

# The Researcher

Newsletter of the  
West Sussex Archives Society  
The Friends of  
West Sussex Record Office



January 2011

## New Year - New Beginning

A Most Happy New Year to all our Readers

WSAS has sensationally enhanced its member communication for the new year with the advent of a **new website**. It is also hoped the new website will be one of the cornerstones of our drive to attract even more members to the society. It is available to everyone at:-

<http://westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net>

No. 72

## Forthcoming Events

### Events 2011

February 12th Halnaker House presentation - Dr Andrew Foster

March 26th 'Parish Registers: the other side'

April 9th AGM, to be held at Capron House, Midhurst

May - Joint Meeting with the friends of East Sussex Record Office. Details to follow.

June 11th Wey & Arun Canal boat trip

Any queries about this newsletter or questions for West Sussex Archives Society please email [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

## West Sussex Archives Society



[Home](#) [About us](#) [Membership](#) [Events](#) [Research](#) [Links](#) [Jrnls/Newsletters](#) [WSRO](#)

### The Friends of West Sussex Record Office

The Friends are people who use the Record Office or who wish to help and support in its work of preserving the wonderful archival heritage of West Sussex



President: Lord Egremont  
Chairman: Caroline Adams

Contact us directly: -  
[wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

WSAS WEBSITE Homepage

The website houses a great deal of information including news on WSAS events throughout the year, past issues of our newsletter and an index of articles that have appeared in our journal *Family History* with information on how to order past issues. Also using the website the society is very keen to host the research of our members and we hope to see the research page full of articles as the year progresses. Please also remember that we are always looking for articles from members to appear in the newsletter as well! All such articles and research can be submitted very easily to the society (word documents preferably) using the WSAS email address: -

wsascom@btinternet.com

Further the new year heralds our move to electronic distribution for our newsletter. If you have received a paper copy of *The Researcher* then that is because we do not have an email address for you at this time. Please, if you are receiving paper copies and do have an email address please forward your address to our email address above. Obviously for those of you who do not have an email address we will continue the paper distribution.

We very much hope you are excited by our changes and we welcome your comments and ideas using our email address; wsascom@btinternet.com.

Barrie Keech

---

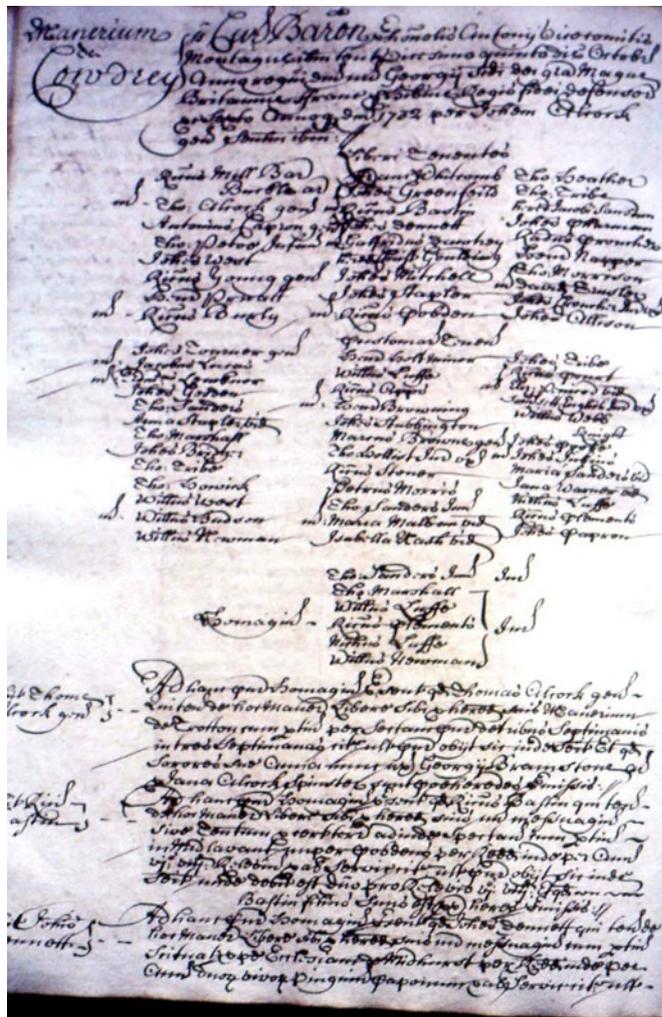
## The Manorial Documents Register Project

The Manorial Documents Register (MDR), kept at The National Archives (TNA) identifies the nature and location of manorial records in England and Wales. It was started after the abolition of manors in 1925, when it was recognised that manorial documents would still give evidence of title, and therefore needed to be located and cared for.



Bailies Court detail (1606)

The MDR is partially computerised – Wales, the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, the three Ridings of Yorkshire, Surrey, Middlesex, Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire North of the Sands, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire are available online (see TNA website). However the majority of the counties have not yet been computerised and information is still only available by visiting TNA or writing in with an enquiry. The project takes a county at a time, turning the original handwritten information slips into a digitised form, and then checking and amending the entries.



A page of the Cowdray Manor Court Book 1732

It is now the turn of Sussex to be computerised – for the purposes of this project, West and East Sussex are treated as one county by TNA. Christopher Whittick at ESRO is to be overall project officer for Sussex. He will get the project going, and then concentrate on East Sussex. At West Sussex, the checking and amending will be carried out by several staff at West Sussex Record Office, using Excel and Access databases that are already set up.

WSAS received a letter from the MDR in the summer, asking if we would consider making a grant towards the cost of this project, but at present this may not be necessary. However, the staff would appreciate some help from anyone who is very familiar with manorial documents. This is because there may be some amongst uncatalogued accessions, which will need finding and identifying, and that may take more time than staff can spare. Many entries will need palaeographic and diplomatic skills to confirm them, so this work is not for the faint-hearted. If you can offer this sort of help, which would start in the summer of 2011, Caroline Adams would love to hear from you (Caroline.adams@westsussex.gov.uk). There may be some remuneration available from TNA, depending on the level of your skills.

# Chairman's Thoughts

Many people are wondering how the local government financial settlement will affect the Record Office. Keiran Stigant, the new Chief Executive of the County Council wrote last year that: 'The fact is that the financial climate we are in, means our ability to continue to provide services in the way we have done in the past will be increasingly constrained. We all know we need to face up to the fact that resources are scarce'.

It is still too early to say how the Record Office will be affected, but it will certainly involve changes in the staffing structure. The County Council's Financial Services Review is in its third year of implementation, and this will still run alongside changes made to staffing levels in the County Council.

The Archives Society has therefore been looking carefully at its spending priorities, and would like your feedback. There are two sorts of expenditure:

- Membership activities (newsletter, journal, meetings), which are self-financing from subscriptions and charges.
- Support for the Record Office. At the moment, this takes the form of paying for purchases of documents or archives that the Record Office could not afford itself. The new WSAS website (<http://westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net>) has a list of the purchases that WSAS has helped with in the past.

Personally, I would like to see WSAS further support WSRO by paying for small things such as subscriptions to genealogy websites for use in the searchroom, and laptops for volunteers. These are not items that the County Council would consider core funding, and yet they are a necessary aspect of life in the searchroom, and they make it much easier for searchroom staff to do their jobs.

I would suggest that we should try to raise £300-400 each year and spend the money on WSRO. One of the ways the Society intends to do this soon, is through the WSAS booksale. Both the Record Office and the society committee would be very grateful for offers from members to help organise fundraising ventures.

**The WSAS Booksale.** There are a large number of books and maps collected in various nooks and crannies around the Record Office, for a WSAS booksale. It could be our major fund-raiser for 2011. We are hoping to hold it in the Record Office reception in mid to late February.

Caroline Adams

# News from the Record Office

## The new file store

West Sussex Record Office is taking a new lead in one of the County Council's initiatives. The Council is in the middle of an accommodation strategy, and is reducing the number of buildings from which it operates. County Hall North in Horsham has taken in many staff from scattered buildings in the Horsham and Crawley area, and the reduced storage space has meant that a lot of records have to be re-homed. This is a records-management function and therefore the responsibility of the Record Office. The records include tens of thousands of Adults and Children's Services directorate files. WSRO has been involved in kitting out a new storage unit at Willow Park in Chichester. 70,000 files will be coming in there, but they are still only part of a larger problem still to be tackled.

## Coffee time sessions

The Record Office has started a new outreach initiative with coffee time sessions on the first Wednesday of the month. Each session starts at 10 o'clock, and runs for an hour or longer, depending on the topic. Leaflets with a list of the proposed topics for 2011 are available from the Record Office and on its website. The topics were chosen from suggestions on feedback forms from past events, and cover subjects such as 'Family History on the computer', 'How to read old handwriting', 'Army records', 'Dating old photographs'. The cost is £7.00 – ring the Record Office on 01243 753602, or go on the website: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro) and click through 'leisure', 'explore West Sussex' 'record office and archives' and 'events'.



Coffee Morning Session

## **New project for SASE [Screen Archive South-East]**

Screen Archive South East has received a grant of £135,000 from the Screen Council for the Revitalising the Regions project. This is a UK project to preserve and make accessible regional film heritage, the beneficiaries being regional film archives such as SASE and the Wessex Film & Sound Archive at Hampshire Record Office.

At the Record Office the project involves digitising 400 films and online cataloguing a total of 600 films (on the SASE screen search database). It has also enabled SASE to buy £20,000+ worth of transfer equipment to make it possible to upgrade capability to HD standard.

Two project officers are employed – one a technician, one a cataloguer – for the duration of the 12-month project. WSRO and the University of Brighton are lead partners in SASE.



A cabaret scene from the thriller *Room 17*  
filmed by the Bognor Regis Film Society (1936)

## **The Registrars at the Record Office**

Changes in the registration service now mean that the old civil registers are stored at the Record Office. During August 2010, the registers from Chichester, Horsham, Haywards Heath and Crawley areas came in. Registers from the Worthing area are still to come, but there are space issues. We are currently trying to reduce the space taken up by an uncatalogued solicitors' collection still in its original boxes. Production of copy certificates has been consolidated here, and one or two registrars are based here, with the records management staff. At this time the registers are not yet available to the public.

# News from the Searchroom

The Searchroom staff spent the two weeks of our cataloguing and stocktaking fortnight working hard at tasks that they do not normally have the opportunity to concentrate on.

During the first week the main task was to help Caroline and Katherine reorganise the Searchroom library shelves. We did this on the Wednesday and every member of the Searchroom team (even those who do not normally work on a Wednesday and our Team Leader, Alan Readman) turned up to lend a hand. At the end of the day all the books had been rationalised and had been placed in their positions on the shelves. We also noted any altered storage so that Caroline and Katherine can make a new list and we will eventually be able to find all the books much more easily. If you are feeling confused about where your old favourites have gone, please ask the Searchroom staff and they will be only too happy to give you a guided tour of the Searchroom shelves! We think it is a great improvement, which is a good thing as Caroline had put a lot of thought and effort into organising it.

James (who is not usually seen by the public because he is the person responsible hoovering and dusting before they come in) cleaned the carpets and shelves and he also helped Ian re-organise the storage for the electoral registers in the Strongroom. Ian and David cleaned the microfilm readers and Sarah and Immie tracked down some elusive white and yellow document order tickets.

During the second week we all got down to some serious cataloguing. Some of us were working on the backlog of small accessions that had accumulated (some were left over from Ron Iden's work before he retired). Some of us tackled large accessions that we could not do normally because of the space required to spread all the documents around for sorting. The most notable of these was the St Margaret's Orphanage Records from East Grinstead, which Di managed to finish. We have a lot of enquiries regarding these records and it will be a lot easier for people to access them now.

Meanwhile Frances, Susie, Alex and myself were also busy sorting and cataloguing!

## **VOLUNTEERS in the searchroom**

People are probably aware of all the volunteers who work on the various projects that the Record Office is involved with. They do really valuable work for a specific project organised by a co-ordinator, who is working only on that particular project.

However, there are many unsung heroes who work hard and give of their time freely, week in, week out (and often year in, year out), on many tasks of a general nature that staff just would not have the time to do. It is really completely different from being a volunteer on the *Joining Up Our Heritage* project, for example.

