

# The Researcher

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



September 2011

## Welcome the new Teams

Caroline asked the Coroners' Assistants and the Registrars to introduce themselves in this Newsletter:

### The Coroners' Assistants

When a death has been referred to the Coroner, we are contacted by the Coroner's Officers and asked to print the relevant forms to allow registration of a death and for cremation to take place. In order for us to do this we have to update and manage the Coroner's Database which is now IRIS or Mountain software. All forms have to be signed by the Coroner or one of her deputies. We have our own dedicated telephone line and receive calls throughout the day from next of kin, doctors, funeral directors, hospitals, the press, the public, registrars etc and deal with their queries. Researchers often contact the Coroner's office for information and we are required to complete forms for cases such as road-traffic accidents and drug-related deaths.



No. 75

## Forthcoming Events

### Events 2011

October 8th - Joint Conference with the Friends of Broadwater & Worthing Cemetery on the Worthing Typhoid Epidemic

November 12th Manorial Records Workshop with Richard Childs

December 10th - Christmas get together at Edes House, Chichester

**Next year's programme** includes amongst other events, a talk on the records of Graylingwell Hospital, Chichester; a workshop on garden records, and a visit to Arundel Castle gardens and archives.

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

## The Registrars

The Certificates Office is responsible for the issuing of copy certificates, which are certified copies of original entries in birth, marriage, death and civil partnership registers. The Certificates team is made up of 3 Registration Assistants and 1 Apprentice. The Certificates team produce approximately 400 certificates per month. The charge of £9-00 per certificate is set by the General Register Office (GRO), who administer these registrations throughout England and Wales. GRO is now part of the Identity and Passport Service.

All Registration Service-related calls are now directed through a central telephone number with staff trained to assist our customers in scheduling appointments to register births and deaths and to purchase copy certificates through our online booking system. These staff are trained to assist with simple enquiries. Technical enquiries relating to births and deaths are transferred to our Technical Enquiries Office, which is based at the Record Office and is manned by our Certificates Team.



---

## Restricted Access to Records in the Searchroom

Because of a number of problems recently, the Record Office has had to tighten up its policy on restricted access to documents covered by the Data Protection Act or because of wear and tear on original documents:

### **1. Use of microfilm over original documents.**

This is really a reiteration of what has long been our policy. Basically, where documents are available on microfilm we prefer people to use those, rather than the original record, to help preserve unique records.

This means that digital photography will be prevented in some cases, and might cause problems to researchers hoping to gain good digital images. However, we also have to consider copyright and ownership issues, which are open to abuse. There will therefore be no photography from original parish registers.

Sue, the present Searchroom Archivist says:

'Having said that we still want to help our Searchers and we will continue to use our common sense when making decisions. If somebody is having difficulty reading something we will continue to identify the problem and try to resolve it. Possible problems might include:

- A reader not having the palaeographic skills – we will read small portions, or refer the person to our research service.



Sue makes it clear that 'This has been forced on us and is making life difficult for us when we are already overstretched. We are getting an average of one enquiry a week that involves these new guidelines at the moment, so we are still testing the water. I should add that the discussion is still going on in archive circles, some Record Offices are taking the line that the 'signing the form' option has not been tested by the Information Commission Office (ICO) as a legitimate means of allowing people access and, as they don't want to risk being a test case, they find it easier to close all the records and make the enquiries into a Freedom Of Information (FOI) request. But this does not take into account the research aspect of many requests.

'Also, it is very time consuming to identify all the microfilms containing the records and deal with the problem of how searchers can access other information on them. Also, marking up all the affected items as restricted in the catalogues and lists is a mighty task.'

### **3. Photocopies of restricted documents**

**Private Research** - it is possible to copy (but destroyed after research completed). However, copying is considered on a case by case basis, and it may be that only notes may be taken.

**Family History** - if there is nothing controversial on a page then a copy is permissible.

---

## **Record Office Update**

It's difficult to believe that a couple of months have passed since I wrote the last update. In the intervening months we have been challenged by a number of issues that were not apparent to everyone when the restructure was underway. The move itself stretched through August into September, because the IT services, that the registrars needed and that we need in the workroom, were not ready. We finally started using the new small room (now christened the workroom) around the beginning of this month; in fact the very first meeting in it was the WSAS committee meeting in the evening of 31 August. A couple of weeks later IT services came back to install a new projector in the room, so we are set up to give talks to about 15 people.

Five registrars have taken over most of the Record Office staff admin room on the first floor as the County Centralised Certificate Office. They feel squeezed in there, and are asking us to move out of the room completely, but we are very short of space now. Also it appears that the accrual of historic registers has not been taken into account, and there is no further room in the strongrooms for the registers.

Downstairs a further six registrars (two at a time) are registering births and deaths by appointment only. This does mean that nearly every day tiny little babies are gracing the visitors' tearoom, which is an unexpected gift for us. However, as we had thought, some people coming to register deaths are finding the chatty atmosphere of the tearoom difficult to take, so we are still in danger of losing part of our new reception area.

There are security problems upstairs as well. Lots more people are coming to see the registrars and coroners, and, because we have two more strongrooms upstairs, we have to operate a tight badging system. The receptionist, who is now very busy anyway, is responsible for people signing in and badges being worn for both the searchroom volunteers and visits upstairs. We need to be extra vigilant that doors are locked at

the end of the day – the alarm system won't set otherwise! This is inculcated in all Record Office staff, who have to sign to this effect at the end of every day. The coroners' staff need to arrive very early, because doctors on duty overnight may need them at 7.30 on the morning, so the keyholders (the archivists and the conservator) will now have to take it in turns to arrive early enough to let them in!

Reception staffing is a further issue. The Record Office is no longer in charge of its receptionists; they are supplied by the Business Support Directorate, and the reception service generally is due to be outsourced next year. Staffing is very tight; there is often no-one to cover for lunch and tea breaks. Staff from the searchroom help where they can; but the searchroom is hardly ever fully staffed, so this can cause problems.

On the records management front a decision is being made on how to go forward with records management. The choice is between outsourcing it completely, keeping it in-house completely or a hybrid decision. Besides retaining non-current records that may be needed in future, and providing a retrieval service, we also hold title deeds and other important documents for the council, which are not archival. The current service includes reviewing records in store, together with a certain amount of expertise and knowledge on the types of records held; and this, together with two and a half staff posts, would disappear in the event of outsourcing the whole records management service.

Finally, and probably most importantly, I should say that we have had to say goodbye to a member of staff, Roland Jakeman, who worked in records management until the beginning of this month. Roland was always extremely helpful, often covering at reception and a whizz on the computer. He and Matt, the other records management officer, picked up boxes of books as if they held tissue paper, and if needed moved many shelves of archives as if it was all in a days' work – which it was for them. Roland has gone to work in a similar field at a firm outside Chichester, and we wish him all the best.

A piece of good news is that we have appointed Nichola Court as our new Searchroom archivist - we were allowed to keep the funding when the post of PA to the County Archivist was removed upon Gail's retirement. Nichola worked here in records management, and carried out studying for her professional qualification at the same time. Immediately she qualified she got a job with the Royal Society.

And really finally, Alison McCann has announced that she will retire a year early, in July next year, so that she can concentrate on a full and busy life outside work, and on her family.

Caroline Adams



*Nicola Court*

# Medieval Deeds



It is very unusual these days for the Record Office to receive a deposit of early deeds. So when a gentleman phoned to say he had a collection of medieval deeds that he wished to deposit with us, I could hardly wait for his visit. The gentleman is a descendant of the Yaldwyns of Blackdown in the north of the county, and he has entrusted to the care of the Record

Office 39 deeds, dating from 1324 to 1612, relating to the build up of the family's estate, mostly in Lurgashall.

I am in the process of cataloguing them at the moment. It always amazes me how much information one tiny medieval deed can contain – about the people involved in the transaction, the property, and the local people who acted as witnesses.

Perhaps the most unusual deed in the collection is a 16<sup>th</sup> century copy of a deed made before 1259 relating to Howike in Lodsworth. It is interesting to note that as far as one can tell, their medieval palaeography was quite good!

As soon as it is finished, the catalogue will be entered on CALM, and be searchable through our website. Everyone interested in the early history of the county owes a great debt of gratitude to the depositor who was willing to entrust these unique document to our care.

Alison McCann



# Events Review

## Burpham September 17th



On a fine autumn morning members of WSAS and guests met at Burpham Village Hall for a lecture, film show and lunch. Burpham is on the other side of the River Arun from Arundel, and the hall is on the edge of the Saxon burh, one of those fortified sites ordered by King Alfred to defend against the Danes. The parish church of St Mary's is also Saxon in origin.

Chris Hare presented an illustrated lecture based on his book *The good old, bad old days* (2001) which was a collection of articles written by Lawrence Graburn in

the *West Sussex Gazette* from 1951 until his death in 1965. Graburn was a farmer at Wepham and wrote using the pen-name Newall Duke.

After his retirement in 1940 Graburn recorded the local history, natural history and folklore of the area. He drew upon his own recollections and that of his contemporaries, and also the old people he had known as a boy, so the information in his articles extended well back into the nineteenth century. Often Graburn's article would be followed by letters in the paper from elderly people whose memories were jogged by him, and much social history is recorded which would otherwise be lost.

One of the articles concerned the robbery of a postboy in 1774. The Highwayman was Jack Upperton, who was in his 60s and driven to the crime by poverty. He was caught out when his spending suddenly increased! Jack was hanged at Horsham, and his body set in a wooden gibbet at Blakehurst as a warning to others. This was an isolated place but near a well-used track. The spot became a focus for tales of hauntings in later years, where Jack's ghost was said to offer advice to people. These stories were the focus of many of Graburn's articles. Once the gibbet had rotted away it was replaced by another post. All traces had disappeared by the Second World War, especially after a hunting accident where a horse threw its rider after hitting the mound (which was subsequently flattened by the landowner). In 1951 Graburn realised only a few elderly residents remembered the location and had a new post and sign erected at the spot. This was repaired again in the 1970s – allegedly to the wrong site!

There was much folklore regarding gibbets. It was said that they could cure illnesses if you cut a piece of the wood and wore it, or even that a bone from the person, worn or even eaten, could cure arthritis.

As in many villages the local public house was the focus of life in Burpham. Graburn claims the West family run the The George and Dragon for 300 years into the 1940s. Chris was able to trace this family at the pub into the early nineteenth century using census data. There are many local stories about this family. The landlord when the railway was being built would bang his fist on the bar at any sign of trouble involving the navvies, and would throw men out of the pub if required.

Graburn describes 'rough music' in the village. This was the practice of community punishment for anyone who offended people. It is also mentioned by Thomas Hardy. The last 'rough music' in Burpham happened in the 1890s, when a crowd, making a great deal of noise, visited the offender in the middle of the night. They often had a rhyme about the person and the issues involved, and sometimes an effigy would be burnt outside the house. It was rare for a second visit to be required! In some larger places, such as Worthing, 'rough music' could develop into a riot.

Sussex humour was always very deadpan. Graburn recalls an incident where a local man and his dog were walking in the village one night when the dog was knocked over and killed by a visiting motorist. The driver, being distressed, offered the man money by way of compensation, and getting no response, offered more money. This was accepted and then the man explained that the dog was old and he was heading for the woods to shoot the animal!

The Burpham area has been the focus for many artistic people. John Cowper Powys lived in the village in the early twentieth century. His garden backed on to the Burh. In his 1934 autobiography Powys described his disagreements with the locals using the burh. Powys once put a 'no trespassing' sign on the burh, only for it to be moved to a nearby ditch on a least two occasions.

Graburn's articles were often accompanied by illustrations by Mervyn Peake, especially the more humorous pieces. Peake is famous as the author of Gormenghast. He came to School House in Warningcamp in the particularly bleak winter of 1940. Peake was often unwell, and was invalided out of the army in 1943 after a nervous breakdown. It is said the view of Arundel castle in the mist over the water meadows inspired him to write Gormenghast.

Ticknor Edwardes moved to the village about 1897, when he was a journalist and writer. He is especially famous for his works on bee-keeping. He enlisted in the army as a private in World War I, rising to the rank of captain. He then had a crisis of conscience about the war, and began training as a clergyman and was ordained in 1919. He was the Rector in Burpham from 1927 to 1935, and lived at what is now Burpham Country House Hotel. He is buried in the churchyard.



*People enjoying the film 'Tansy'*

Edwardes wrote the novel *Tansy*, published 1914, which was made into a silent film in 1921 directed by Cecil Hepworth and starring Alma Taylor, Gerald Ames, James Carew and Hugh Clifton. Although set in Devon, the film was shot around Amberley and Burpham, and Edwardes visited the filming. Chichester is also briefly shown, doubling as 'Marshminster'. The actors and film crew must have been an unusual spectacle in the area. The film has been described as

a very good example of Cecil Hepworth's ability to photograph the English countryside. The scenes involving sheep are very skillfully directed.

*Tansy* is a rare survival among Hepworth's feature-length films of this era, as many are believed to have been lost following Hepworth's bankruptcy in 1924, when his film stock was seized and melted down by administrators for its saleable silver nitrate content.

After the lecture, the film *Tansy* was shown. There was no music, so Chris and others pointed out the locations and other points of interest.

After the film an excellent two course lunch and drinks were provided by Liz Collison. Everyone was most grateful to Liz and her helpers for an enjoyable morning, and Chris for his entertaining lecture.

Richard Martin

---

## THE BOOK SALE

On Monday September 19<sup>th</sup>, we launched the book sale at the record office and it ran for the next five days, bringing in over £1200 at present.

There was a wide spread of historical books, including such categories as Sussex churches, military history, art and architecture, inns and taverns, and railways. Many aspects of social, economic and political history were well-covered. Except for some specialist editions - rare and highly sought-after volumes - the books were all sold for £2 (hard back) or £1 (paper back).

The Book Sale could never have been run, let alone be the success it undoubtedly was, without tremendous efforts being made by a very large number of people. The actual running of the sale was shared between members of WSAS and volunteer helpers from the record office, but it was a WSAS initiative in the first place so quite rightly members of WSAS did all the categorising of the books (several hundred), and spent many hours shifting books and setting up tables at the record office on the Sunday before the sale opened.

I am very grateful to all those who helped in any way with the preparations for and the actual running of the Book Sale. It had its difficulties, not least being told during the preparations that we had to move all the books out of the Classroom and that we would not have the use of it, in its well-known size and shape, for the sale. Caroline Adams must be mentioned and thanked sincerely for all she did to ensure the success of the sale.

Richard Mant

### **And From the County Archivist:**

**This is a fantastic result ! Over one week it far exceeds expectations.  
So much hard work and commitment went into the event from gathering & sorting the books to manning the stalls & selling them.  
A big thank you to all concerned from the Record Office and our staff.  
Do please pass this on to all the volunteers involved.  
We will I think rely on our Friends increasingly in the future, in one way or another, and we are so very grateful for their support.**

# Events Programme 2011

---

Saturday 8th October at 10.00 am, **Worthing Typhoid Epidemic 1893**, a joint conference with the Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery to be held at Broadwater Parish Rooms, Broadwater Street West, Worthing. Provisional agenda:-

10.00 am arrival for tea or coffee

10.30 am Chris Hare

11.30 am Martin Hayes

12.45 pm lunch is not included but there are many options close to the parish rooms

14.00 pm Assemble at Broadwater cemetery, South Farm Road for tour

15.15 pm return to Broadwater Parish Rooms for roundup

Cost £10 members and £13 for non-members and guests

Time is now short please make your bookings at your earliest convenience.

Any queries contact - [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

---

Saturday 12th November 10.00am - 4.00pm, a Workshop on Manorial Records at WSRO with Richard Childs. Richard will explain how to use manorial records and show original documents dating from the middle ages'.

Costs £8 members and £10 non-members and guests, to include tea and coffee

---

Saturday 10th December 10.00am - 12pm, the Christmas Get-together to be held at Edes House, Chichester. Come along to this lovely house for our annual get-together with coffee, wine, mince pies etc.



## ***WSAS Committee***

*Caroline Adams - Chairman*

*Richard Martin - Vice Chairman*

*Liz Collison - Treasurer*

*Stella Elliot - Secretary*

*Barrie Keech - Newsletter & Website*

*Helen Whittle - Journal Editor*

*Richard Mant - Committee Member*

*Joy Eccleston - Committee Member*

*Leigh Lawson - Committee Member*

*Richard Howell - Committee Member*

All contactable using [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

# Booking Slips

---

Saturday 8th October. 10.00 am **Worthing Typhoid Epidemic 1893**, a joint conference with the Friends of Broadwater and Worthing Cemetery to be held in Broadwater Parish Rooms, Broadwater Street West, Worthing

Costs to members £10 & non-members £13

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel No.....Email.....

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

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

Please return slip very quickly to, The Honourable Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Any queries contact: [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

If anyone is able to offer a lift to other members or is in need of a lift please contact WSAS using the email address above.

---

Saturday 12th November 10.00 am Workshop on Manorial Records to be held at WSRO with Richard Childs. Richard will explain how to use manorial records and show original documents dating from the middle ages'.

Costs to members £8 & non-members £10

Name/s of members attending.....

Tel No.....Email.....

Please return slip by 29th October to, The Honourable Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Any queries contact: [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

If anyone is able to offer a lift to other members or is in need of a lift please contact WSAS using the email address above.

---

Saturday 10th December at 10.00am - 12.00pm Christmas Get-together at Edes House, Chichester.

Names of members attending.....

Tel. No.....Email.....

Names of Guests.....

Please return slip by 26th November to, The Honourable Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

