

# The Researcher



NEWSLETTER OF THE WEST SUSSEX ARCHIVES SOCIETY  
THE FRIENDS OF THE WEST SUSSEX RECORD OFFICE

## West Sussex Record Looks to the Future

As the New Year begins, we find ourselves in lockdown once again with the Search Room closed and most of the staff working from home to keep everyone safe. As before we are offering a service remotely, answering enquiries and helping people as much as we can whilst having limited access to the archives themselves.

In the meantime, we are continuing to take in material for our COVID-19 Community Archive in partnership with Screen Archive South East and The Novium Museum so that we can document the latest developments and the ongoing impact of the pandemic in West Sussex. We are also working with our colleagues in Screen Archive South East on the next edition of West Sussex Unwrapped, the multimedia project that we launched during lockdown last year with a 10-week series of film clips and archives on a variety of different topics. The first series proved to be hugely popular and in December we put together a West Sussex Unwrapped Christmas Special featuring some wonderful film footage of a family Christmas at East Grinstead in the late 1960s together with a multitude of festive records from the archives featuring pantomimes and carol singers, festivities and feasts, war-time experiences, a Shippam's Christmas and the Lord of Misrule.

[www.westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/westsussexunwrapped20](http://www.westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/westsussexunwrapped20)

In December we heard that West Sussex Unwrapped had been selected by The National Archives to appear in their annual publication, A Year in Archives 2020. This brings together stories from organisations across the country to celebrate the exciting, creative work of archives and is based on the sector vision, Archives Unlocked. This is the second time that we have made it - A Year in Archives 2018 included the Sussex Declaration story.

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/a-year-in-archives/a-year-in-archives-2020/highlights/east-and-south-east](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/a-year-in-archives/a-year-in-archives-2020/highlights/east-and-south-east)

West Sussex Unwrapped Series 2 begins on 18 January with the release of a promotional film featuring highlights of the coming season. The first episode will be launched on 16 February focusing on the history and development of Crawley New Town with a film

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

**Saturday  
20th February 2021  
ZOOM ONLINE  
PRESENTATION**

“AN ILLUSTRATED  
WALK AROUND OLD  
STEYNING TOWN”  
By: Dr. Janet Pennington

**Meeting ID:  
844 7646 2507**

**Passcode:  
260705**

Log on from: 1:50pm  
Talk begins: 2pm

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

HAVE YOU PAID?  
2021 SUBSCRIPTIONS  
DUE 1ST JANUARY

**JANUARY 2021  
ISSUE 112**

of the royal visit in 1958 to open the Queens Square Shopping Centre. Future monthly episodes will include Women's Suffrage in West Sussex, the South Downs, Shoreham Harbour, West Sussex cinemas, schools, landed estates and ancient fairs. All coming to your screens very shortly.

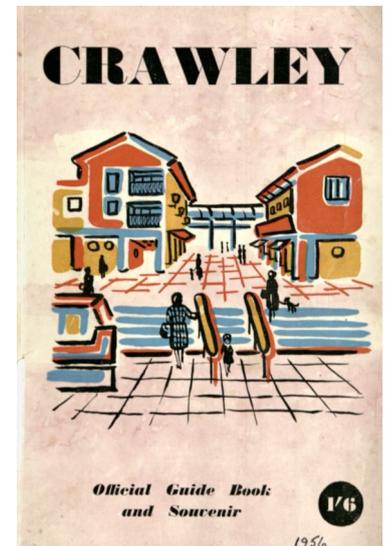
[www.westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/west-sussex-unwrapped-21](http://www.westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/west-sussex-unwrapped-21)

With so many events and activities cancelled over the last few months and restrictions on our ability to travel, Record Offices across the UK have been exploring new ways to reach people and open up access to the collections. West Sussex Unwrapped is a case in point and online events and talks are also featuring in our work and plans for the future. These will never be a substitute for seeing and discovering the real thing but they do offer ways for people to engage with the archives from further afield and to explore the collections in different ways. Whilst we cannot attempt to make all of our archives available online, we can focus on key classes of records and themes through projects and partnership work. Our Transatlantic Ties Project will result in a wide range of documents about America and West Sussex becoming available online and it is hoped that we will be able to do the same with our proposed Sussex Military History Project in the future.

Last year we entered into a partnership with Ancestry and East Sussex Record Office to digitise the parish registers, wills and electoral registers of Sussex and make them available on line. Digitisation began in both offices in September and good progress is being made. It will however take time for all this work to be carried out and for the indexing and website work to be completed. I will keep you updated on our progress in forthcoming newsletters and let you know when these pan Sussex resources are ready to go live on the Ancestry website. The project will provide our users with high quality colour images of these resources, which will be available for use free of charge at both Record Offices and at the libraries across both counties.

We start 2021 with the promise of things to come but sadly in the midst of much uncertainty and loss. In these difficult and unprecedented times, I would like to wish you all a very happy, healthy and above all a safe new year.

**Wendy Walker**



Crawley Office Guide Book  
(AM967/7/1)

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## WSAS Committee

*Philip Robinson - Chairman*

*Leigh Lawson - Vice Chairman*

*Susan Nicel - Treasurer*

*Richard Howell - Secretary*

*Sophie Wood - Newsletter & Website*

*Jane Mant - Membership Secretary*

*Helen Whittle - Journal Editor*

*Susan Millard - Information Manager*

*Jeff Staniforth - Committee Member*

*Wendy Walker - County Archivist*

All contactable using: [contact@wsas.co.uk](mailto:contact@wsas.co.uk)

Further Society information is available at the website: [www.wsas.co.uk](http://www.wsas.co.uk)

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## WSAS Chairman's Report - January 2021

This edition of the Researcher honours a former Chair of WSAS, Dr Annabelle Hughes, and reflects something of the breadth and depth of local history in West Sussex. Local historians draw inspiration and illumination from our Record Office. Hence the importance of renewing your subscription: by cheque or BACS to sort code 20-20-62 account 10942073 with your reference, your name and initial.

WSAS is a societal member of the British Association [BALH] for Local History and as such each of our members is entitled to a discount for selected online webinars and talks. If you are interested, go to [balh.org.uk](http://balh.org.uk) and use the unique code F-21628K.

Again, my thanks.

**Philip Robinson**

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### Ferring History Group

Ferring History Group grew out of the interest aroused during 'Ferring History Week' in 2000, as part of the Millennium Celebrations. Two local history enthusiasts, Kathleen Worvell and Joyce Cooper arranged a series of talks and displays, which were very well received and at a further showing of a compilation of amateur ciné film of Ferring in the 1930s the audience was asked if they would like to have a regular programme of presentations on local and county history. Again, there was a warm response, and a steering committee was formed. I had just moved into Ferring and knew nothing of its history, but I offered my services as Secretary and have continued in that role for the last 20 years.

We have held meetings every quarter since 2001 (until Covid wiped out three-quarters of our 2020 programme) and have never had less than 50 attenders – on several occasions we have had around 100. We started publishing a regular magazine in 2001, we have guided walks and visits in Spring Summer and Autumn, we have a web site with many pages on the village's history ([www.ferringhistorygroup.co.uk](http://www.ferringhistorygroup.co.uk)) and we always have a stall at the Village Summer Fair and the Christmas Fair. We meet in the Village Hall and there is very much a 'club' atmosphere at our meetings, with old and new friends having a chat during the coffee break, and we have an additional 'Social' meeting every December.

The meetings were originally 'pay as you go', and visitors are still welcome on this basis but some five years ago we set up an annual subscription (£10, £15 for a couple) giving admission to all our meetings and activities (apart from the Social), which includes loan of books from our large collection of local and regional history volumes, discounts on our publications and access to a 'members' only' section of the web site. Just before Covid we had 140 members. Between events, we keep in touch with them through email circulars.

Most of the magazine and web site material, and some presentation material comes from our own research. A lot of groundwork was done by Frank Leeson, who passed on his archives, and Richard Standing (the historian of East Preston and Kingston), who both transcribed many important documents from the Record Office back in the 1970s. Like other local history groups, no doubt, we have very few members who take part in research work. We emphasise that the internet provides many opportunities to discover and interpret original sources, and that the Local Studies Library at Worthing has very good secondary sources but we have not had many members who have taken that opportunity – let alone made the trip to the Record Office.

Apart from our Magazine, we have produced a booklet on Ferring's War Memorial, and our Chairman recently produced a revised version of the Guide to our local church. Last year, I produced, with the help of a few of our members, 'The Day before Yesterday – Ferring in the 20th Century'. It sold over 270 copies, in addition to 25 complimentary copies, and I now have just 5 left. Now I am working on a similar volume on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. I can't wait to get back to Orchard Street.

**Ed Miller**

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## **Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders**

Come April 2021 we are 25 years old. The group was started in 1996 by three friends meeting in the Gardeners Arms in West Street, Sompting. Bob Brown, Phil Fry who has published two books and Mike Prince who had the inspiration and did all the setting up for "Sompting Old". Initially meetings were held in members' homes with an in-house speaker or general discussion. Exhibitions were held in Lancing Library based on large sheets of card attached to their dedicated space on the wall. Members were invited to submit articles on an agreed subject.

We eventually needed more space and moved out of members' houses, followed by another move to the Harriet Johnson Centre in Loose Lane Sompting, the old National School building. A committee had been formed and eventually we had a Constitution, a bank account and a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was made.

The Lottery Fund provided enough money to purchase equipment including a scanner capable of scanning the Sompting Old negatives as Mike's photographic equipment had reached the point of no return and it was impossible to reproduce any of the 1,000 or so images then held. A lot of scanning and cataloguing followed together with forms and accounts.

As a group we had a speaker or activity every month along with a local walk of interest and in 2016 we held a large event in Lancing at the Tabernacle Hall with displays of all our exhibitions, photographs of Lancing and various local groups were invited. Members have produced booklets for sale and along the way we established where Anna Sewell lived in Lancing, where WWII bombs landed in the villages, the fact that John Oliver Miller of Highdown was a first cousin to John Oliver Miller of Lancing rather than the same person and the list goes on.

We have attended Sussex Family History Group events with a display and booklets for sale along with visits to the WSAS conferences. Sompting Old has been held nearly every year now either as part of the Sompting Festival or as a stand-alone exhibition when we have the use of the Centre and grounds.

We held our usual meeting early in March 2020 but since then have been locked down and even when the Centre re-opened with social distancing in place we decided to wait until we could all meet safely rather than have to deny entry to some members when capacity was reached. However, after various discussions the Committee decided to set up an email chat room which started early in April, and as long as everyone agreed to their email address appearing then articles can be sent to our Editor who sends them out a couple of times a week and members can join in with comments, information and pictures. Luckily we have a large store of exhibition work to draw on.

**Eileen Colwell, Secretary Lancing & Sompting Pastfinders**

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## Chichester History Society

In January 1985, Chichester Local History Society held its inaugural meeting on an arctic evening, in the New Park Road Community Centre. Ever since then, except in the recent age of Covid, the Society has met in the very same venue, on the second Wednesday of each month from September to June. Its brainchild and first Secretary was Ken Green; he is still an active, elderly, member of the Society.

Right from the start, CLHS had a lot going for it. Perhaps the surprise is that it took so long for Chichester to acquire such a Society. The city has a rich history – Roman, Mediaeval, Georgian, whatever, we've got it, with huge scope for local history research. We are the County Town of West Sussex, with a Cathedral. Within a literal stone's throw of where we meet are the Roman City Walls. Just across the city is the West Sussex Record Office, with potential speakers aplenty, usually for free. Ditto the University, up College Lane. Our first Patron was the Duke of Richmond; he gave a fine speech about Goodwood's connection with Chichester at our rather grand Millennium Dinner in 2000. As for our charismatic first Chairman, Philip Harris, he just happened to be M.D. of Phillimore's, back then the country's leading publisher of local history books, with its HQ nearby at Shopwyke. His ten-minute monthly introductions to the Society's speaker were always memorable: uproariously funny and hugely politically incorrect, getting every meeting off to a great start.

In the subsequent 36 years it is no cliché to say that the Society has from gone strength to strength. At one stage we had a waiting list as the Auditorium could only cope with 140 of us. Our annual Journal, now 60 pages in full colour, is of real quality. We have revived the publication of the 'Chichester Papers' (which were a series of 55 monographs edited between 1955 and 1968 by Francis Steer, the County Archivist, of blessed memory). Ours are called, with stunning clarity if little originality, the New Chichester Papers. There have been ten so far, edited by Alan Green, our Society Programme Secretary, and author of many excellent books on aspects of Chichester local history. Alan is a native Cicestrian; his primary school classroom back in the 1950s was the very room where our Society meets each month. Such continuity.

I joined the Society in its first year. I was a History Master at Chichester High School for Boys, with a strong belief in the value of local history as a teaching and learning tool. Down the years I have been the Society's Chairman, Journal Editor (twice), Secretary (twice, still am) and Summer Outing organiser. We journeyed to such places as Lewes, Southampton, Brighton, Buckler's Hard, Guildford, Oxford, Selborne, Chawton, though I was always made only too well aware that the main requirement of the day's itinerary was a top notch afternoon cream tea in a sunny country garden somewhere. The 53-seater was always full. I've given over a dozen talks to the Society, and written plenty of Journal articles down the years. During Lockdown I wrote and circulated a weekly article about Chichester's history to our members, of whom well over 100 are on our group email. I kept it going for six months, but like Joe Wicks, eventually ran out of steam. I also self-published 'In Search of Lavant' (£10), 168 pages; sales are going well, but some still available, from me! The Society is close to my heart, and has led to strong friendships here in Chichester. Long may, long will, the Society flourish.

**Andrew Berriman**

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## Lavant Local History

Even the current pestilence could not halt the study of history in Lavant. The usual monthly meetings in the Church hall ceased and from March were replaced by newsletters e-mailed to the 40 members of the group. Since August 2020 meetings have been held on Zoom, which is not accessible to all, but does allow people who would not be able to come to a meeting, to 'attend'. In the Newsletters the most popular items featured photographs taken in the village over the last 140 years. During the first lockdown the Lavant History Project (the name given to the Lavant History group) also transcribed the eleven censuses of East, West and Mid Lavant as well as the 1939 Register. This will prove invaluable in meeting one of the longer terms aims which is to produce house histories for the whole parish.

In October 2019 the Sustainable Communities Fund of the South Downs National Park Trust awarded the Lavant History Project match funding for its 'Lavant Lives' project. Work had begun with partners such as the Goodwood Estate, the Parochial Church Council and Launchpad (a local charitable trust). And then came lockdown. Some aspects of the project had to be suspended – such as going into the homes of residents and recording their experiences – but others kept going. Most significantly, agreement had been reached that four interpretation boards will be set up Lavant which will explore and explain the cultural heritage of the village. A graphic designer and artist who lives in Lavant, Richard Whincop, was commissioned to help produce the boards. One board will be by St Nicholas Church in Mid Lavant and it tells the stories of some of the ordinary folk who lie in the graveyard. Another board is on the Centurion Way and being close to the Eastmead Industrial Estate (soon to be housing?) and it concentrates on the working lives of the people in Lavant. A third board will be near the Recreation Ground in East Lavant and this examines some aspects of prehistory and concentrates on the Chichester Entrenchments. Lavant was a 'Goodwood village' and so the fourth board, which will be at the bottom of Chalkpit Lane, the old main road to London, will explore both communications and the impact of Goodwood on Lavant. The research has all been turned into content and designs for the boards, planning permission has already been gained for some of the boards, consultations with the South Downs National Park have continued and the printing and making up of the boards have been commissioned. We hope that in 2021 visitors to Lavant will be able to see these boards and benefit from the walks leaflets which will connect them.

Local history research in Lavant has continued, but Zoom meetings can never match the social gathering which is so much part of any local organisation's programme. We very much look forward to seeing people in 3D again.

**Dr. James McInnes**  
[lavanthistoryproject@gmail.com](mailto:lavanthistoryproject@gmail.com)

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## Yapton & Ford Local History Group

The forming of the Group in 1992, was the natural progression from a weekly workshop organised by the Sussex Editor, Tim Hudson, of the Victoria County History publications. The aim of the workshop was to research the history of the village of Yapton. Following the completion of the course several of the researchers formed the Group with the aim of continuing with the project. Because of the special relationship that Yapton has with its neighbouring parish it was decided to include the village of Ford into the study area.

Members met regularly to analyse documents but interest slowly waned. The decision was made to invite guest speakers along occasionally which proved to be a success and numbers slowly

increased, to hear the speakers rather than to carry out research. It was not long before the emphasis of meetings moved away from research to illustrated talks given by guest speakers usually on local, historical topics. Today we are a thriving Group who normally meet on the first Monday evening of the month in the Yapton & Ford Village Hall.

Research is still carried out by a few members whose results are lodged in the Group's library along with an expanding collection of old photographs and an ever-increasing selection of local history books which are available for the members and general public to borrow. Articles about local historical topics are regularly published in the bi-monthly village magazine Yapton News and in the Sussex Local (Arundel edition) magazine which appears monthly.

The Yapton & Ford Local History Group is not all about guest speakers. Over the years we have staged many exhibitions, some small, some large. Perhaps the greatest success was to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Ford airfield. The Fleet Air Arm's Rear Commodore for Eastern England came along as a special guest. The day also included a flypast from a Seahawk from RNAS Yeovilton and the event was featured on South Today's news bulletin. Other exhibitions include the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE Day, the centenaries of the start of the Great War, The Somme and of Ford Airfield. The exhibition that attracted the most attention from the BBC was in 2019 with the discovery of some unknown glass slides and a series of incredible coincidences. The BBC dedicated a 5-minute slot on their South Today programme.

The Group has also undertaken several projects. As part of Kim Leslie's, A Sense of Place millennium map project, a historical map of Yapton & Ford was produced and printed. The original now hangs in the Foyer of the village hall. Also, with the aid of a Lottery's grant a series of five Heritage Trail booklets were produced. The same grant funded two further books, one, a collection of articles relating to the history of the villages and the second, a compilation of the memories of villagers recorded in an Oral History project. Another venture involved a local artist who produced a range of watercolour paintings of village buildings these were used as the basis for a collection of postcards. Apart from the books produced by the Group, two others were written and printed by individual members. One book traces the lives of all the villagers that made the ultimate sacrifice in the Great War and the second book celebrates the centenary of Ford Airfield, telling its story from 1918 to 2018.

A grant from the Nationwide Building Society funded the creation of a web-site which is regularly up-dated and is a mine of information for anyone interested in the history of the two villages. It contains articles, memories, events, projects and much more. A steady stream of enquiries as well as new information are received from visitors to the site, all of which is very well received.

The Group is run by a dedicated committee of seven people with more members volunteering as required to ensure that everything runs smoothly. A program sheet of coming events is emailed or delivered to every member quarterly. It is through the efforts of those seven people that the Group has been so successful. The 2018/19 membership passed the 60 mark for the first time.

During this COVID-19 period the members are continually being kept up to-date via email as well as notices in the village magazine.

Allen Misselbrook, Chairman  
[info@yaptonhistory.org.uk](mailto:info@yaptonhistory.org.uk) | [www.yaptonhistory.org.uk](http://www.yaptonhistory.org.uk)

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## Worthing Archaeological Society

The Worthing Archaeological Society [WAS] came into existence in 1922. An informal meeting took place on January 10th 1922 at the instigation of the then Worthing Librarian and Museum Curator, Marion Frost. A public inaugural meeting was held on February 2nd 1922 and the lecture, given by Mr T Sheppard F.G.S. M.Sc., was '*Three thousand years of hidden treasure*'.

The first general meeting took place in the Art Gallery of the Museum on March 22nd 1922. In 1922/23 there were more than 200 members and the subs were 2/6 and 1/-. The first President of the society was Lieutenant Col. E.W. Margesson. Leading figures of WAS over the years were the Curwens, father and son, Dr. Ratcliffe-Densham, John Pull, Major A. C. Roper, Jane Evans, Con Ainsworth and, today, James Sainsbury. They, and others, have undertaken extensive research and excavations including at the Flint Mines to the North of the town – Blackpatch, Harrow Hill, Cissbury and Church Hill - the excavation (and fund-raising) to save the Marlipins Museum in Shoreham, New Monks Farm (soon to be built over), the Roman Villa (now underneath Northbrook College), the bath-house on Highdown Hill, Muntham Court, the Angmering Roman Bathhouse, Medieval Pottery Kilns in the Binsted area, a Roman Villa at Walberton (soon, sadly, to be lost under the A27 bypass), with the National Trust at Petworth House, Gobblestubs and Rough Copse in the possible Arundel Oppidum, with the Chichester Group on a field-walk and flint collection near Fittleworth, a Medieval site at the Malthouse Field near Sompting, a Community dig at Angmering on the site of St Nicholas' Church, and the amazing finds of barbed-and-tanged-arrowheads at Brinsbury College.

More recent high spots were the visit of Time Team to Harrow Hill, and the great project which was the Secrets of the Highwoods, which many of our Members took part in.

The Society has actively campaigned over the years to save many buildings and sites in our area, for instance Park Brow and Highdown.

Nominally, WAS's area lies between the Adur and the Arun, though, occasionally, digs come up to the West. Our Headquarters is Worthing Museum, which has an extensive collection of Archaeology, and where, in normal times, we hold regular Study Days.

Many of our Members gained experience and qualifications through the University of Sussex Centre for Continuing Education, and by working with other local Societies.

We produce a bi-monthly Newsletter, and an annual Journal. The Society is involved in other events such as coach trips, holidays and visits to various sites. WAS has very good informative lectures each month from October to April and an annual social event, which includes quizzes as well as eating and drinking.

WAS had about 120 members in early 2020. The Society is currently involved in the Community action at the Sompting EPIC site (Enhancing Places, Inspiring Communities), where its expertise in flint recognition is valued.

**Liz Lane, Membership Secretary and Newsletter Editor**

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## Women's Land Army - Ian Everest - 31st October 2020

Between 25 and 30 people watched WSAS's first zoom lecture, Ian Everest's illuminating and comprehensive talk on the Women's Land Army. Ian's interest in the topic had initially been stimulated by his mother, who had served as a land girl during the Second World War. As an eighteen-year-old she had caught the No. 76 bus from Edmonton in north London to Victoria Station, thence to Lewes and a farm in Sussex. One of her tasks was to empty the privy each day onto the vegetable patch, a task, reported Ian, that resulted in a lifelong reluctance on the part of his mother to eat celery.

The contribution of the land girls in ensuring that Britain could feed itself has not had the recognition it deserves, and we forget that so much agricultural work required physical labour. Ian juxtaposed the biography of his mother with the national context, beginning in the First World War and the urgent necessity of providing food for the horses serving on the Western Front and the endless requirement for compressed hay to be sent from Newhaven and from Littlehampton to France. Physical labour was essential albeit leavened in innovative ways, illustrated with a clip from Pathé news showing elephants at work in Sussex. Their circus owner had no opportunity to use elephants as performers, but they could load hay.

It was surprisingly late in the First World War, January 1917, that Meriel Talbot (1866 - 1956) was appointed as the first director of the Women's branch of the Board of Agriculture. Lady Gertrude Denman née Pearson (1884 - 1954) became Honorary Assistant Director and played a major role in recruitment. She lived at Balcombe Place, north of Haywards Heath, a home given to her by her father, Sir Weetman Pearson, on her marriage.

By the Second World War the critical importance of food supply was immediately recognised, and the Women's Land Army re-established based on a county organisation. Though there had been an increase in mechanisation in agriculture much of the work remained physical though the land girls were equally adept at driving tractors. Ian showed a picture of a line of tractors, provided by the USA, moving in sequence cutting the wheat. Agriculture was not only about stock rearing, milk and dairying and horticulture it was also about the control of pests, illustrated in the following verse:

We are the girls  
That kill the rats  
That live in the stacks  
And eat the corn  
That feeds the people of England

This set alongside a photograph of women preparing a cyanide spray without any protective clothing nor apparent hand-washing facilities.

The hours were long, the pay low (£1.4s per week as against £3.3 for men) but the sense conveyed by Ian of his mother was that of pride in the contribution that she and her colleagues made to the war effort and a strong sense of camaraderie that remained with her throughout her life. Despite their labour, despite their skills, despite the daily challenges they faced, members of the Women's Land Army were not treated in the same way as women who had served in the armed services. It was not until 2000 that they were recognised as eligible to walk past the cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday and not until 2007 that they were awarded a badge of recognition, and even then a badge given to those women of the Land Army still alive. An insensitive neglect to the memory of those who served and are no longer with us, and to their families who would have grown, been nurtured, amused and appalled as their proud relatives regaled the family once again with tales of "when I was a Land Girl".

A comprehensive, stimulating, fascinating glimpse of an important element of the collective memory of Sussex, well delivered and superbly illustrated.

**Philip Robinson**

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## **Obituary - Dr Annabelle Hughes (13/08/1941- 28/11/2020) by three friends**

With great sadness on 28 November I heard from Annabelle's daughter Jo that her mother had died quietly at home. I knew she had been very poorly for the past year; our last physical meeting was at the AGM of the Wealden Buildings Study Group<sup>1</sup> just before the March Lockdown. I first met Annabelle at Grittenham Farm, Tillington, near Petworth, in 1983. She was with her friend and mentor Sylvia Bright, both from Horsham, at a WBSG meeting - I too was a fairly new member. Not long after that Annabelle visited Steyning and met my own friend and mentor, Joyce Sleight. We three lunched at the Chequer Inn while Annabelle, having discovered that we were transcribing and analysing the Steyning probate documents, as well as looking at buildings, quizzed us on our knowledge and more particularly on a house for which she was about to begin a building history; from then on we became firm friends.

Over the years Annabelle and I produced many house and pub histories together for owners and lessees, she with her expert timber-framed building knowledge - much ahead of my own - and my documentary research<sup>2</sup>. I learned much from her when we were crawling through roof spaces, or discounting owners' stories about so-called smuggling tunnels, supposed ships' timbers and other old wives' tales, though we did keep open minds about ghosts.

Annabelle completed her DPhil on Horsham's timber-framed buildings in 1989, the year that I became chairman of WSAS. At the end of my term of office in 1992 I knew just who should take over, and Annabelle was chairman for the next six years. I would not have achieved my own PhD on the social and architectural history of early-modern inns and taverns of western Sussex in 2003 without Annabelle's patient and generous advice - and didn't we have fun too! I remember the amazement of the manager of the Spread Eagle in Midhurst who could not understand why two rather disreputable-looking ladies having coffee wanted access to the roof spaces with their torches and notebooks. The fabricated 1430 date for the older part of the inn was soon adjusted to c.1550. The same day saw us struggling with Annabelle's ladder which we had unwisely tried to elongate in a first floor corridor of the Angel Inn there, endangering ancient plaster and dangling light-fittings.

Throughout these years regular meetings of WBSG continued and we often met up at interesting houses and barns throughout Sussex and Kent, sometimes Hampshire and Surrey and Annabelle eventually became President of the Group. With Janet Aidin she was involved with the history of and worship at St Mary the Virgin Church, North Stoke. Her Sussex Record Society Vol. 91, 'Sussex Clergy Inventories' (2009) sits on my bookshelf. Her contribution to Sussex: West, The Buildings of England (the Pevsner 1965 re-write) (2019) is acknowledged for Cuckfield, Horsham, Midhurst, Petworth and timber-framed domestic buildings generally.

I could continue with Horsham and the South Downs National Park, but Jeremy Knight, curator of Horsham Museum, has recently written far more about her research and publications, also her early life - Annabelle was born in Malaysia<sup>3</sup>. Her sister Helen Philpott has also written an obituary published in The Guardian<sup>4</sup>.

I would like to end my section of this tripartite obituary with a parrot story from the 1990s - not the Michael Palin one - this parrot was alive. Annabelle and I met at the Half Moon inn at Northchapel where I was exploring not only the timber-framed building but the history of local

18thC cricketer Noah Mann<sup>5</sup>. In the office on the first floor an African Grey parrot sat quietly on his perch in a large cage. The landlord said we might hear him talking if we stood outside the door and to our amazement we heard the parrot apparently making a telephone call. Click, click, click as the line connected with the brewery - 'Good morning, Half Moon, good morning, Half Moon'. 'Did you hear him?', called the landlord from downstairs, his voice the same as the parrot's of course. Having just ordered some beer, the parrot was still sitting quietly in his cage when Annabelle and I peeped round the door frame, his beak firmly closed: a special memory of Annabelle Hughes in a timber-framed building. I shall miss her very much.

