

## **CHASE family history with links to Dodnor and West Medina Cement Mills**

**Isle of Wight. Prepared by Richard Chase in February 2019**

### **Summary**

Frederick Henry CHASE (b. 1902 d. 1974) was married to Norah Eileen CHASE nee CUSACK (b. 1907 d. 1984) and they lived at 2, Dodnor Cottages, Dodnor Lane, Newport from 1935 to when they died.

Frederick CHASE worked as a Lorry Driver at the West Medina Cement Mills from 1931 to 1967 until retirement. He served during WW2 in the RAF. Norah CHASE worked in the Cement Mills canteen.

Their son, Frederick William CHASE (b.1928 d. 2005), upon leaving school at the age of 14 years, briefly worked as an apprentice fitter in the Cement Mills, but the draw of the Sea was fulfilled by him joining the Merchant Navy in 1942, setting off in the MV Ferrocrete from the Mills Wharf, still 14 years of age.

Richard Frederick CHASE (b. 1953) was their Grandson, who spent the majority of his childhood from 1961 to 1969 at Dodnor, so recalls many adventurous times; fishing, boating and playing in The Old Kilns and the Cement Mills derelict site.

### **Frederick Henry CHASE**

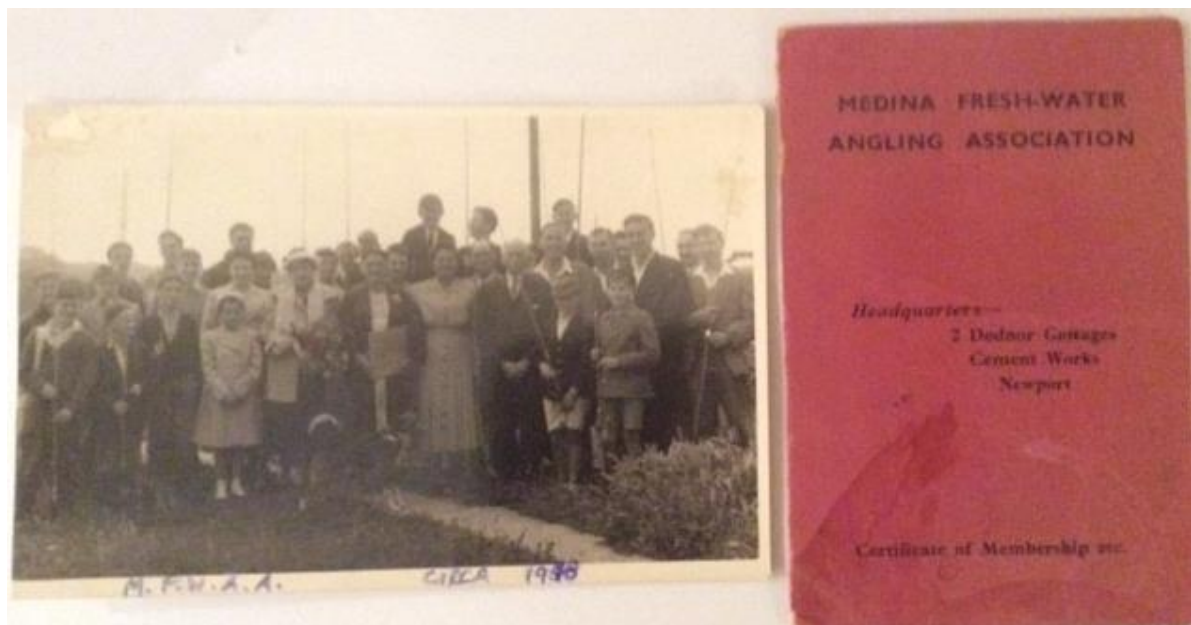
Frederick H. CHASE grew up in Gosport and joined the newly formed Royal Air Force at the age of 17 yrs in 1919, training as an Aero Rigger. In the 1920's RAF service took him abroad to Karachi. He was a good footballer and the family still have a cup and trophy from that period. It is believed he may have played for Newport Football Club in the 1930's, but this cannot be verify.

Fred married another Gosport resident – Norah E. CUSACK in 1927 and they moved to the Isle of Wight, living in Trafalgar Road, Newport. Fred worked as a Lorry driver for a Coal Merchants until 1931, when he gained employment as a Lorry Driver at the Cement Mills.

In 1935 they moved the 2, Dodnor Cottages, Dodnor Lane and the Landlord was "The Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers Ltd". The house was located across the Causeway (known locally as The Bank) adjacent to a large pond, which became known as "Chase's Pond". Their initial tenancy agreement is in the possession of the family, which shows a weekly rent of Eight Shillings and Six Pence. Incidentally, although the Cement Company is the Landlord, other documentation relating to a fishing rights licence granted to the Chase's, indicate the area was in fact owned by The Queens College, Oxford.

## **Fishing**

This pond was very popular with local fisherman, as it was well stocked with Carp and other freshwater fish. In the 1940's The Medina Freshwater Angling Association was formed and its meeting room was in the Chase's house, with Mr and Mrs Chase selling drinks and crisps to anglers both young and old. Annual cups and trophies were awarded and the family still have items of interest – Cups, Fish weighing scales and the hand bell which was kept at the front door. There is a photograph of Fred and Norah plus fisherman of all ages circa 1948, believed to include the Mayor of Newport. In the 1960's some anglers names are known to be Arthur Brewer, Mr Neat, Max and of course Richard Chase, their Grandson. The club discontinued in the 1970's mainly owing to Mr and Mrs Chase becoming elderly and the decline of fish stocks.



Medina Freshwater Angling Association c 1948

The upper reaches of the pond (beyond the railway viaduct) was always full of reeds, but the main pond was open water. During a great storm in the late 1950's a flood occurred, resulting in a huge amount of reeds being embedded in the main pond, but fortunately this made fishing easier around the edges. Dodnor Cottages were also flooded.



Pond prior to great flood

The pond suffered during high spring tides when saltwater flowed over the Bank from the River Medina, which during more recent years contaminated the pond with silt and inhibited fish growth. However, the bird life flourishes with Swan, Duck, Coot, Moorhen and Heron breeds most evident.



Dodnor Cottages circa 1960s

The River Medina was also an attraction for sea water fishing from the Bank and using small boats, often stored in the Chase's garden. Commercially, an elderly man named Len Sheaf would set nets across the river and catch good quantities of Plaice and Flounders, which he sold from his fruit and vegetable van in Newport and surrounding areas.

## Cement Mills

Both Fred and Norah Chase worked at the Cement Mills; Norah in the canteen (dates n/k) and Fred drove Lorries there. Initially flat-bed HGV's carried bags of cement to all parts of the Island and in the 1960's the Cement Mills also distributed bulk cement storing it in a large silo. Fred subsequently drove a tanker lorry and his Grandson, Richard Chase remembers very clearly joining his Grandad in the lorry cab during school holidays.

The cement company later named The Blue Circle Group, was regarded as a good employer and recognised its drivers with regular awards, mainly RoSPA (Royal Society Prevention of Accidents) annual medals for having an accident free period. Fred received many medals and clasps over the years, including an engraved tankard in 1960 for the 20 years RoSPA safe driving award.



In February 1967 Fred retired and he and Norah had attended in 1966 a staff long service dinner in London (St. Ermins Hotel, Westminster).





He also received a Clock and Certificate recognising his 37 years' service. This later presentation took place in the Cement Mills Office by the area manager from Southampton – Mr Marsh and a photograph of this occasion clearly shows the old disused concrete storage silo's in the distance through a window.

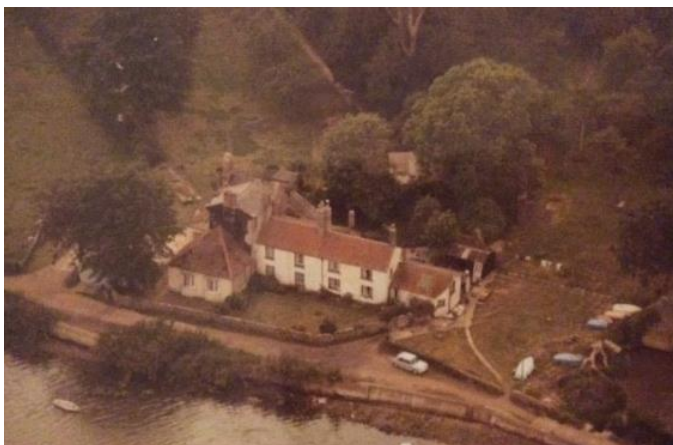


### **Life after retirement**

During retirement Fred worked in various jobs; serving petrol at the garage top of Dodnor Lane, Lolly Pop man and other general work. He would walk his dogs each evening to check the site and often found trespassers from courting couples to thieves looking for scrap metal. During this period it was distressing to see rabbits suffering from the Mixomatosis disease. Fred died in 1974 at their Dodnor home. Norah continued to live at Dodnor, but passed away in Fairlee Hospital in 1984.



Fred and Norah Chase during retirement



Dodnor Cottages in 1974

### Their Son – Frederick William CHASE

Frederick CHASE (Fred junior and known as Freddie) was born in Trafalgar Road, Newport in 1928 and in 1935 moved with his parents to 2, Dodnor Cottages, so in his words, he enjoyed the freedom of an outdoor lifestyle. As WW2 started his father was called up by the RAF and Freddie remembers making camouflage nets at school to support the war effort. He had talked of swimming across the river and generally was allowed to roam wherever he wished. Below is a photograph dated 1939 of the Parkhurst School Swimming Club and Freddie is in the second row down, fourth from the left.



Fred Chase senior  
on leave during  
WW2

In 1942 at the age of 14 years Freddie became an apprentice fitter at The Cement Mills, but he was always drawn to the Sea. He recalled working with Ray Apple in the Engineers Shop but Ray soon left to join the Navy. Freddie's parents were friendly with some of the Ships Masters that delivered cement and materials, in particular Captain Watts of MV Hanna, which was a 3 masted schooner with the main mast converted to also be a crane. There was also Captain





Draper of the MV Ferrocrete (above), a vessel owned by the Cement Company. He agreed to take Freddie to join the Merchant Navy, so still at the age of 14 years Freddie left the Mill Wharf and set off to Southampton to obtain his Merchant Navy Seamans Registration. Freddie remained on this ship as it was requisitioned by the War Ministry, to become a RFA ammunition barge.

Freddie's Merchant Navy career was very eventful on various ships; Arctic Convoys; Torpedoed off South Africa; D-Day plus 3 on an ammunition ship and finally crewing on a Hospital Ship bring prisoners of war back from Cherbourg and later Singapore to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley.

At the age of 18 years in 1947 Freddie joined the Royal Marines and served for 12 years. In 1961 he became a Prison Officer and was posted to HMP Parkhurst, so returned to the Isle of Wight this time with his wife Ann, daughter Julie and son Richard Chase, author of this article.



Freddie Chase as a Royal Marine  
L/Cpl in 1948

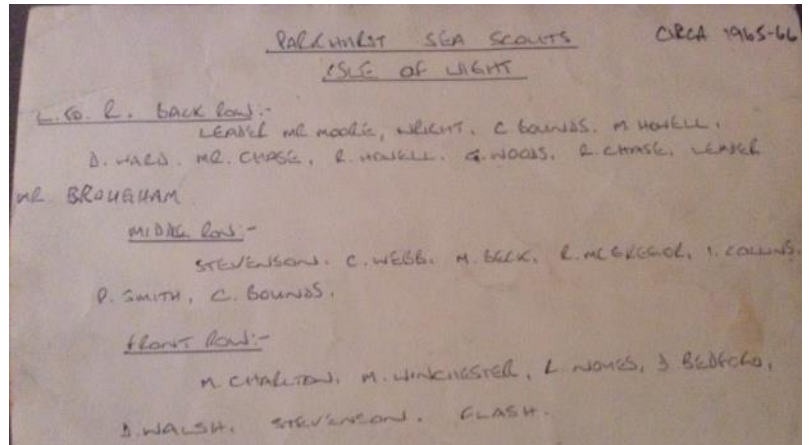
Freddie retired in 1974 when living on the mainland. He always spoke of his childhood at Dodnor as happy days and was a prolific writer, penning much of his memories for family history. He died in 2005.

### **Grandson - Richard Frederick Chase**

Richard Chase (b. 1953) grew up in Parkhurst and at Dodnor between 1961 and 1969. He attended Hunny Hill Junior School and Priory Boys Secondary Modern School in Carisbrooke. Much of his play time was spent at Dodnor and around the then former Cement Mills, including the old Kilns, with the site by the late 1960's becoming very derelict. He remembers many good times at



Dodnor from fishing, rabbit shooting and snaring, sailing and rowing on the river. A new Sea Scout troop was formed – 1<sup>st</sup> Parkhurst Sea Scouts – led by two Prison Officers with naval experience and about 20 Scouts. Its outdoor activities were based at Dodnor and Fred Chase senior supported activities. Two ‘eights’ rowing boats (wooden clinker built) were acquired and in the late 1960’s the teams won trophies at the annual Folly Regatta’s. The photograph taken in circa 1965 shows the Scout Troop with Fred Chase and one of their black Labradors named Flash. His Grandson, Richard is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Scout to his left.



**Boating capsized incident**

On the 7 June 1954 Freddie, who was then a Royal Marine Corporal, visited his parents at Dodnor with his wife and 1 year old son – Richard, when it was decided to borrow his father’s rowing boat and have a trip along the river. The dingy contained his mother Norah, wife Ann, baby son Richard and a friend. As the boat was negotiating a bend opposite The Folly Inn it took in water and capsized. Fortunately East Cowes Sea Cadets were on the east shore and helped to rescue them all. It resulted in Richard being revived in a hot bath in the Pub and this story featured in the Portsmouth Evening News Newspaper headlined “Southsea Family in island Rescue Drama”.

**The Evening News**  
AND SOUTHERN DAILY MAIL, Portsmouth  
No. 23,977 (78th Year) MONDAY, JUNE 7, 1954 (Three Halfpence)

**VP** with TV  
Wight Final  
A. R. BERRY  
310, FAWCETT ROAD  
TILED FIREPLACES  
From £3-10-0 Complete

**GRANDMOTHER, BABY, RESCUED AS DINGHY CAPSIZES**

**RACING TRIM**  
Gainers prepare their punts for competition in the Lymington regatta boat off Medway, S.E. COES

**Southsea Family in Island Rescue Drama**

ONLY prompt action by rescuers prevented a Whitsun pleasure jaunt by four persons and a 13-month-old baby in an outboard dinghy on the River Medina, near Newport, from becoming a tragedy.

Corporal F. Chase, of the Royal Marines Amphibious School, Portsmouth, borrowed his father's dinghy to take his wife Ann, their son Richard, his mother, Mrs. N. E. Chase, and a friend, Mr. R. J. Allbrighton, for a trip.

A gull of wind capsized the dinghy.

Chase and Mrs. Chase and their son had been home at Flat 3, 11, Waverley Road, Haslemere, the previous day to spend Whitsun with the Corporal's parents at 3, Osborne Cottage, near the ground covered with on the River Medina.

It was as they were returning home when they had launched the boat, which had an outboard motor, that it overturned. Mrs. Chase and Mr. Chase had been for a swim, but a gust of wind capsized the boat as they crossed the river.

They slipped water and were rescued by a party of seven, the weight of the motor dinghy being 150 lb.

**Cap sized**  
The dinghy was overturned and the motor was damaged.

**BRIGHT PERIODS**  
Weather forecast for 14 hours beginning Sunday. Mainly or drizzle with occasional sun. Sea calm. Wind light. High 4.5. Low 2.5. Rainfall 0.1. Wind force 1. Direction variable.

**Continued from Page 1**

**WYMERING HEROISM AS HOME BLAZES**  
NEIGHBOURS are talking in Washbrook Road, Wymering, Portsmouth, about the fireman and the man in a white shirt who

**NIGHT ATTACK ALLEGED**



## **The Railway**

The steam trains run from 1862 to closure in 1966 and the locals from Dodnor and Stag Lane would also use the Cement Mills Halt, which had been mainly for employees over the decades. For Newport bound train's passengers would have to wave down the train. When at Newport for Cowes bound trains, those that required stopping at The Halt would ask the engine driver to stop there and then passengers would sit in the front carriage. On occasions young children have been known to be allowed to accompany the driver on the engine footplate.

Richard Chase remembers hiding with mates in the Railway Viaduct as a train travelled closely overhead. Lads would also place a penny coin on the rail to have it squashed flat and became much larger.

The Cement Mills site had an abundance of rusty ball bearings laying around, so they were ideal for catapults and unfortunate pigeons roosting in the roofs were often targets.

## **Well known local**

Hoppy Walker (nicknamed owing to a limp) lived in a cottage on a bend in Stag Lane near to a reservoir. Sadly his only son, who was RAF aircrew, was killed in WW2 and to commemorate this event Hoppy made a magnificent Propeller which was in the garden. He also made concrete garden gnomes and ornaments, which he sold painted or as bare concrete. Hoppy passed away in the 1970's.

## **Dodnor Cottages**

Old OS maps and census records show a house named Dodnor Lodge, where over decades the Cement Mills Manager lived, but at some stage this large house was divided into two and renamed No. 1 and No. 2 Dodnor Cottages. Other old buildings also remained consisting of sheds and a small structure on the pond edge known as The Laundry. In the garden was evidence of other former structures which match OS map building shapes. The Orchards and grounds also contained former pigsties and water pumps. The Chase's recalled the presence of old horse harnesses and carriage lamps when they first rented their cottage in the 1930's. There remains a line of disused telegraph poles along the edge of the pond, which presumably enabled communications between the Cement Mills and Dodnor Lodge.

The house was made of thick concrete walls, so it was always assumed the building materials came from the Cement Mills, with its endless supply of cement. Electricity was not installed until the late 1950's and up to then occupants used tilly oil lamps and a wood/coal fired range, along with paraffin primus stoves.

No. 1 Dodnor Cottage lived generations of the McDine family;

No. 2 Dodnor Cottage lived the Chase family as outlined.

In about 1986 the whole property was demolished and replaced by two large separate houses, now privately owned.