There are as many different 'types' of volunteer as there are jobs but there is a backbone of computer inputters who type information from documents or index cards onto spreadsheets, which are later added to our CALM electronic catalogue. This information adds value to the catalogue and makes the documents concerned more widely known and, therefore, accessible to more people. For example, the photographs taken by George Garland in the Petworth area between the 1920s and 1960s show many local people and events. The photographs were listed in date order

in a typescript catalogue but they have now all been typed up on a spreadsheet and are gradually being added to CALM so, eventually, all these names and events will be searchable on-line. Some of the inputting jobs that volunteers are currently working on include: the crew index from the shipping records (cards); the Shipping Registers from the Customs and Excise records (original volumes); an index to an early Chichester City Council minute book (typescript).

We also have a group of people who do cataloguing. This may be considered work that should only be done by archivists but some of the straightforward cataloguing work can be done with little supervision. For example parish magazines may be brought in by individuals in small bundles but there are also large boxes that arrive from the libraries at the end of each year! Sorting these is a daunting task but, fortunately for me, Terry comes in every year from November to March (he works as a Petworth House Guide in the summer) and adds them all to the catalogues and stores them in the strongrooms. Job done! Another regular is John who scans and lists many of the photographic collections that come in. He has built up an impressive store of knowledge about postcards, photographs and photographers over the years!

Cataloguing under supervision is also a task done by our young (or sometimes not so young) recent graduate volunteers. Some of them are hoping to move on to do one of the archive courses but some just want to get some experience of the world of work. Jenny came to us with a degree in Maths and Music and not sure what she wanted to do next. She has not only proved a wonderful help in getting down my backlog of school and parish records but she has also shown an aptitude for conservation work.

There are very many more volunteers who do valuable work for other members of staff, not just me, and we really appreciate all they do. So, what do the volunteers get out of it? Well, as I have already mentioned, the recent graduates get work experience. This also applies to other volunteers who are trying to get into or back to work. Some may be unemployed or, sometimes, they have had an illness or accident that has prevented them from working for a while. They not only gain work experience but volunteering can also increase their confidence and self-esteem. For retired people too we offer the opportunity to keep busy and sometimes volunteering can be a transition from work to retirement. However, once people have been retired for a while they sometimes find they are so busy they are not sure how they had time to work!

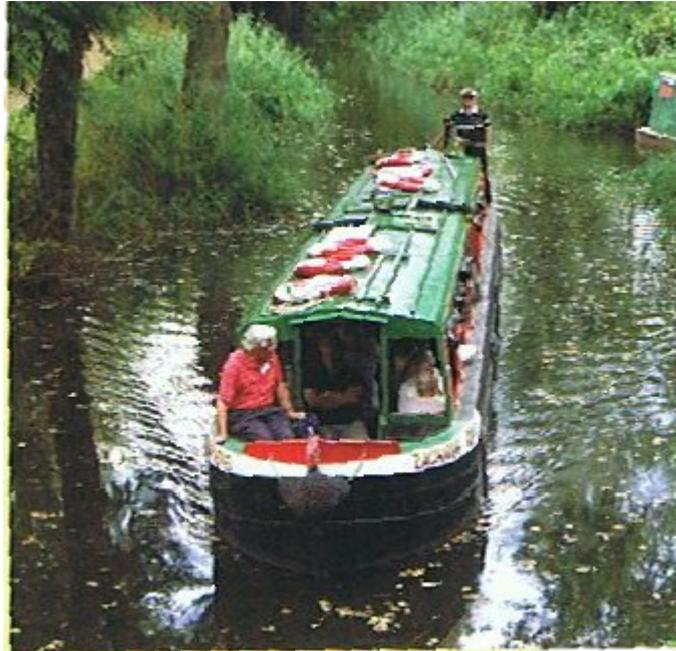
I have only touched on some of the tasks that volunteers do and a few of the reasons why it helps not only the Record Office but also the community. Hopefully, much of the work that the volunteers do to get more information out there on the internet will encourage more visitors to the archives! The only problem is juggling them all about to find a computer for them to work on, as my old laptop I brought in has now died as well as one of the archaic ones we keep for volunteers in the Searchroom!

I will finish with a plea. We have one project that many have started but none have finished. That is inputting all the information from the prints and drawing cards into an excel spreadsheet. It requires a special person who doesn't mind struggling with the difficult handwriting on the cards and who doesn't mind getting many of the prints out to try and work out what the person who originally wrote on the cards actually meant! Could that person be you?

Susan Millard, Searchroom Archivist

# Not to be missed!

## Wey & Arun Canal Trip



On Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup> 2011, come and join us for a pleasant trundle along the Wey & Arun canal, from Loxwood and back, with a speaker on board to tell us about the canal and it's history.

The journey will last about 2 hours and we shall be on board the Zachariah Keppel, a 50 foot converted narrow boat licensed to carry up to 30 passengers. She is a weatherproof boat fitted with comfortable seating, tables and a W.C.

On return to Loxwood tea will be provided at the Onslow Arms.

Timings: 2.00 pm Park and meet in the Wey & Arun Canal Trust car park behind the Onslow Arms.

2.15 Boat leaves Loxwood (returning 4.15 approximately)  
4.30 Tea in the Onslow Arms

Early booking is advised, definitely before the 28th May. The last time we offered a boat trip on the Wey & Arun Canal, it was over subscribed. See over for booking form.



Onslow Arms



Loxwood

# Events Programme Early 2011

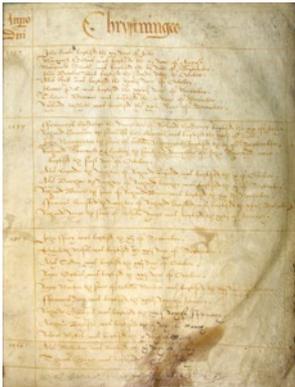
---



Saturday 12th February 2.00pm-4.00pm, An illustrated talk and current research on Halnaker House, followed by tea & coffee. To be held at the record office, Chichester.

Free to members, £3 guests and non-members

---



Saturday 26th March, 10.30 am - 4.00pm, a workshop entitled "Parish Registers: the other side" to be held at the record office, Chichester. Parish Registers are a major resource for the family & local historian, come along and see the original registers that are only usually available on microfiche.

Cost Members £5 Guests and non-members £8

---



Saturday, 9th April, AGM to be held at Capron House, North Street, Midhurst, GU29 9DT.

10am for 10.30am. Tea/coffee will be served before the meeting.

After the meeting Bridget Howard will talk on "Midhurst through the Ages".

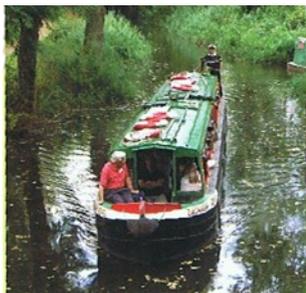
After the talk you are invited to join us for a buffet lunch.

The AGM papers and other details will be sent in March.

Cost for lecture and lunch is £10.00 per person.

(closing date for booking lunch is 25th March)

---



Saturday June 11th, Wey & Arun Canal, boat trip with speaker on board. Park in the Wey & Arun Trust car park behind the Onslow Arms. The boat leaves Loxwood at 2.15pm and the journey is approximately 2 hours. On return tea is available at the Onslow Arms.

Cost £15 ALL persons

# Booking Slips

Some of these are repeat slips so please do not worry if you have already submitted previous slips

Saturday 12th February 2.00pm-4.00pm, An illustrated talk and current research on Halnaker House, followed by tea & coffee.

Free to members, £3 for guests and non-members

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel. No.....E-mail.....

Name/s of guest/s.....

Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by 30th January to; The Honorary Treasurer, W.S.A.S., West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday 26th March, 10.30 am - 4.00pm, "Parish Registers: the other side"

Costs £5 members, £8 guests and non-members

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel. No.....E-mail.....

Name's of guest/s.....

Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by 12th March to; The Honorary Treasurer, W.S.A.S., c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday 9th April, **AGM**, to be held at Capron House, Midhurst beginning with arrivals and tea/coffee 10.00am-10.30am.

Costs for the lecture & lunch £10

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel. No.....E-mail.....

Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by 25th March to; The honorary Treasurer, W.S.A.S., c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday 11th June, 2.00 pm at Loxwood, boat trip on the Wey & Arun Canal with speaker on board followed by tea on return

Costs to members & non-members £15

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel. No.....E-mail.....

Name/s of non-member/s or guest/s.....

Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by 28th May to; The Honorary Treasurer, W.S.A.S., c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN