

The Researcher

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



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Website: westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net

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RECORD OFFICE UPDATE

With the start of another year it is time to look ahead and plan for the future as well as to look back on the achievements and highlights of the previous twelve months at the Record Office.

Jenny Mason, our new Collections Manager, will be starting work with us on 12 January. Jenny has previously worked at Hampshire Record Office, Liverpool Record Office, Tate Britain and most recently as the archivist at the Oxford English Dictionary in Oxford. We are very excited that she is joining the team and she will introduce herself to you all more fully in the next newsletter.

Jenny is joining us at a time when we are about to start work on our Archive Accreditation. Archive Service Accreditation is a new UK wide standard that has been developed by The National Archives (TNA) and replaces the previous system of TNA Inspections and the Self-Assessment Scheme. It is aimed at all organisations holding archive collections and covers both private and public sector archives. As a county record office we will be expected to apply for and achieve Accreditation in order to retain our status as a place of deposit for Public Records. We will be expected to show that we are delivering a high level of service to our users, that we are preserving our collections in line with national standards and that we are a robust, sustainable service which plans and delivers ongoing improvement. It is a fairly rigorous process involving a considerable amount of work and I will keep you updated on our progress during the year. It will be an important piece of work that will demonstrate the quality of our service to our users, depositors, stakeholders and funders. So no pressure!

In 2015 we will continue working with our partners on our current projects including Pass It On with the Chichester Festival Theatre (CFT) and the Graylingwell Heritage Project. Nick Corbo-Stewart, the new CFT Archivist, has written an article in this newsletter to tell you more about his work. There is also a review of our joint

Forthcoming

Events

February 14th Travel in the Past presented by Janet Pennington

March 14th Records Management Workshop held at WSRO

April 18th AGM at Pulborough Village Hall

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workshop with the Friends of CFT, which was a great day and certainly qualifies as one of the highlights of the year. This year we will also be working with the South Downs National Park on their new Secrets of the High Woods Project, which you can also read about below.

A major focus last year was the commemoration of the start of the First World War and the role played by the Royal Sussex Regiment and by the people of West Sussex, both at home and on the front line. The Record Office has been proud to be a part of these events and to take part in all of the project work that has helped to highlight the stories of these men and women over one hundred years ago. Our work will continue throughout 2015 so look out for our new 2015 Time Line in Reception when you next visit the Record Office.

Stories of a different kind were highlighted in a talk by Kate Mosse at the Record Office at the beginning of December and you can read more about this in Katherine Slay's review below. For me Kate's visit was inspirational. It encapsulated the very best of what we do and also the endless possibilities that lie within our walls. The multitude of archives in our strong rooms contain the stories of people, places and events that are waiting to be uncovered by generations of enquiring minds both now and in the future. Equally these records can also be used in new ways to inspire a wealth of creativity, to develop new ideas and to tell new stories to new audiences of all ages. A young school boy once turned to me after a tour of an archive strong room and commented that 'Archives are well wicked Miss'. I couldn't agree more! Happy New Year!

Wendy Walker - County Archivist

Kate Mosse explores the West Sussex Archives

The Record Office has been holding evening talks (on the last Tuesday of the month) for some time now. These have been given by staff and have appealed to a mixed audience of Record Office 'regulars' and those who are interested in the subject. We were delighted to add a bit of variety by holding a talk on a Monday evening in December (the first of the month) and to have a speaker with a different slant on things. This was the author Kate Mosse, talking about how she used the record office when she was researching for and writing her latest book, *The Taxidermist's Daughter*.

I met Kate through attending events at the Festival Theatre, so her first contact with the Record Office in connection with her book was when she emailed me in January, asking for suggestions as to things she might look at. What she wanted was period detail and topography for Fishbourne in 1912, which is where (and when) the book was to be set.

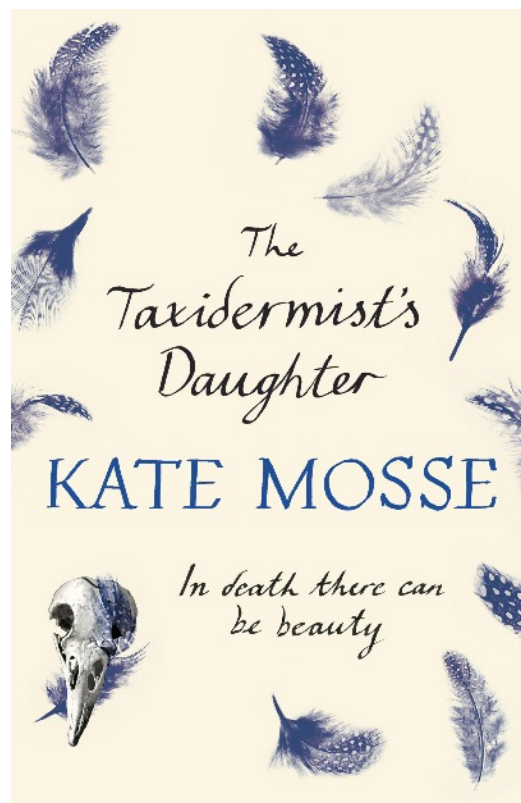
Nearly a year later she regaled us, not just with the background to this book, but on how she arrived at the point where she was writing a book about the village she grew up in. There were two particular 'obsessions' in her childhood years. One was *The Reader's Digest Book of Folklore, Myths and Legends*,



Kate Mosse

which gave rise to an interest in stories that came out of the land. The other was Walter Potter's Museum (in Arundel by the time she was visiting it, although it had started in Bramber) which contained taxidermy – animals and birds displayed in glass cases, forming tableaux with titles such as 'The Guinea Pigs' Band' and 'Who Killed Cock Robin?'

So by January this year, Kate knew that she wanted to write about Fishbourne and taxidermy, but the detail wasn't yet clear in her mind. Going through Record Office copies of *The Chichester Observer* for 1912 gave her some general background, particularly the fact that it was the wettest summer on record. She'd decided the book would be a gothic novel, a type of fiction she described as placing its heroine 'between a rock and a hard place', with the action visceral, violent and fast-moving. She described how she could see someone standing on the sea wall with rain and high tide, and how if this person (who became Connie, her heroine) went one way the sea would get her, and if she went the other way the 'baddie' would get her.



Large-scale maps helped Kate decide where her characters would live: she said that she makes up houses where 'bad things' happen. Graylingwell Hospital provided a 'side plot', but like Kate I'm including no spoilers here. If you haven't read the book, you should – it's a real page turner, gory but gripping!

Katherine Slay

Nick Corbo-Stewart and the Pass It On Project

My name is Nick Corbo-Stewart and I have recently been appointed as the Pass It On Project Archivist for the Chichester Festival Theatre.

I am working to catalogue a unique collection of archive material associated with the Theatre, spanning a time period from its foundation to the present day. This includes a broad range of items such as posters, programs, correspondence, photographs, notes, production scripts, newspaper articles and film to name but a few. All of these records have been generated over the years from theatre productions, actors, visitors, donations, building work, administration and special events.



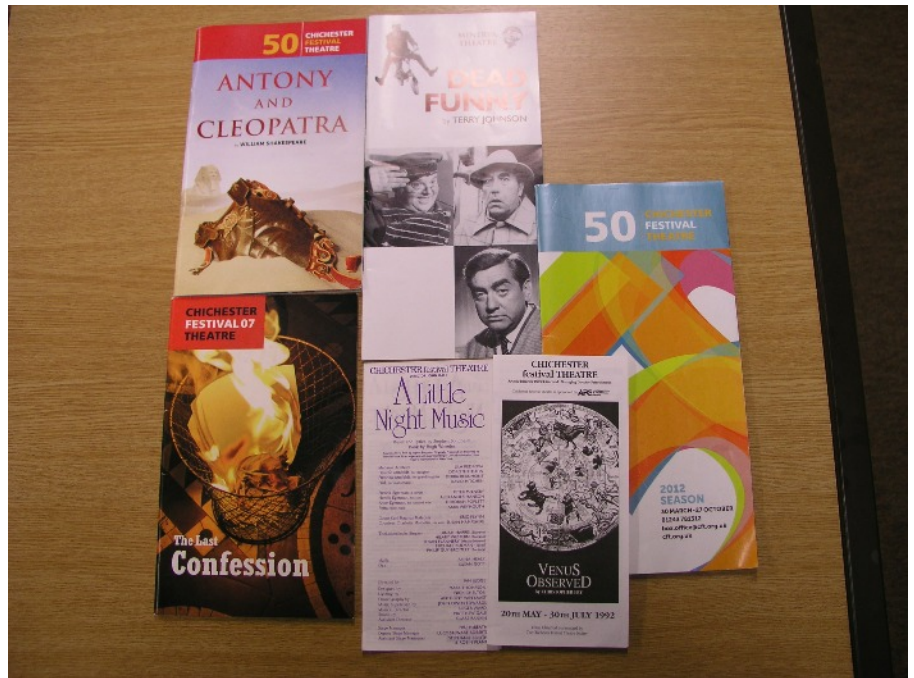
Nick Corbo-Stewart

It is my job to sort and catalogue these items, so making them more accessible to researchers and anyone with a general interest in theatre history. The collection has been deposited with the West Sussex Record Office. It is here, based in a working partnership with Record Office colleagues, that I will complete the project.

I have lived in Sussex for the last fifteen years, during which time I qualified as an Archivist, having studied with the University of Wales in Aberystwyth.

My previous work has included a variety of cataloguing projects both within London and the South East. This has brought me into contact with a broad range of collections, which I have had the privilege through my work to make more accessible for public and researchers alike.

I am therefore very excited to be joining the team, and working with my new colleagues and volunteers, as well as getting to know more about the Festival Theatre in general. I'm in the process of catching up on all the hard work achieved; being encouraged by the constant positive reaction and enthusiasm that our volunteers and partners have shown for the project so far, and wanting to continue the heritage journey that the Chichester Festival Theatre has embarked upon.



Some of the unique posters associated with the theatre

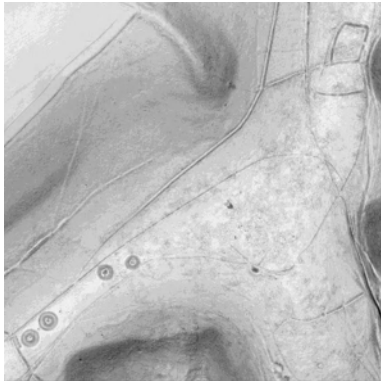


Part of the CFT Archive



The South Downs National Park is hosting an exciting new Heritage Lottery funded project:

'The Secrets of the High Woods'



Bow Hill SHW Lidar

The project is using a remote sensing technology known as Lidar to investigate the hidden history and archaeology of the wooded western downs. Lidar enables us to create detailed topographic models of the ground surface below the woodland canopy, allowing our volunteers to identify a range of archaeological and historic features, many of which will never have been mapped or identified before.

A key part of the project will be contextualising the features we identify and researching landscape development. On Monday the 24th of November, a group of 14 Secrets of the High Woods volunteers underwent an introductory training session hosted by the West Sussex Record Office in Chichester. Volunteers were introduced to the different sources available for research, and were given 'behind the scenes' access to the archives themselves.



Volunteer training at the West Sussex Record Office

Many opportunities for archival research exist within the SHW project, including cartographic, photographic, place-name, and documentary research. Each archive project will be focussed on a different element of the project area's history and development. For more information, or to sign up to our newsletter, please visit the project website: www.southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods.

With thanks to Wendy, Sue, Diane and Nick for a very enjoyable morning.
SHW project team

Events Review

WSAS Annual Conference

October 11th

Comfy chairs, real coffee and lots to look at by way of displays! And on top of that a grandstanding opener from John Sladden of the Harting Society on the Gorgeous Garmens. Like many others, I had always associated 'arty' communities with Amberley, so this was a real eye-opener.

A respectable doctor who moved to Harting from the Midlands and 'ran a tight ship' must have been stretched to the limits by his seven daughters (beautiful, talented and wise) and his two sons (clever and revolutionary). The generally unconventional connections (we needed the family tree on offer) made by these girls, their brothers and off-spring, rolled out like the Dictionary of National Biography – Bertrand Russell, Vita Sackville-West, T.E. Lawrence, Peggy Guggenheim, Laurie Lee, Augustus John and 'Hutch', Jacob Epstein, Lucien Freud – they kept on coming and John's insouciant delivery and asides had us laughing out loud. It was also a salutary lesson on the (unexpected?) tolerance of village communities in the first half of the twentieth century. I am sure I am not the only one who will be ordering the recommended reading – Cressida Connolly's 'The Rare and the Beautiful'.



Caroline giving her presentation

In spite of declaring how daunted she felt to follow such a class act, our own Caroline Adams did us proud, giving us a fascinating introduction to social networking in the sixteenth century, using the cross-border Mervyn family of Bramshott as an example. Only a beautiful brick gatehouse survives from Bramshott Place, now marooned in a gated community. (Queen Elizabeth *did* stay there) but Caroline drew on parallels in her doctoral thesis on Elizabethan progresses to illustrate the 'greasy pole' climbing and house-building exploits of the period. Connected as the Mervyns were with Rogate, Petersfield and

Durford, other names mentioned were familiar to us – Pole, Dudley, Bettisworth, Lewkenor, Palmer, More and Shirley. We were introduced to the archival material behind the research, including a wonderful 3 foot long roll at The National Archives, and delightfully personal correspondence.

After lunch and a bracing walk to the village green, dodging the showers, we were introduced to subjects more specific to the immediate area. Laura Ponsonby and Ian Russell introduced us to Shulbred Priory, lovingly cared for by generations of their family. This is possibly the earliest Augustinian house founded in West Sussex – others were at Easebourne, Hardham, Pynham and Tortington - and like the last-mentioned may

have been something of a 'sin-bin' for misbehaving canons. An intriguing insight into contemporary ecclesiastical patronage was provided by fact that one of the last priors, albeit for a short time, was also a suffragan of London titled 'bishop of Gallipoli' and dean of Chichester!

A reconstructional drawing of the priory as built, helped us orientate ourselves in what remains, and we were given a visual introduction to the delights that have survived – wall paintings, decorated floor tiles, doorways and vaulted undercroft – as well as those still being unearthed in the neighbourhood, where they had migrated after the Dissolution and dereliction of the site.

We were then given a brief introduction by Nic Mann to the local efforts being made to identify, collect and care for Linchmere archive material, challenging the archivists among us, who were keen to offer advice.

The day was brought to a close by Peter Searight with a series of wonderfully evocative slides of the landscape of the area, much of which is in the ownership and care of the Linchmere Society. This must be an almost unique situation for such a community and one which demands a high degree of management, building on historic practices.

The day was an excellent introduction to a corner of the county which is probably unfamiliar to many of our membership, and it must have stimulated a desire to learn more.

A.F.Hughes



Fernhurst Archive Display

VISIT TO THE CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE



On Saturday 8th November members of WSAS had the unique opportunity to hear and see an Archive in the making. We assembled in the Foyer of the newly re-furbished Chichester Festival Theatre and were greeted by Sophie Shaw who is the Heritage Activities Manager for a short backstage tour. Sophie gave a brief history of the theatre comparing the old and new theatre pointing out the new features in the foyer namely that the foyer was now an uncluttered space

continuing the original idea of blending the inside and outside together. We moved onto the "green room" which is meant to be a restful space for the actors awaiting their entrances but this looked more like a clinical canteen. Sophie explained the original idea of the Theatre was conceived by Leslie Evershed Martin one time optician and ex mayor of Chichester when he was watching a television programme of the building of the Stratford Ontario Theatre in Canada. Their idea was to have an open stage or as they now call it a "thrust stage" which projects into the audience. This was thought to be a revolution from the proscenium arch and front tab (curtain) type of theatre but it in fact was harking back to the original type of theatre via Greek and Shakespearean times. The architects, Powell and Moya, who were more into designing social housing than theatres, designed the theatre in a hexagon shape.

The theatre itself was built as cheaply as possible using concrete. The Stratford Ontario theatre had donated Canadian Maple wood from which the original stage was made. Now this wood had re-floored the Green Room. We proceeded via the Costume room where the staff was busily at work for the afternoon's performance of Gypsy. We also saw the Wig room where we were informed that many of the real hair wigs could cost up to £4000. Along the maze of corridors we passed the dressing rooms. This area had all been rebuilt as part of the new project. A light well had been created and was painted by Antonio Malinowski using iridescent paint so that when the light changed so did the triangles of colour. Some of his artwork was to be found in the foyer. We proceeded to look under the stage and saw how the new stage had been created. The pieces are bolted together so any configuration of stage can be achieved. A new orchestra



pit had also been constructed under the front of the stage for this show. Unfortunately we could not go onto the stage or in the scenery dock as this was in use. We progressed to the theatre itself noticing the new blue glass panels up the stairs creating the atmosphere as one entered the "magic of the theatre". Above the lighting gantry the lights in the ceiling of the actual theatre were set to remind you of stars in the night sky. The new £22 million refurbishment has certainly thought of the disabled as there are lifts back and front of stage and a method of disassembling seats for wheelchair access. At the end of the tour we all preceded to the Pimlott building and the Anita Roddick room ready for the talks in the afternoon.

After our packed lunches Friends of The Chichester Festival Theatre joined us. Sophie Shaw gave us a talk on the new Pass It On project. The Heritage Lottery Fund had funded the refurbishment of the Theatre and this ambitious project was to educate, collate and share the 50 year history of Chichester Festival Theatre. Wendy Walker, the

County Archivist, gave a short talk on the involvement of the Record Office. The main speaker of the afternoon was Gillian Edom who had headed the volunteers with the collation of the Archive. She had had a good response from volunteers. The difficulty she explained with theatres is when a show finishes it is on to the next. Any documentary evidence is either discarded or unceremoniously dumped in a box. Likened to the grey squirrel hiding its nuts and then forgetting where he had hidden them the boxes turned out to contain a lot of hidden gems and also some unexpected items. The hard work of the volunteers had taken eighteen months to catalogue and they had digitally scanned over 7000 documents. Such things as posters had been outsourced to other volunteers to deal with. Not only theatrical things had been dealt with but administration documents including ice cream receipts! Her talk was punctuated with a PowerPoint display of photographs and names of all the volunteers.

Ann, one of the volunteers, said how much she had enjoyed the project and how difficult some of the photographs of productions were to identify but that she had found Kate Mosse's book on the 50 year history of the Theatre a great help.

Gillian had said that she felt most of the volunteers were hoping to find the Holy Grail, namely a letter from the then Sir Laurence Olivier who was the first Director of the Theatre back in 1962.

Our next speaker was Katie Hennessey who had trained as a Stage Manager and is at this time helping at the Theatre. She showed an annotated script with lighting and sound cues. She then showed a clip of Amadeus showing the cues as set out in the script. She explained that no "prompters" as such are used in the theatre. It was hoped that the actor who had dived could either help him or herself or hope the fellow actors would get him/her out of the situation. The script looked very complicated and the only pitfall could be if you got so used to it that you could indeed miss a cue.

After a few questions the group were able to look at some of the Archives. I am still wondering if anyone has found the Holy Grail and tucked in some remote corner that letter from Sir Laurence Olivier will be found.

Daphne A. Norton

Christmas Get-together

We had a record number of 30 members at the Christmas Get-together. We enjoyed fresh coffee, mince pies and wine before sitting down to a couple of excellent quizzes. 'Sussex People, Places and Events' prepared by Helena Millen won by Nigel Brown, and twenty questions on 'Old Trades, Terms found in the Archives, Sussex Dialect and Sussex People' prepared by Richard Howell and won by Helen Whittle. We then had an enlightening question and answer session with Wendy Walker the County Archivist who discussed the previous year at the Record Office and plans for next year.

Leigh Lawson



Concentration for the quiz

Events Programme 2015

Saturday February 14th - Travel in the Past: The Problems and Pleasures of the Journey. An illustrated talk by Dr Janet Pennington between 2.30pm and 4.00pm at St Botolphs Church Rooms, Lansdowne Road, Worthing, BN11 4LY. Access via the north entrance in Manor Road.

Travel in the past was not easy, and Sussex was notorious for its bad roads, particularly in the clay regions of the Weald. It was not until after the mid 18th century when Turnpike Acts improved the county's roads, that journeys became less of a problem. This talk, taking in the regions around London and further afield, looks at horses, coaches and plenty of mud. It will make you glad you have a car, or can catch a bus or a train. Even walking could be better than coach travel in the 17th century!

Saturday March 14th. Workshop. Come and join us for a fascinating insight into the Records Management Service at the Record Office. As well as providing an Archive Service, the Record Office also looks after hundreds of thousands of modern records for the County Council, providing a service for records before they become archives. Come and see the hidden side of the Record Office's work and find out how long modern records are retained for. Find out how these records are appraised and selected as archives and have a go at archive appraisal for yourself. To be held at WSRO 11.00am - 4.00pm

10.45-11.00 Arrival and coffee

11.00-12.00 Introduction to Records Management Service at the Record Office

12.00-1.00 Break for lunch (you will need to bring a packed lunch or go out into the town)

1.00-2.00 Selecting Records for Archive Preservation

2.-00-3.00 Practical workshop for everyone: archive appraisal and selection of records for permanent preservation.

3.00-4.00 Tea and feedback on archive appraisal.

Saturday April 18th – AGM at Pulborough Village Hall, starting with coffee/tea on arrival at 11.30 am. The AGM will begin at 12.00 midday, to be followed by lunch and a guest speaker in the afternoon.

The AGM papers and other details will be sent in March. If you should have questions that you wish raised at the AGM, we would appreciate it if they could be submitted by March 7th. This allows the committee an opportunity to investigate and provide a more comprehensive answer than might be possible if the query was raised at the AGM.

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. Thank you.

WSAS Committee

Richard Mant - Chairman

Leigh Lawson - Vice Chairman

Paul Guest - Treasurer

Vacant - Secretary

Barrie Keech - Newsletter & Website

Helen Whittle - Journal Editor

Stella Elliot - Committee Member

Helena Millen - Information Manager

Richard Howell - Committee Member

All contactable using wsascom@btinternet.com

Further Society information is available at the website:

westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net

Booking Slips

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

Events can also be seen at: westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net

Saturday 14th February - Travel in the Past presented by Dr Janet Pennington, to be held at St Botolph's Church Room, Worthing. There is free on-street parking in all side roads near the church with a limited number of spaces inside the church grounds. The church is just over half a mile from West Worthing station. Costs £5 members, £7 non-members (includes tea and biscuits served during an interval in the talk)

Names of members attending

Tel No Email, or home address

Names of non-members.....

Please return slip by February 1st (if possible) to, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

Saturday 14th March - Records Management Workshop to be held at WSRO beginning 11.00am with coffee available from 10.45am.

Costs £8 members, £10 non-members

Names of members attending.....

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

Names of non-members.....

Please return slip by 1st March (if possible) to, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN
