

The Researcher

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



January 2013

No. 80

County Archivist Report

Since my last piece, for the October Newsletter, I've had the good fortune to attend the Day Conference at Horsham and the Christmas meeting at the Record Office. These two events confirmed for me what a marvellous society WSAS is: really excellent speakers at the Conference and a cheery way to begin the festive season. Caroline and the Committee are to be congratulated on the programme this year as, too, most certainly, is Barrie for editing the Journal and Newsletters.

Indeed, this is a good time of year to thank all members for their support of the Record Office, including in September the very successful Map Sale which raised over £630 for our Document Purchase Fund. The icing on the cake is that we now have a successor for the role of Treasurer, Paul Guest a true cause for celebration, and our collective thanks should go to Susan and Caroline for their part in preparing the way for this very welcome addition to our ranks.



John Bishop reviewing findings at WSRO - see later

Forthcoming Events

Events 2013

February 10th -
'Chichester in the 1950s'
by Alan Readman.

March 16th - Wills and
Probate Workshop

April 13th - **AGM**

May 11th - TBD, joint
event with FESRO.

June 8th - Wey and Arun
Canal Trip.

July 13th - Tarring Walk
with Richard Howell

Any queries about this
newsletter or questions
for West Sussex
Archives Society please
email
wsascom@btinternet.com

I know several of you watched *Who Do You Think You Are?* on BBC1 in December. The latest series of this popular family history programme concluded with the story of the Liverpool comedian, John Bishop. This featured his visit to the Record Office to discover about his ancestor, Charles Bishop, who was a Lay Vicar at Chichester Cathedral in the mid 19th century. Nichola did a great job, not only as on-screen presenter, but also, with other searchroom staff, in researching the story. We much enjoyed meeting him during the filming in September and the office has reaped a lot of good publicity as a result.

On the more mundane side, December was also the month of our annual closure period. In keeping with most County Record Offices we close our doors for a fortnight once a year to do the jobs that we cannot so easily do when we are open to the public. A great deal of backlog cataloguing was completed, together with much cleaning, tidying & re-ordering of strongrooms & searchroom, and good progress on the re-arrangement & listing of the very extensive Royal Sussex Regiment library.

Only one training session interrupted all this practical work – this being a presentation by a consultant on our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act, an important matter to us as evidenced by the many questions it generated. Above our heads, contractors took advantage of a rare break in the rain to replace the glazed panelling in the searchroom roof, which in future should reduce the glare of the sunlight and the noise of the rain for staff and public working in there.

At the end of the day on New Year's Eve we said our farewells to Neil Bettridge who has been with us for nine months. He has been working on a grant-funded project to revise the Manorial Documents Register for West Sussex. This is part of a national exercise co-ordinated by The National Archives. Once the East Sussex section has been completed the database will be published on the TNA website.

This will be a real asset for researchers as it identifies the nature and location of a major category of records including court rolls, surveys, maps, terriers and all other documents relating to the boundaries, franchises, wastes, customs or courts of a manor.



Manorial records are not widely used and the revised MDR will, we hope, remedy this by bringing the records into wider public awareness. As such it fits in well with our current plans to revitalise knowledge of and interest in some of our more under-used collections.

Speaking of projects, we are about to embark on two substantial Heritage Lottery Funded projects which start in earnest in the New Year. We are a partner with the Library Service in a World War One project, linked to the commemoration of the

John Bishop discusses findings with Nichola Court at WSRO

centenary of the beginning of the war, and with Chichester Festival Theatre, in a heritage project associated with the theatre's 50th anniversary. These are big and exciting projects in which we are delighted to be involved. They will add to our work load, particularly in respect of our work with volunteers, but they are both of huge archival and public benefit.

I have to say, on a personal note, that one of the highlights of the last few months for me was the visit in November of Isabel Syed, formerly Kirby, who was employed on the archive staff in the early 1960s. The Record Office then was in the basement of County Hall. Her memories of Life in the Archives and of former staff, such as the legendary Dr Francis Steer, and renowned visitors such as W.D. Peckham and Mervyn Cutten, were full of amusing anecdotes. The same job – but a different world!

The core purpose of WSRO, to preserve and make accessible the recorded heritage of our county, remains the same for us today as it did for our predecessors when the Record Office began almost seventy years ago. But developments in media and IT, coupled with project and partnership working, now give us so many additional opportunities to develop our collections and promote interest in our archival treasures. The economic climate may remain uncertain but at the beginning of a New Year we look forward to taking up these opportunities, as always with the much valued support of our Friends in West Sussex Archives Society.

On behalf of the staff of West Sussex Record Office may I thank you all for your friendship and your support and wish you all a very happy New Year.

Alan Readman - County Archivist

Post of Chairman

Please read this!

This April I will have been Chairman for three years. I have been supported by a wonderful team on the WSAS committee and the first thing I would like to say is how hard they all work. Don't take this for granted! None of them just turn up for meetings (general or committee); they all give their own time – sometimes quite a lot of it – generously and with passion for the society.

The post of Chairman lasts for three years. The postholder is the convenor of a lot of different activities. He or she can trust the committee members to carry out these to the best of their ability, but occasionally decisions have to be made, either for or against what they want! The postholder also makes out the agenda for committee meetings and chairs them, checks the minutes, looks after our entry on the Charity Commission website, liases with the County Archivist, gives a report at the AGM and is a signatory for cheques on the society bank account. I would say I give about a half a day a month to the post, and also attend all the committee meetings and most of the society meetings. It is not arduous, but it is one of the most rewarding things I have done.

If you think you would like to be Chairman, please do get in touch. My email is Caroline.adams@westsussex.gov.uk and my phone number is 01243 753625 – but beware, I am not always at my desk!

West Sussex Record Office Jubilee Photograph Competition

In June 2012 Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Diamond Jubilee and the whole Nation celebrated with her! West Sussex was no exception and, despite the inclement weather, communities, villages, and towns across the county celebrated the Diamond Jubilee with great aplomb. Many celebrations included a party (or several parties!). Others decided to plant a tree or have a fancy dress or 'Bake a Cake' competition. In Chichester, there was a parade through the streets as well as lots of parties, which were held indoors and out. Some were organised by groups but residents of many individual streets and even tiny closes and blocks of flats defied the varied weather and got together to celebrate over the long weekend.

WSRO already had some wonderful photographs of past Jubilee celebrations, from Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee of 1887, to Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee of 1977, so at the beginning of the year Susan Millard (Collections Team) and Nichola Court (Searchroom Archivist) discussed how we might use the public fervour and enthusiasm to add to this collection. They came up with two aims, the first to improve our existing archive that illustrates how Jubilees and Coronations had been celebrated throughout the County in the past, and the second to build up an archive showing how West Sussex celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of 2012.



WSRO 2012 Competition, 3rd Prize - Jubilee Street Party, Midhurst

It is fascinating to look back at the past and the various celebrations, which have taken place locally, and the Record Office holds many photographs of these historic events. Articles in local newspapers and magazines encouraged people to share their memories and deposit copies of photographs of past events. This produced a flurry of deposits including photographs of fancy dress competitions held to celebrate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, and several celebratory mugs! The oldest

mug was a King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra Coronation mug of June 1902, which was originally given to Jessie Marsh, a pupil at the Elizabeth Johnstone Girls' School, Chichester. This school, which closed in 1933, used to be on the corner of St Pancras and New Park Road. It was later used as a Sunday School building by St Pancras Church until it was demolished when the ring road was constructed.

Susan and Nichola wanted to ensure that future generations could do the same for the festivities, which took place this year, so we asked for help from everyone who had taken photographs of their local event. A competition was held to find the best photograph of this year's Jubilee festivities. You may remember that in our last Newsletter we made a plea to WSAS members who had attended any local Jubilee events to send in their photographs. The entries flooded in and we asked the staff to pick their favourite. There were four winners but all of the photographs were worthy of preservation in the archives. These photographs are now part of our collective memory and will be preserved for future generations. A cross section of the entrees (some of which were received after the competition deadline!) are on display in the Record Office Searchroom and Foyer until the end of January. Do come in and see them!

Susan Millard
Nichola Court



Nichola Court and Susan Millard hold aloft the WSRO 1st Prize Winner - West Dean School Jubilee Party

Events - Chanctonbury Ring: the story of a Sussex Landmark

On a sunny Sunday afternoon members of WSAS and guests met in the reception at WSRO for a talk by Dr. Janet Pennington on the history of Chanctonbury Ring.

Janet described the Ring, which sits on the top of the downs above Washington, 767 ft (234 metres) above sea level, as a very special place with an almost spiritual atmosphere. There were many stories and legends associated with the ring. The site is on the Wiston estate.

The site consists of a prehistoric univallate (one ditch and bank) earthwork dating to the late Bronze Age (ended c. 750 BC) with Bronze Age roundbarrows and two Roman temples inside the earthwork. One of the temples is a typical Romano-Celtic rectangular building and the other is a Romano-British polygonal (nine or eleven sided) temple, both built in the second century. The polygonal temple might have been associated with a 'cult of the boar' as many fragments of pig skull have been found there.

The trees, mainly Beech with Norway Spruce and Scots Pine, were planted around the edge and within the perimeter of the earthwork, in 1760 by Charles Goring of Wiston House, when he was 16 years old. Charles wrote a poem in his extreme old age – he was in his late eighties – celebrating that he had lived to see the trees mature. Janet suggested that Charles had planted the trees to celebrate the accession of George III, perhaps inspired by Launcelot 'Capability' Brown who had been working at Petworth House in the 1750s planting clumps of trees.



Since then further trees, including Holm Oak, Sycamore, Ash, Larch and Chestnut, have been planted at the site at regular intervals. In 1909, it was decided to plant trees inside the earthwork. More trees were planted in 1978. In 1987 three-quarters of the trees were blown down and an icon of the Sussex landscape was lost during the 'Great Storm' of 16 October. In 1990 400 trees were planted, mainly Beech, to replace those lost.

An Anglo-Saxon hoard of 3000 silver coins in a leather bag was discovered on Chancton Farm, north of the ring, in December 1866. They were eleventh-century pennies of Harold II and Edward the Confessor, probably minted locally at Steyning, Chichester and Lewes. Only half were handed in to the authorities at the time, many being sold by the farm labourers to buy beer. The rest were declared 'treasure trove' and handed to the Treasury. Janet said that it is not now known where they are. The find was recorded in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 20, 1868.

Various archaeological investigations have taken place. In 1909 plans of the Roman Temples were drawn as a result of excavations by George Mitchell. The area was further explored in the 1920s, when some aerial photographs were taken. Owen Bedwin led a dig in 1977 and David Rudling in 1988-91, when a medieval skeleton was found. This could link to a story in a Steyning Court document dated 1351 that relates the murder of a monk from Sele Priory, Upper Beeding on the hill in 1330. However, it is likely that his body would have been buried at the Priory. In 2003-4 Mark Tribble undertook a topographical survey of the landscape and hillfort.

The hill has been used for beacons and bonfires, being recorded as a beacon hill in 1587. A beacon was lit in 1935 to celebrate the silver jubilee of George V, and for the present Queen's coronation in 1953 and silver jubilee in 1977. The last one was lit in 1988 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Spanish Armada. Beacon sites were seen as ideal points for the Ordnance Survey's trigonometrical survey of the country in the 1790s. There is still a trig-point on the hill west of the ring.

In the nineteenth century trips to the Ring by bus were arranged from Worthing. In 1814 an account of an excursion from Worthing to the Ring, via Sompting, returning via Findon was published. Trips by horse-drawn charabanc or omnibus were advertised later in the century.

A poem called *Chance Memory* by John Stanley Purvis was published in the *Daily News* in June 1916 which reflects on the lane that goes from Steyning to the Ring and the trenches. However, it was written before the author saw service in France. An original manuscript of the poem is now in Steyning museum.

The Ring has been mentioned in literature. Hilaire Belloc refers to the Ring in his *The Four Men* (1912) and Rudyard Kipling mentions the Ring in *The Run of the Downs*, a poem published in 1910. In John Galsworthy's Forsyte Saga there is a scene set on the hill, which was filmed for the BBC series in 1962.

After the talk, Janet answered questions from the audience. If you want to know more about the ring, I recommend Janet's book *Chanctonbury Ring: The Story of a Sussex Landmark* (2011).

Richard Martin

POOR LAW WORKSHOP

On Saturday, November 10th there was a well-attended workshop run by Nichola Court. In the morning Nichola began by covering the evolution of Poor Law legislation from the Tudor period up until modern times.

In the afternoon we had access to various documents that really breathed life into the history that Nichola had so capably covered in the morning. It reminded us, in a very sobering way, that the poor were real people, in the real world struggling against unbearable odds. It caused us as attendees to reflect on how the world is now and our current attitudes towards the poor e.g. are there deserving 'scroungers'? It seemed as if the poor (however defined) are always with us and as we move forward we choose new (but old ways) of tackling the 'problem'. The antilocution seems to change but the problem remains the same. Who pays?



Finally.....

I am sure all of the attendees would want to thank Nichola Court for an enjoyable and engaging day. It was well organised, well-paced and was just about right in terms of presentation and material.

So, thank you Nichola.

Michael Matkin

(A summary for the newsletter of an excellent report supplied by Michael and passed onto the Journal Editor)

Christmas Get Together

On December 8th around 25 people gathered amongst the scaffolding at WSRO for the WSAS Christmas get together. People enjoyed 2 excellent quizzes, a talk from Alan Readman as well as wine, mince pies and coffee. Everyone agreed that this informal get together was a marvellous prelude to the festivities of Christmas ahead.

(Incidentally the scaffolding was erected during a process of replacing glass in the roof of WSRO - not for the Christmas get together)



Quiz time at the WSAS get together

THE BOOK SALE: SEPTEMBER 2013

We are holding another book sale to raise funds which can be used to assist the Record Office.

Can you help please by donating books for this sale?

The books should be on local history, preferably of Sussex, or general history, or books on related subjects, such as law.

We have a real need for books in these categories, having sold so much of the Record Office's existing stock in the last WSAS book sale in 2011.

Please hand in any books you can spare to Reception at the Record Office. We are ready to receive them now!

Richard Mant

The Journal

Thanks to everyone who contributed such a wide range of interesting material for the 2012 Journal.

I look forward to receiving contributions for the 2013 edition - please see the inside cover of the current Journal for our requirements as to size, illustrations etc. As previously mentioned, we are hoping to start a 'Notes and Queries' section and I would welcome contributions of short articles [approx. 1000 words or less], requests for information and similar.

I am happy to receive material at any time between now and the end of July 2013 which is the deadline for the 2013 Journal. If possible material should be submitted in electronic format to wsaseditor@yahoo.co.uk.

Helen Whittle - Journal Editor

Events Programme 2013

Sunday 10th February beginning 2.30pm an illustrated talk on 'Chichester in the 1950s' given by Alan Readman and to be held at WSRO.

Please try and make your bookings as soon as possible

Any queries contact - wsascom@btinternet.com

Saturday 16th March, 10.00 - 4.00pm a workshop entitled **Wills and Probate** given by Susan Millard and Caroline Adams and held at WSRO.

Please try and make your booking by March 3rd at the latest.

Any queries contact - wsascom@btinternet.com

Saturday April 13th **AGM** to be held at Sullington Village Hall near Storrington.

Beginning 12.00 for 12.30 - further detail to follow

After the meeting there will be a lecture - topic to be confirmed

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

Any queries contact - wsascom@btinternet.com

Saturday June 8th an opportunity to travel a stretch of the Wey and Arun Canal aboard the canal boat Zachariah Keppel. A 2-hour trip on the Wey and Arun Canal, with guest speaker on board, and with tea at the Onslow Arms on return to Loxwood.

The journey will include going under the new road bridge at Loxwood and through the new lock, something we have not done before. The Zachariah Keppel has a toilet on board.



Arrive at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood, at 1.45 pm latest please. Park in the canal car park behind the Onslow Arms. Boat leaves Loxwood at 2.00 pm and returns at about 4.00 pm.

Please return your slip by Friday May 3rd

There may be occasions when members wish to attend an event but feel they cannot due to transport limitations. Please do not be deterred, we would encourage you to book the event and indicate with your booking slip that you can only attend if it is possible to obtain a lift. Could we also ask please, that any members coming to an event who feel they could give a fellow member a lift let us know with their booking slip. We can then do our best to marry parties together. Thankyou.

WSAS Committee

Caroline Adams - Chairman

Richard Martin - Vice Chairman

Paul Guest - co-opted Hon. Treasurer

Stella Elliot - Secretary

Barrie Keech - Newsletter & Website

Helena Millen - Information Manager

Helen Whittle - Journal Editor

Richard Mant - Committee Member

Joy Eccleston - Publicity Manager

Leigh Lawson - Administrator

Richard Howell - Committee Member

All contactable using wsascom@btinternet.com

Booking Slips

Any query about any event please contact: wsascom@btinternet.com

Sunday 10th February. 2.30 - 4.00pm at WSRO an illustrated talk 'Chichester in the 1950s' given by Alan Readman.

Costs £3 to members & £5 for non-members

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 as soon as possible to, The Honorary Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday 16th March 10.00 - 4.00pm. A workshop entitled Wills and Probate to be given by Susan Millard and Caroline Adams.

Costs to members £8 & non-members £10

Name/s of members attending.....

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

Names of non-members or guests.....

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

Please return slip by 3rd March to, The Honorary Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday June 8th 2013. A 2-hour trip on the Wey and Arun Canal, with guest speaker on board, and with tea at the Onslow Arms on return to Loxwood. The journey will include going under the new road bridge at Loxwood and through the new lock, something we have not done before. The boat is the Zachariah Keppel, with toilet on board. Arrive at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood, at 1.45 pm latest please. Park in the canal car park behind the Onslow Arms. Boat leaves Loxwood at 2.00 pm and returns at about 4.00 pm.

Tea in the Onslow Arms on return.

Cost to members £15 and £17 for guests.

Names of members attending.....

Tel No..... Email, or home address.....

Names of non-members or guests.....

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

Please return slip by Friday, May 3rd, to the Honorary Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN