggest further that the vicar of the parish, the Rev. Moore White, D.D., be interviewed and the question of his influence in getting the desired alteration of the name ecclesiastically be discussed, if this should be a necessity, and that he also be asked to call a meeting or to preside over one, so as to gauge the public feeling again, and perhaps on the name in question, viz., Richmond-on-Sea. I just launch the idea and trust I have not trespassed too much on your valuable space.—I am, yours truly,

W. G. W. CLIBBETT.

6, Lawson Terrace, Pokenwood.

THE NEW NAME.—In an article in the *Parish Magazine*, the Rev. Dr. Moore White says the question of **re-naming** the district has been “sprung upon the ratepayers,” and believes it would have been better to give three months’ notice of the intention to take a poll. “Public opinion would then have had time to form, and fade to die a natural and becoming death. . . . The fact that the Council proposes such a long list of heterogeneous **names**, some of them adopted on the spur of the moment, is in itself evidence that the matter is not ripe for decision. If there is to be a change of **name**, Boscombe Park, or Boscombe East, seems to us to be the most suitable. All England knows and appreciates ‘Sunny Boscombe,’ with its dry soil, bright skies, invigorating climate, and beautiful surroundings. The ecclesiastical parish of Pokesdown includes the greater portion of Boscombe. . . . and as a matter of fact for all practical purposes none can tell where Boscombe ends and **Pokesdown** begins.” The Vicar’s letter has called forth several rejoinders. One writer asks “where is the park?” and urges that the district should be quite distinct from “Boscombe,” arguing in favour of “Pinehurst-on-Sea.”

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RE-NAMING POKESDOWN.

Sir,—Allow me to suggest as an alternative to the name Pokesdown that we should substitute for it the name "Maybourne." I think the pronouncement of the name "Maybourne" would follow well in rhyme, and would be a much prettier name than Pokesdown. For instance, Southbourne, Maybourne, Boscombe, Bournemouth, and Westbourne.—

Yours faithfully,

MARK BRIANT.

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POKESDOWN RESIDENTS NOT PROUD OF NAME

"Pokesdown (Hants) is an ugly name, and should be wiped off the map."

This passage was contained in a letter to Bournemouth Chamber of Trade.

"We are not proud of it," said a member of the Chamber.

Another member, however, recalled that the name was derived from "Pixies Down," which he thought was poetical.

The highly respectable name of West Southbourne was suggested as a substitute.

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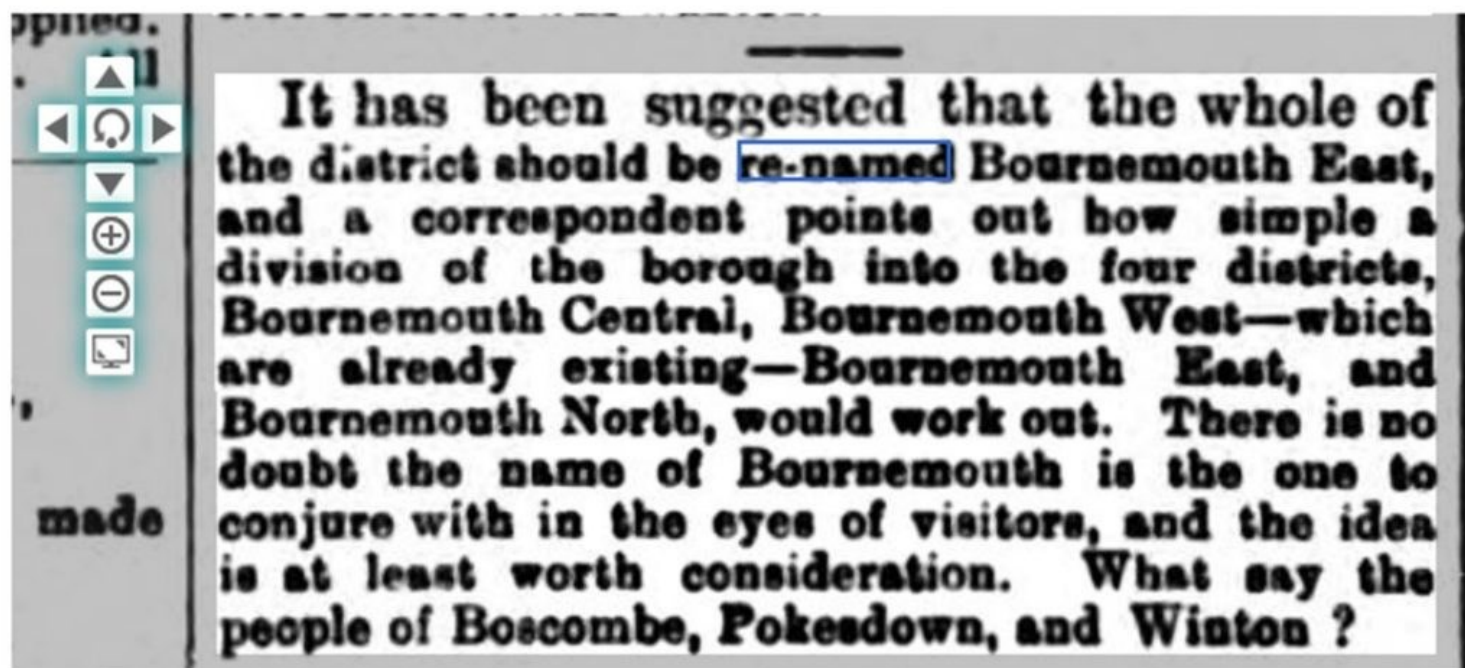
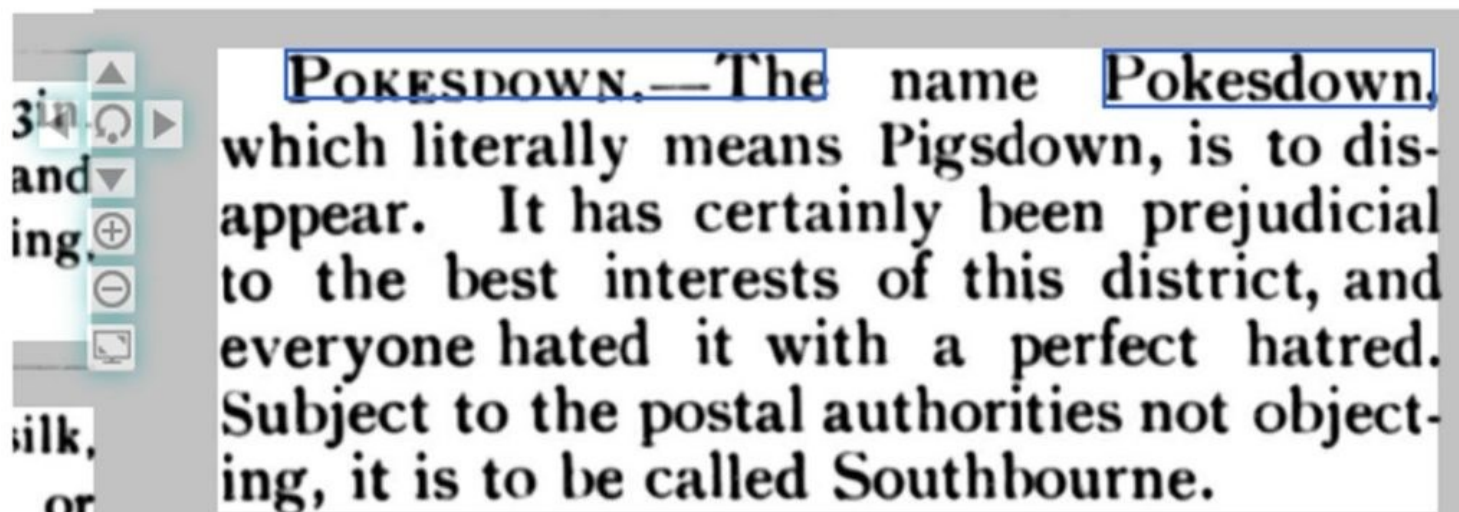


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POKESDOWN STATION TO BE RE-NAMED.

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Mr. Owens, the general manager of the London and South Western Railway Company, has promised that the name of the railway station at Pokesdown shall be altered to Southbourne at once provided that there is no opposition from the postal authorities. The name Bournemouth is also to appear on the notices of all stations within the Borough. A deputation from the Corporation consisting of Aldermen Bolton and Lawson, and Councillor Elcock met Mr. Owens, and pointed out the desirability for improving the present Pokesdown Station, or its removal to a more convenient situation; also the need for providing a goods department. Mr. Owens promised that at an early date he would visit the station with the engineer, to enable him to advise the directors what course to take, and also promised to carefully consider the suggested extension of the free delivery limits to all parts of the Borough. These are concessions of some importance, for which the town should be grateful.

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ANCIENT NAME LOST

Link with Puck and the Fairies Severed by Bournemouth Council's Choice

Pokesdown the ancient name of which is derived from "Puck's Down" where, legend has it, fairies used to dance, is to be known in future as Bournemouth East.

Residents objected to the name on the ground that **Pokesdown** was not known to be part of Bournemouth. And so the Borough Council yesterday acceded to the Southern Railway's request to change the station's name.

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NEW SUPER CINEMA FOR BOSCOMBE

THE ASTORIA TO OPEN ON
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Enterprising Owner-Builder at
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Six months ago not a solitary brick indicated that another handsome super cinema structure was about to rise in one of the most populated areas of Bournemouth East. To-day, there stands a most on the point of completion a fine new cinema built on the most up-to-date lines to accommodate 1,500 patrons in almost super comfort.

The new building has been named the Astoria and stands on the main Christchurch Road, at the corner of Queensland Road, between Pokesdown Station and Parkwood Road.

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Day and Eve
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Pokesdown history plaque on Pokesdown Green, next to the Bell Inn.

Photo taken for RPBC, 15th April 2021.

<https://roseberypark.org/history/pokesdown-name/>