

The Researcher

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

Website: westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net



October 2015

No. 91

WSAS NEWSLETTER OCT 2015: RECORD OFFICE UPDATE

The last few months have been a time of sad endings and new beginnings at the Record Office. We have had to say goodbye to some very close and longstanding friends whilst welcoming newcomers to the fold and looking forward to some exciting times ahead.



Colin at the map table display

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the sudden death of Colin Excell on 7th September. The Chairman of the Sussex Family History Group for many years, Colin was a staunch supporter of the Record Office and we have all been thinking about him and sharing our thoughts and memories with each other. He leaves behind a great legacy and a tribute to Colin is included in this edition of the Newsletter.

This summer we have also had to say goodbye to Percy Allen, a regular visitor at the Search Room and our oldest serving volunteer.

As a longstanding member of WSAS Percy was a regular attender

of WSAS events and I will always remember the enthusiastic way in which he got to grips with our Records Management workshop and tried his hand at appraising modern records earlier this year. At the Record Office he was one of our most conscientious and loyal volunteers, taking part in the Tithe Maps Project in 2008 followed by Joining Up Our Heritage and latterly the Chichester Festival Theatre Project. Sadly he had not been able to come into the Record Office over the last few months but he made a huge contribution to the work of the Record Office over the years and will be sadly missed in the Search Room. A separate tribute to Percy is also included in this Newsletter.

Forthcoming Events

2015

November 14th -
Workshop on Literary
Archives and Creative
Writing

December 12th
Christmas Get Together

2016

February 13th
Workshop at WSRO.

March 13th - Talk and
Films on the Land
Settlement Association

AGM April 16th
**More details will follow
in the new year.**

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

As this newsletter goes to print we have just heard the sad news about the death of Mrs Patricia Gill on 5th October. Mrs Gill had a long and distinguished career at the Record Office joining the staff in 1956, becoming the County and Diocesan Archivist in 1968 and continuing in post until her retirement in 1993. She played a pivotal role in developing the service and the collections and in 1989 she oversaw the development of our new purpose-built Record Office in Orchard Street. For several years after her retirement she continued to come into the office for one or two days a week on a voluntary basis to work on the collections. She leaves behind a tremendous archival legacy and the reputation of the Record Office and the service that it provides owes much to her hard work and commitment. A full tribute will appear in the next newsletter in January.



Whilst coming to terms with all of this sad news we should not forget to recognise current staff achievements including the long service of Bill Gage, Assistant County Archivist, who completed 45 years with the Record Office in September. This certainly makes him the longest serving member of the Record Office staff and may well make him the longest serving staff member across the whole of the County Council, which is an amazing achievement.



Lauren Clifton

From the longest serving to our most recent member of staff, we welcome Lauren Clifton to the Record Office for the next six months to cover for the maternity leave of Nichola Court. Lauren trained as an archivist at University College Dublin and has worked on the Conservative Party Archive at the Bodleian Library in Oxford as well as at the Library of the London Mathematical Society and East Grinstead Library. She is current combining her part-time work with us with her volunteer role at The Keep working on the Mass Observation Archive for the University of Sussex.

The next six months will be a very busy time for the Record Office as we will be upgrading some of our strong room shelving, replacing static shelving with mobile racking in order to maximise capacity and create much-needed space for incoming archives. The bulk of the work is likely to be carried out between January and March 2016 but we will also be doing preparatory work before then to relocate some of the archives off-site temporarily ready for the new shelving to be installed. Some of our archives will therefore be unavailable while this is happening and there may also be periods when the Search Room is closed or operating a limited service. We will be doing our utmost to keep any disruption to a minimum and apologise in advance for any inconvenience caused. It is however all in a good cause and will enable us to take in many more archives to add to our wonderful collections. We will have more details shortly on the timings of this work so do watch out on our website for further details or ask us when you come in or are planning a visit.

Over 9,000 people a year visit the Record Office to research their family history, learn about the history of their local area, investigate a historical topic or legal issue, or study for a school, college or university project. Many of our visitors are individual researchers but there is a growing interest in group access and educational activities from schools, colleges, universities, community groups and other organisations. Similarly there is an increasing demand for archives to be made

available online and for more of our growing collections to be catalogued so that they can be made available both for visitors to the Record Office and for remote users of our service.

With this in mind we have been investigating ways in which we can meet this demand and are proposing to close the Search Room on Mondays for individual researchers in order to focus more staff time on cataloguing and digitisation and, in particular, to open up the Search Room for more outreach and educational activities. At the same time we will be suspending our late openings on Thursday evenings and closing at 4.45 instead of 7.30. The vast majority of visits are now made during normal office hours and there is very limited demand for Thursday evenings. Again by shifting resources away from our late-opening on Thursdays, we will be better able to focus on activities that will improve access to the collections and widen participation. We will still be open on Saturdays as usual for those who cannot come in during the working week or who prefer to come at weekends.

These changes will come into effect in January but in the meantime we will be carrying out a consultation to find out your views on this and to ask you what you would like us to do and offer on Mondays. Further details about this will be available on our website shortly together with the on-line consultation. Please do let us know what you think. A paper copy will also be available for you to complete at the Record Office. If you would like a copy of the consultation to be sent to you in the post, please contact us by email to let us have your name and address (record.office@westsussex.gov.uk) or ring the Record Office on 01243 753602.

You may have seen in the media recently that the Record Office has been asked to help with the preservation of the Shoreham Community Archive to record the community response to the Shoreham Air Crash on 22 August:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/news/unique-community-archive-launched-following-shoreham-tragedy/>

The Shoreham Community Archive page is also now live on the WSCC website:

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/campaigns/shoreham-air-crash/>

We have started work on conserving all of the cards, tributes and messages left on the bridge and are issuing memory sticks to anyone wishing to donate photos or film footage. This archive will also include the books of condolence in due course as well as copies of all the press and media coverage. The community archive will thus complement the official records of this tragic event. It feels really important that we help to record the community involvement and the public response as well as the official archive and preserve all of this for all those involved and for future generations to see and understand. Our work on the archive will be continuing over the next six months and there will be more news on this in the next Newsletter.

As the winter nights start to draw in we have a great series of Tuesday Evening Talks to tempt you with, alongside the impressive programme of WSAS events, so do check out details of all these in the Newsletter and book your places. On Saturday 12 December we will be holding the annual WSAS members Christmas event at the Record Office. In partnership with WSAS we have been able to purchase a number of West Sussex archives in auctions and private sales over the last year. We will be telling you more about these exciting acquisitions on 12 December when you will also have the opportunity to see these archives for yourself. So do come along and I look forward to seeing you there.

Wendy Walker - County Archivist

Colin Excell (1944-2015)

My memories of Colin are many and various as indeed were all of his interests in life. Looking back over all the years that I have known him I will always remember him for his constant energy and enthusiasm, his endless support for both East Sussex and West Sussex Record Offices and of course for his longstanding commitment and work for the Sussex Family History Society.

Colin joined the Society Family History Group by following in the footsteps of his parents, who were members before him, and it was here that he met his future wife, Judy Warren. They were married at Sompting Church in December 1981 and went to live at Goring on Sea. Both Judy and Colin remained actively committed to the Society and Colin became Chairman in 2008 only standing down earlier this year after ensuring a permanent home for the Society at The Keep.

Judy has very kindly provided me with details of Colin's background, early years and working life, much of which illustrates his great zest for life and the way in which he embraced and immersed himself in each new experience as it came along. Judy writes that:

Francis Colin Excell was born 8 August 1944 to Stanley and Phyllis Excell at Guildford Hospital, Surrey; this was a hospital that used to be a workhouse so he would sometimes say he was "born in the workhouse".

His family actually lived in Observatory Road, East Sheen. He went first to Tower House, East Sheen and later to St Paul's School (on the old site). He was in the choir of Christ Church, East Sheen and, at about the age of seven, was chosen to sing the "Once in Royal David's City" solo at the carol service when his elder brother, Robin, had been chosen for one of the readings.

Colin was very practical and inquisitive; at the age of four he sat watching a workman doing 'wood graining' to correct war damage. After moving with his parents to Worthing, Sussex he did some wood graining at the new house for his father from the knowledge gained.

He had taken up rowing while at St Paul's and naturally became a cox. Before there was a 'national squad' for rowing he was coxing it (Barns Cottage) and had hoped to attend the Tokyo Olympics; only coxless fours went however but he was awarded his national colours.

He was involved with raising money for the building of the daughter church (St Peters) for St Marys at Sompting, Sussex. In fact he eventually did four son-et-lumières: Chailey Heritage, Cuckfield Park, Sompting St Marys, and St Marys Goring. He also did sound and lighting effects for various amateur theatrical societies.

He responded to calls for volunteers for Neighbourhood Watch and in 2000 became an early member of the West Downs Neighbourhood Watch Search Team. He was called out on several searches until 2010.

My own memories of Colin began at East Sussex, when I joined the staff in 1993 and often saw both Colin and Judy at family history fairs and SFHG events. However it was whilst working on The Keep in 2003, when the vision for a new archive building was first explored, that we started to work together on a regular basis with Colin leading the way in developing and establishing the new Sussex Family History Room as an integral part of The Keep. Colin took part in design workshops with the architect, visited the archaeological survey of the site before construction work began, came with us to furniture showrooms in Clerkenwell to look at desks and chairs, met with IT officers and went on site tours as the new building began to take shape. Colin was there at the beginning of the journey, when the idea of The Keep was no more than an architect's bubble diagram on a flip chart, and he was there at the end when

the building was officially opened and he met the Queen. In between he worked tirelessly to help us deliver the dream.



Colin and Wendy Walker at the archaeological survey on Woollards Field prior to construction of The Keep.

When I moved to West Sussex in 2013 it was very good to be able to work together once more. Colin remained a staunch supporter of archives as a member of the WSRO User Forum and the West Sussex Archives Society and was a regular attender of our events. On a personal level I will very much miss his friendship and support. He always greeted me with great enthusiasm and a cheery smile on his face. We will always remember him for everything that he has done for archives and for the Sussex Family History Group, for all that he has achieved and for the tremendous legacy that he leaves behind for us all.

Farewell Colin you are much missed.

With many thanks to Judy Excell for the details about Colin's life

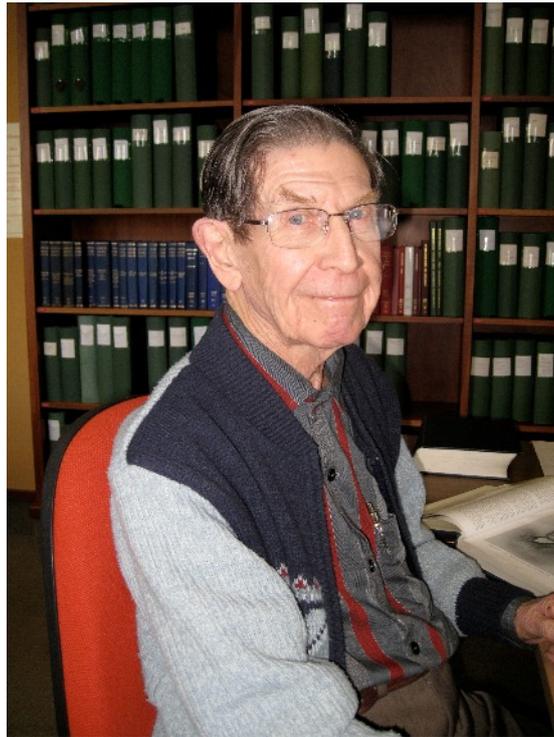


Colin with SFHG Committee on a site tour at The Keep

Percy Allen

We are very sad to announce the death of Percy Allen on 30th August 2015 at the age of 98. Percy was a popular and cheerful member of WSAS, regularly attending our meetings when he could get to the venue using public transport.

Percy was the oldest volunteer at the Record Office and played an important part in the volunteer teams. Gillian Edom, Project Officer and friend, wrote about him in a previous article, and her words have been adapted for this obituary. Gillian wrote that every week Percy travelled in from Bognor to Chichester on the bus. He took on his role as a volunteer extremely conscientiously, to the extent that sometimes it was necessary to tell him to stay at home in times of bad weather!



He first became one of 100 volunteers on the Tithe Maps Digitisation Project in 2008 and assisted in the transcription of the Tithe Apportionment documents. He was careful and reliable, which is just what was needed, and so at the end of the project, moved on to the Joining Up Our Heritage Project.

One of the most exciting tasks he did during that project, was to help transcribe 'Doreen's Diaries'. Doreen was a Land Girl during the 2nd World War and 20 diaries span the period from 1939 to 1949. This was a huge task and on several occasions, Percy and Gillian visited Doreen to collect and deposit the diaries. Gillian said it was a privilege for her to experience some fascinating conversations between people whose memories stretched back so far.

Percy was one of the first volunteers to be involved in the recent 'Pass it On' project in partnership with Chichester Festival Theatre.

After the CFT project finished he started working on some useful typing projects, producing lists of uncatalogued documents, including the Miscellaneous Acts that are stored in boxes on the searchroom shelves. This makes them more accessible as the list can be searched electronically. Only last year he told staff that he loved volunteering for the Record Office as it made him feel more entitled to have been drawing his pension for so many years! He had just managed to reach his 98th birthday on 18th August.

