

The Researcher



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

County Archivist's Update

It was a very real pleasure to be able to meet with you, albeit remotely, for the 47th AGM of the West Sussex Archives Society and share some of the highlights and activities of the Record Office in a year that has been unlike any other for us all. You will all have received a copy of my report giving details of our work over the last twelve months.

At times the opening and closing of the Search Room has felt more akin to a yo-yo and we are delighted that we have been able to reopen once more. We are operating with all of the usual COVID-19 procedures in place and asking people to book in advance as before. We will be keeping a watching brief on the latest guidance for any changes that will enable us to do more in due course whilst also making sure that we keep everyone safe. With the reopening of the office we now have more staff back on site helping to run the Search Room and working behind the scenes to answer enquiries and carry out the research service and digitisation work. However, we are all still working from home for part of the week in line with the current guidelines.

We have all had to embrace the joys of remote working and it has given us the opportunity to explore new ideas and find new ways for people to access the collections. West Sussex



*West Sussex Unwrapped II Episode 3:
Image from the SASE film
'A New School for Eastergate' 1970*

Unwrapped, our multimedia project with Screen Archive South East (SASE) proved so popular last year that we launched a second series for 2021 with monthly episodes from February to September. It has been great fun exploring the synergies between our joint collections and sharing these with everyone.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Thursday 13th May
WSAS ONLINE
PRESENTATION:
"RALPH ELLIS"
led by Sue Hepburn

Friday 11th June
WSAS WALK:
TOUR OF Oving
led by Sue Millard

Tuesday 6th July
WSAS WALK:
ALONGSIDE THE
WEY & ARUN CANAL
led by Richard Mant

Sunday 18th July
WSAS WALK:
PRIORY PARK,
CHICHESTER
led by Alan Green

SAVE THE DATE:
Sat 25th September
WSAS ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
South Downs Centre,
Midhurst
or
Zoom Presentation (tbc)

**APRIL 2021
ISSUE 113**

Episode 3 on the history of Eastergate School was launched on 13 April, the day that we reopened, and in May we will be taking a glimpse into the past at Warnham Court. On Sussex Day, 16 June we have our first West Sussex Unwrapped Live event when we will be exploring the history of the South Downs through archive film, maps and other records.

Visit: <https://westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/west-sussex-unwrapped-21>



Episode 4 (11 May)

Image from the SASE film: 'The Young Squire's Wedding at Warnham Court', 1923

We have a new programme of online **Tuesday Talks** which will be held on the last Tuesday of the month at 7pm from July to December on Zoom. We will start on **Tuesday 27th July** when I will be introducing the series, talking about the work of the Record Office and showing you some of the highlights of the collections including the Sussex Declaration. Full details will be published on our website shortly. Sadly we cannot yet hold talks at the Record Office itself but hopefully this will be the next best thing. We will still be able to show you all of the documents for each talk using our new visualizer and we are hoping to have our own YouTube Channel shortly to help us promote the archives and provide online content and activities.

We have also been working on a remote offer for schools. Prior to lockdown we ran a series of pilot projects with schools visiting the Record Office, having a tour round and an activity session using original records and historical resources in the Search Room. During lockdown we have been looking at ways to deliver this as a remote session and have just completed a pilot project with a West Sussex school using a range of local history resources, which we have put together as an online learning pack. The feedback from all of this work has been very positive and we are now looking at ways to take this forward.

Those attending the AGM will have heard the fascinating talk from Elizabeth Williamson, the joint author of *Sussex: West*, the latest revised volume in the *Buildings of England* series. One of her co-authors, Tim Hudson, has written a series of blogs for us on the architecture of the county exploring the different types of archives that are used by architectural historians and what the archives reveal about the architecture in different parts of the county:

<https://westsussexrecordofficeblog.com/architectural-histories>. Tim also now has his own blog for you to enjoy, looking at 20th and 21st century buildings in West Sussex in Classical or Classical-related styles: <https://classicismonthesouthcoast.wordpress.com/styles>.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all of the Record Office staff who have done so much this year in such difficult circumstances to 'keep the show on the road'. Running an archive service with limited access to the archives has certainly had its challenges but everyone has worked so hard to make this work and supported each other along the way. I am also very grateful to WSAS and all of the WSAS members, who continue to support us in everything that we do, and to our wonderful volunteers many of whom have been carrying out work for us from home over the last year. I hope that you have all been keeping safe and well and look forward to seeing you again in person before too long.

Wendy Walker

Report on the Annual General Meeting

The 47th AGM was held on 27th March via Zoom. There were 40 live 'screens' at the meeting, some with more than one participant suggesting an attendance not dissimilar to that of previous AGMs.

The Covid 'lockdown' of 2020 prevented the 46th AGM taking place though members had been circulated with the accounts for 2019 and with proposals for the election of officers and committee members. These had been approved by the membership in 2020 and were ratified at the 47th AGM.

As Chairman, Philip thanked both the Committee and wider membership for their efforts in stimulating a continued interest in local history in general, and that of West Sussex in particular. It was a year when physical meeting was not possible and access to the Record Office limited by Covid protocols. The backing from members was vital in keeping WSAS engaged and vibrant in its support for the Record Office. It is essential, however, that more members offer to help and in particular, anyone with an interest and competence in social media and website development.

The accounts for 2020 were presented, as reviewed by Sheen Stickland of Chichester. They reflected the loss of activity by WSAS, consequent upon covid restrictions and highlighted a greater dependence on the subscriptions of members.

The County Archivist's report had been circulated and Wendy paid tribute to the work of the staff of the Record Office throughout the unprecedented year.

Philip acknowledged the contribution of Susan Nicel to WSAS as Treasurer over six years. Susan is to be replaced by Jane Mant who will combine the responsibilities of Treasurer with those of Membership Secretary. Jane's election was endorsed as was the committee membership of Kim Fleming and Dr. John Godfrey.

The 48th AGM of WSAS will be held on 26th March 2022 in Billingshurst, the same location as had been planned for 2020 and 2021, but this time in the confident hope that WSAS members will be able to meet, share thoughts and celebrate the contributions of archival research to a greater understanding of our communities.

Prof. Philip Robinson

WSAS Committee

Philip Robinson - Chairman

Leigh Lawson - Vice Chairman

Richard Howell - Secretary

Jane Mant - Membership Secretary, Treasurer

Susan Millard - Information Manager

Wendy Walker - County Archivist

Helen Whittle - Journal Editor

Sophie Wood - Newsletter Editor & Website

Kim Fleming - Committee Member

Dr John Godfrey - Committee Member

Jeff Staniforth - Committee Member

All contactable using: contact@wsas.co.uk

Further Society information is available at the website: www.wsas.co.uk

Facebook: [West Sussex Archives Society](#) | Instagram: [@westsussexarchivessociety](#)

An Illustrated Walk Around Old Steyning Town - with Dr Janet Pennington

This comprehensive, well-illustrated and informative presentation by Dr Janet Pennington in February was the second hosted by WSAS through Zoom. There were at least 40 participants, many of whom were couples, together with some guests of WSAS members; all fascinated by the talk and frustrated that they could not plan to visit Steyning with friends in the near future.

Janet illustrated Steyning's 'foundation legend' of Cuthman, a shepherd boy, probably from Chidham, west of Chichester. Following the death of his father, Cuthman travelled with his invalid mother whom he transported in a wheelbarrow. Her weight was supported by a rope around Cuthman's shoulders which broke as they reached Steyning. Cuthman took this as a sign from God as a place to build a church. Subsequently the Normans built a church close to the site of that of St. Cuthman dedicated to St. Andrew. (This church was rededicated to St. Andrew and St. Cuthman in 2008).

Steyning features in Anglo Saxon history as the burial place of Æthelwulf, who died in AD858, father of King Alfred. He was not as appreciated as he might have been, in laying the foundation to his son's success, and it was Alfred who ordered the transfer of Æthelwulf's remains from Cuthman's church to Winchester, an economic loss to Steyning.

By the Domesday survey, 1086, Steyning [Staninges] a borough of 123 dwellings belonged to the Abbot of Fecamp in France. It was a borough that honoured its civic duties, reflected in the name 'Shooting Field'. As Janet explained, from at least 1363, males were required to practise the longbow and the name Shooting Field in Steyning, can be traced back to 1577. Twenty-two years earlier, July 1555, during the reign of Queen Mary, protestant John Launder aged 25, of Godstone in Surrey, was burnt to death on Chantry Green, close to the present Library. One of those inconceivable acts of Tudor England, and as Janet commented, it is not known why Steyning was chosen.

One of the most significant buildings in the town, used by Janet as a backdrop to her presentation, is Steyning Grammar School in Church Street. The school was generously endowed in 1614 by William Holland, a cloth merchant born in Steyning, who became an alderman and thrice mayor of Chichester. (His burial is registered in St. Peter the Great, Chichester on 12/07/1614). The school building predates Holland's endowment, and a dendrochronological report of 2014 provides, 'good evidence that the construction of the building is likely to have occurred in AD 1451, or soon after'. For several centuries the timber-framed frontage was hidden from view by tiling and it was only in 1982 that its earlier form was revealed, much to the delight of the residents of the town.

Across the rich and absorbing history of the town some notable people have appeared and faded. Charles Parnell, Irish nationalist, married his lover, the recently divorced Katherine O'Shea, on Thursday 25 June 1891 in the Steyning Register Office. A marriage that was to last only three months when Parnell died in Hove. On the corner of Tanyard Lane and High Street there is a blue plaque to Fanny Cornforth, born in Steyning as Sarah Cox in January 1835. Her face is an iconic symbol of the Pre-Raphaelites and the plaque respectfully describes her as a 'model, companion, nurse and Friend to Dante Gabriel Rossetti'. She died in 1909 in Graylingwell Hospital Chichester.

Participants were enriched and stimulated by Janet's presentation that covered so much; the port, the postal dog carts, the railway that came in 1861, and the eponymous Saxon House of 1550. Possibly the oldest surviving building in Steyning is the Old Post Office, 44 High Street, a dais beam dated early 14th Century, before the black death, with a ritual carving, Steyning's "Green Man", keeping watch over the history of the town.

An exploration with much to discover, enjoy and follow up with Dr Pennington's publications, sussexhistorytalks.co.uk and the excellent website of Steyning Museum: steyningmuseum.org.uk.

Prof. Philip Robinson

In the Footsteps of Nairn and Pevsner - with Elizabeth Williamson

This year's WSAS AGM was preceded by a talk from Elizabeth Williamson, "In the Footsteps of Nairn and Pevsner: The Buildings of Sussex: West". Elizabeth was introduced by Richard Mant who had originally arranged the talk to follow last year's AGM, which should have been held at Billingshurst. Unfortunately, it was cancelled because of Covid-19 but it was a talk well worth waiting for. All of us who attended listened attentively to the insights that Elizabeth was able to provide regarding the editors of the original Buildings of England: Sussex volume, published in 1965, together with how the current West Sussex volume, published in 2019, was put together.

Elizabeth described how Ian Nairn and Nikolaus Pevsner were very different characters and worked in different ways. Pevsner was an art historian, a cataloguer by nature, who lived a very Spartan existence when researching. He took his notes with him, which were written up by a researcher (his writing was terrible!). When he wasn't out and about researching in the towns and villages, he used other sources including journals and antiquarian writings. The series was founded in the late 1940s, and Pevsner employed many researchers, some of whom were German refugees. They were given lists of source material, including County Histories and monographs of architecture. There were secretaries who wrote to vicars and local people for information. However, not much photography was used to record information. Nairn, who started working on the series in the 1960s, was idiosyncratic and a writer. He was a topographer and very interested in architecture. He was influenced by the 1940s Townscape Movement and developed ideas as to how the book could be improved. He enjoyed the visiting and writing – he wrote down his thoughts in a notebook that same evening. However, he did not enjoy writing to vicars and following up on research.

The original aim of the authors of the first series was to provide an inventory of everything of architectural importance in all the English Counties, so it was no mean task for the authors of the current edition to update and add to this information for the County of West Sussex. Elizabeth Williamson (who was responsible for the revision of the central and eastern parts of the county), Tim Hudson and Jeremy Musson found that it was not always so easy to get access to private buildings as it was in the 1960s, but they were able to make good use of the many sources available in West Sussex Record Office and local libraries, together with information from local historians and local history societies. The original Sussex volume had been designed to fit into a duffle coat pocket or a car shelf but, with the extra information added to West Sussex alone, the revision is much larger. It is also illustrated with a good selection of coloured photographs, including some modern buildings such as the East Beach Café at Littlehampton and the Dhamma Hall at the Chithurst, Cittaviveka (Buddhist monastery). Industrial design and garden design is considered in the book as well as the vast array of old churches and country houses.

Elizabeth illustrated her talk with interesting slides throughout and concluded with images of some of the places and buildings that had been visited as part of her research. These included the fascinating Bailiff's Court at Climping, Arundel Castle gardens and the Gridshell at the Weald and Downland Museum. Elizabeth described her talk as a 'scamper' but she certainly achieved her aim of providing 'some idea of how they did it and what they found'. I am sure many of us will now be going, armed with a copy of the volume (but maybe not in our coat pocket!) to visit many places in West Sussex and view them with fresh eyes.

Susan Millard

Events Programme

Thursday 13th May 2021 - 7pm

WSAS Online Zoom Presentation: 'Ralph Ellis', led by Sue Hepburn

To attend, go to: <https://zoom.us/join> or your Zoom App at **6.45pm** for **7pm** start.

Zoom Meeting ID: 864 2166 0418

Passcode: WSASMAY21

Ralph Ellis, born and died in Arundel, was shot and wounded in August 1917. As Sue Hepburn wrote in *The Researcher 111* "During a prolonged period of recovery Ellis wrote a memoir of his two years' service on the Western Front, using notes and sketches he had made at the time. The memoir is the powerful testimony of an ordinary soldier who survived extraordinary events and his words and pictures help us understand a little of what he and his comrades experienced over a century ago." Sue's edited edition of Ralph Ellis has been published by Sussex Record Society, Volume 100 and may be ordered at www.sussexrecordsociety.org/ellis-gallery/.

Friday 11th June 2021 - 2pm

WSAS Walk: Tour of Oving, led by Sue Millard

Meet in the Gribble Inn car park at **1.45 pm** for a **2pm** start. You may be able to park in the Gribble Inn car park or the road opposite, PO20 2BP.

A Tour of 'Oving Past and Present', led by Susan Millard. Starting and finishing at the Gribble we will make our way round the village looking at some of the older buildings and modern developments. We will also consider the topography of the area and how it has changed over the years.

Cost: members £3, non-members £5 - *places are limited so early application is advised.*

Tuesday 6th July 2021 - 1.45pm

WSAS Walk: A Walk alongside the Wey and Arun Canal, led by Richard Mant

The walk will start at 1.45pm. Meet at the west end of Wisborough Green Church, RH14 0EA, below the tower. Parking is possible round the village green or in side roads. The walk will end with tea/coffee and cake at the Cricketers Arms pub in Durban Road, Wisborough Green at about 4.15 pm.

This rural walk will include a length of the Wey and Arun Canal which is currently un-navigable, except for canoes and small boats at certain times of the year. This stretch of the canal includes some interesting and in some cases rare examples of canal architecture. These features include a newly rebuilt brick bridge, flood gates, a slipway, an aqueduct over the River Arun, and a water wheel. The walk will take approximately two hours (an hour each way) with a break at the half-way point where we hope to meet the Wey and Arun Canal Maintenance Manager, Mr Kevin Baker, who will explain some of the complexities of the canal at that point. As we will be walking alongside a canal, the walk is largely flat terrain though it can be muddy and there is a slope to climb on the return journey. The walk will be led by Richard Mant who is a member of the Wey and Arun Canal Trust.

Cost: members £6, non-members £8 - *tea/coffee & cake inc - places limited, early application advised.*

Sunday 18th July 2021 - 3pm

WSAS Walk: A Walk around Chichester Priory Park, led by Alan Green

3pm - meet at the Priory Park front gates, Priory Road/Guildhall Lane junction, PO19 1BL.

Priory Park is regarded as Chichester's village green, a quiet oasis in the middle of the bustling city. It has been a public park for just over a century, but its history goes back more than 2000 years. Join Alan Green, author of *Priory Park Chichester – Its History in 100 Objects*, on this walk which explores that history from Roman posh quarter to public park via a friary, a vast town-house garden with a town hall, and a private members' pleasure ground. Along the way we meet some of the city characters associated with the park and learn of its important role in the Second World War effort.

Cost: members £3, non-members £5 - *places are limited so early application is advised.*

WSAS Event Booking Form

Friday 11th June 2021

WSAS Walk: Tour of Oving, led by Sue Millard

2pm - Gribble Inn car park, Gribble Lane, Oving, PO20 2BP

Cost: members £3, non-members £5

Names of members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Names of non-members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Amount paid (cheques made payable to WSAS): _____

Date of application: _____ Please return slip by **Friday 4th June 2021**

Tuesday 6th July 2021

A Walk alongside the Wey and Arun Canal, Wisborough Green

1.45pm - Wisborough Green Church, RH14 0EA. 4.15pm approximately: the walk ends at The Cricketers Arms pub in Durbans Road, RH14 0DG

Cost: members £6, non-members £8

Names of members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Names of non-members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Amount paid (cheques made payable to WSAS): _____

Date of application: _____ Please return slip by **Friday 25th June 2021**

Sunday 18th July 2021

WSAS Walk: A Walk around Chichester Priory Park, led by Alan Green

3pm - Priory Park front gate, Priory Road/Guildhall Lane, Chichester, PO19 1BL

Cost: members £3, non-members £5

Names of members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Names of non-members attending: _____

Tel No: _____ Email: _____

Amount paid (cheques made payable to WSAS): _____

Date of application: _____ Please return slip by **Friday 9th July 2021**

Return slips to: **WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN** (Please note that we do not issue tickets or receipts for booking slips received.)
For queries, please contact: contact@wsas.co.uk | Events can also be seen at: www.wsas.co.uk