**Janet Pennington, Steyning**

<sup>1</sup> [www.wealdenbuildings.org.uk](http://www.wealdenbuildings.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [www.sussexhistorytalks.co.uk/publications](http://www.sussexhistorytalks.co.uk/publications)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wscountytimes.co.uk/news/people/tributes-paid-immensely-respected-expert-horsham-3052717>

<sup>4</sup> [www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/dec/16/annabelle-hughes-obituary](http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/dec/16/annabelle-hughes-obituary)

<sup>5</sup> *West Sussex History*, no. 66, Autumn, 2000, pp.2-6

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Before coming south in 1994, I worked as an archivist in Leeds, and through various social groups met Helen Philpott. Sitting in her lounge one day having a coffee, I noticed one of Annabelle's books on her shelf. I knew Annabelle because I grew up in Horsham, and was taught by her husband, the Revd John Hughes, when at the High School, but I was still surprised when Helen replied that Annabelle was her sister.

When I moved to Sussex, I swapped one sister for the other. Annabelle has been very kind and helpful over the years. I got to know her better in the search room at the Record Office, and on numerous WSAS outings, when she often brought her mother, Joan, and I brought my parents. We went to Joan's 80th birthday party in Rushams Road, Horsham, next to the 'Ducks Crossing' sign.

It is really since I left the Record Office in 2014 that Annabelle and I worked closely together. I research house histories and she gave me endless help, introducing me to the Wealden Buildings Study Group, for example. She seemed to have already visited every house for which I had been commissioned, so reports and lists of documents generously came my way. When at last I found a house that was new to her, we visited it together, and thereafter she did the structural reports for each house for me. Although I followed her around, and read up timber-framing as much as possible I could never discuss it intelligently with her - nor could I follow her into the attics!

We also explored other buildings: Danny House at Hurstpierpoint with Jane Kirk, Eastergate church, and North Stoke church where I helped with the lecture she gave with architectural historian Ptolemy Dean. Annabelle treated us all to lunch that day, but when we got back to her car it had been broken into. She was naturally upset but went ahead with the lecture in her professional manner. Together we went to some fabulous places and I very much enjoyed these trips.

I shall miss her extensive knowledge, her boundless enthusiasm and our work together. She delved into documents of a much earlier date than I dared for the house histories, but she gave me hope that one day I would be able to do the same. Mostly I now can, but I still don't know my purlins from my tie-beams.

**Caroline Adams, Westergate**



Dr Annabelle Hughes

I first met Annabelle at WSRO while I was researching the history of Northchapel parish for a book to be published in 2000. Annabelle introduced herself and gave me her card with an offer to help identify historic buildings in the parish. It was an offer I jumped at!

Over the following months my limited understanding of vernacular buildings gradually expanded. It seemed to me that Annabelle could read a timber-framed house like a book but, as I dutifully followed her up and down ladders, squeezing through hatches into cobwebby roof spaces while trying helpfully to hold the end of her tape measure, she initiated me into the mysteries of side-purlins, soot stained rafters and the occasional joyous discovery of a medieval crown post. It was not long before I was introduced to members of the Wealden Buildings Study Group, who came over to Northchapel to record our own 17th house, and Annabelle encouraged me to 'sign up' and join.

At that time there had been relatively little solid recording of buildings in the border parishes to the north-west of Petworth. In order to gain a wider understanding of the pattern and pace of local settlement, not only documentary research is required but also 'boots on the ground', and with Annabelle's indefatigable enthusiasm and expertise, together with valuable input from the late Diana Chatwin and various WBSG visits to the more 'interesting' houses, a good deal of 'ground' was steadily covered.

By 2009 my son and family had moved to South Harting. An introduction to the Harting Society proved fruitful and I accompanied Annabelle on several trips, driving over to Harting to investigate buildings and also to sample convivial lunches of soup and sandwiches at the local pub.

Other projects involving close parish studies of surviving timber-framed buildings followed as I worked with Annabelle on Tillington parish in 2015, then Lodsworth and lastly on the Hampshire parish of Buriton 2018/19. She was endlessly generous and encouraged me to play my part in writing up reports.

By the autumn of 2019 it was clear that Annabelle was becoming increasingly unwell and she asked me to prepare a forthcoming talk to the Buriton Association. Covid restrictions subsequently put this on hold, but I hope to honour her request when possible. It goes without saying that I shall miss her enormously. As I got to know her better our friendship had developed and I am hugely grateful to have had the opportunity to benefit from her extensive knowledge and to have shared so many interesting and happy times.

**Pamela Bruce, Northchapel**

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