Forthcoming Events at the Record Office and WSAS

Events Review

Forthcoming events at the Record Office

Family history workshops

If you're new to family history or want to find out more about the sources available and how best to use them, you may be interested in the Record Office 'coffee time' workshops. They start at 10am on the first Wednesday of the month. On 4 November, Susan Millard and Rhodri Lewis will provide an introduction to the archives relating to crime and punishment.

Tuesday talks

WSAS members are also invited to our ongoing series of Tuesday talks, starting at 7pm, which continue throughout the autumn and winter:

- "Tales from the Rails" - stories from the days of steam on 27 October 2015
- "A Peep at the Pixies" - exploring the life and literary archive of Anna Eliza Bray (1790-1883) on 24 November 2015
- Screen Archive South East - Developing and Preserving the Screen Heritage of Sussex on 26 January 2016
- Archives in the Footlights - Chichester Festival Theatre at the Record Office on 23 February 2016
- Chichester in the 1950s on 29 March 2016
- "Dogs at War" - The British use of dogs during the First World War on 26 April 2016
- West Sussex and the Battle of the Somme on 28 June 2016

Book now!

If you'd like to come along to a coffee time workshop or a Tuesday talk, please call 01243 753602 to book and pay (advance booking essential). Tickets cost £7.50, which includes refreshments. Visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro for more details.

Don't forget the Historic Environment Sessions

If you would like to find out more about the archaeology and landscape of your area you can book a one-to-one session with Rachel Salter, the West Sussex Historic Environment Record (HER) Officer, who will be in the Search Room on Friday 30 October 2015, Friday 27 November 2015 and Friday 18 December 2015, 9.30am-1.00pm. Tickets are free but please book in advance by [contacting the Record Office](#).

WSAS AGM IN 2016

The date of next year's AGM is Saturday, April 16th.

More details will become available in the New Year.

WSAS Visit to the High Salvington Mill by David Coward

Not unlucky for any as 13 members gathered at the High Salvington Mill on the edge of the South Downs above Worthing on Saturday afternoon 4 July 2015. Met by several volunteer members of the Mill's Charitable Trust the visitors were briefed on intended proceedings and split into 2 groups under the guidance of two charming and totally committed gentlemen introduced as "Miller Bob" and "Miller John".



Detailed explanations were given about the history of the Mill which is understood to have been built circa 1750 but there is every reason to believe there was an earlier construction known as the Durrington Post Mill on or near the same site in 1615. It operated until Edwardian times but was put up for sale in 1906 when it was purchased as a commercial venture as a site for attracting tourists at a time when members of the "working class" were gathering interest in travel and historical sites.

The building itself is almost entirely made of wood with a 2' x 2' bulk of oak known as the buck extending across the width and supporting all the working parts which are suspended from it. Designed to work two sets of milling stones, the complete structure above ground level can be turned by one person to set it to the correct position to catch the wind. Around the bottom area there is once again a wooden roundhouse which is a re-construction after the earlier 20th century change of use to a tea room which had been built of cast concrete.

Originally there were likely to have been only two sails but in the 1960s through to the 1980s restoration work was carried out and the mill now has 4 separate sails, two of which are frames with cloth coverings and the other two are made of adjustable wooden slats. In 1991 after a gap of 90 years the mill re-started operations and is now in use when the wind is favourable and visitors are in attendance. Quality flour created by the milling operations is available for purchase in the shop which also has memorabilia and books about milling.



As part of the visit arrangements the inside of the mill was inspected and then refreshments were provided by the volunteer helpers, with especial interest in their lovely cakes. Thanks are due to Helena Millen for her efforts in organising the visit and making everyone so welcome, as did the Windmill team.

Full details about the Windmill, including special events and opening times, can be found at <http://www.highsalvingtonwindmill.co.uk/>

Visit to Shulbrede Priory on 20 September 2015, by Susan C. Djabri

Members of the West Sussex Archives Society enjoyed a most interesting and very pleasant visit to Shulbrede Priory, which lies in a quiet and remote part of north-western Sussex, near Linchmere, some five miles south-west of Haslemere. We were fortunate with the weather – the sun shone and we were able to have tea in the garden – but we profited most from the opportunity to see the remains of this 12th century Augustinian Priory, now a treasured family home. Relatively little remains of the original Priory – the church and cloisters have gone, and only part of the southwest corner of the lodging remains, containing an undercroft, part of the refectory and, above it, the Prior's great chamber, with a high hammerbeam roof. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the Priory became a farmhouse on the Cowdray estate, but the Prior's chamber was used as a manorial court, with a 17th century fresco bearing the arms of King James I. The most famous and celebrated of several other delicately coloured frescoes in this chamber depicts the animals celebrating the birth of Christ, with a cock crowing "Christus natus est", a duck quacking "quando quando", a raven croaking "in hac nocte", a bull bellowing "ubi ubi?" and a lamb bleating "in Bethlehem". Another fresco shows three Elizabethan ladies whose faces have been lost due the fact that the local lads amused themselves by shooting at them with bows and arrows! The floor of the undercroft has a number of tiles which are of a distinctive Shulbrede pattern, widely copied. Many more fragments of such tiles have been found in the grounds.

In 1902 the Priory was leased and later bought by Arthur Ponsonby, son of Sir Henry Ponsonby, private secretary to Queen Victoria. Arthur was a scholar, writer and politician, who in 1898 had married Dorothea (Dolly), the daughter of Sir Hubert Parry, the composer. They had two children, Elizabeth and Matthew. Arthur, who held pacifist views during the First World War, became Labour M.P. for Brightside, Sheffield, and was created Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede by Ramsay Macdonald in 1930. He devoted much of his life and resources to the preservation of Shulbrede Priory, which was much loved by his whole family. His father-in-law, Sir Hubert Parry, was a frequent visitor and composed a series



of ten piano pieces, known as the "Shulbrede Tunes", published in 1914, which celebrated the house and the people who lived there. A room in the Priory has been dedicated to Sir Hubert Parry, with an exhibition celebrating his life and work, and another is devoted to Arthur Ponsonby, his family, his political career and the books that he wrote. We were fortunate in being shown around the house by his grand-daughter, Miss Laura Ponsonby, who still lives there, and her brother-in-law. At the end of the tour a delicious tea, with home-made cakes, was served in the garden, where a number of chickens, ducks and geese roamed around the Priory fishpond, adding to the delights of the day.



Events Programme

Saturday November 14th Workshop - Literary Archives and Creative Writing at the Record Office

Come and find out about the authors and writers whose records can be found amongst the archives at the Record Office. Explore the records that they have left behind and how the county has inspired generations of writers over the centuries. Follow in the footsteps of Kate Mosse, find out how it is done and have a go yourself!

10.45-11.00	Arrival and coffee
11.00-12.00	Introduction to Literary Archives at the Record Office using original archives
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	Sources to inspire Creative Writers
2.00-3.00	Practical workshop
3.00-4.00	Tea and feedback

Note - this event is limited to 12 places and only 5 remain. If your booking should arrive after all the places are booked we will return your cheque. BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR ADDRESS.

Saturday December 12th. The WSAS Christmas Get Together for members and their guests to be held at WSRO from 10.00 am to 12.00 midday. Mince pies, wine and a chance to ask those questions you have been itching to ask of the County Archivist. The event is free but we need to know numbers so please complete a booking form.



Events to come in 2016

Saturday February 13th will be a workshop to be held at WSRO.

Sunday March 13th will be a talk and films on the Land Settlement Association to be held at WSRO.

Saturday April 16th will be the AGM

There maybe 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

<i>Richard Mant - Chairman</i>	<i>Jane Mant - Membership Secretary</i>
<i>Leigh Lawson - Vice Chairman</i>	<i>Stella Elliot - Committee Member</i>
<i>Susan Nicel - Treasurer</i>	<i>Barbara Ely - Committee Member</i>
<i>Richard Howell - Acting Secretary</i>	<i>Gillian Thompson - Committee Member</i>
<i>Barrie Keech - Newsletter & Website</i>	<i>Holly Wright - Committee Member</i>
<i>Helena Millen - Information Manager</i>	<i>Helen Whittle - Journal Editor</i>
<i>Wendy Walker - County Archivist</i>	

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 November 14th - Workshop on Literary Archives and Creative Writing to be held at WSRO

Cost: £8 members £10 non-members

Names of members attending.....

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

Names of non-members.....

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

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

Please be sure to include your address, so that in the possible event we are over-booked we can return your cheque.

Saturday 12th December - The WSAS Christmas Get Together for members and their guests, to be held at WSRO Chichester from 10.00am to 12.00 midday. The event is free but we need to know numbers so please complete a booking form.

Names of members attending.....

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

Names of guests.....

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

