

# The Researcher



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

## County Archivist's Report

### Record Office Retains Archive Accreditation

As we start the New Year I am delighted to be able to tell you that we have been successful in our Accreditation Review submission to The National Archives and will remain an Accredited Archive Service for the next three years. Many of you will remember our original designation award in 2018. Last year it was due to be reviewed and our submission went before the Accreditation Panel in November.



Archive Service Accreditation defines good practice and agreed standards for archive services across the UK and covers the acquisition and care of the collections as well as the provision of public access and plans for the future. All aspects of the service are therefore scrutinised as well as

progress on the actions set during the original assessment. In delivering their verdict the Panel said that they were "...were impressed by progress and development of the archive service since accreditation, in particular COVID-19 service planning, work around intersectionality and progress around digital preservation. We now have a further series of actions and recommendations to work towards for 2024 when we will have to put in a full application once more.

The turn of the year has seen a flurry of activity in the sale rooms and with the help of WSAS we have been successful in purchasing three separate archives to add to the collections. In November we were able to purchase the Royal Sussex Regiment postcard album, 1907-1912, compiled by Lieutenant Colonel Leonard Charles Rudolph Messel. It concerns the activities of the 2nd Volunteer Brigade (later the 4th Battalion) Royal Sussex Regiment, including scenes of the army summer camps at Hassocks and Arundel. Many of the postcards are captioned and some have pencilled annotations on the back. In December we purchased a manuscript map of Upper Nappers Coppice in

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

**26th March 2022**  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Resolutions for consideration at the AGM must be submitted to the committee at [contact@wsas.co.uk](mailto:contact@wsas.co.uk) no later than FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup> FEB 2022

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

HAVE YOU PAID?

2022 SUBSCRIPTIONS  
DUE: 1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY

For further details visit:  
[www.wsas.co.uk](http://www.wsas.co.uk)

BACS:  
Sort Code: 20-20-62  
Account Number:  
10942073

**JANUARY 2022**  
**ISSUE 116**

Fernhurst, 1859, belonging to A. Mellersh Esq and surveyed by W. Shorto of Midhurst.

In January a collection of over 50 documents relating to the Baybridge Canal in West Grinstead came up for sale at auction. Dating from 1825 to 1875 they included invoices, letters, accounts, and broadsides, one from 1825 inviting tenders for the construction of the canal and another from 1875 announcing its closure. The Baybridge Canal was the name given to the stretch of the River Adur between Bines Bridge and Baybridge in the parish of West Grinstead that was made navigable in 1825. The River Adur had been navigable as far as Bines Bridge since 1812, and it was hoped that if the waterway was extended to Baybridge, on the Horsham-Worthing road, a further distance of 3.75 miles, it would be more useful to trade. By 1865 however the new canal had ceased to pay interest on its loan debt, and in 1875 it was closed by Act of Parliament.

CLOSED 15th SEP 1875

**Baybridge Canal.**

TO  
*Riverdiggers, Excavators,*  
**BRICKLAYERS, AND OTHERS.**

**Notice is Hereby Given,**  
THAT THE  
**Baybridge Canal Company**  
WILL  
**Receive Tenders for excavating the Canal,**  
AND FOR  
**Building 2 Locks**  
THEREON, WITH  
**Bridges, Tumble Bays, and Sluices,**  
AS FOLLOWS, VIZ.,

For Casting Earth, at	per Yard cube.
Filling Earth, and wheeling not more than 20 Yards, at	per Yard, cube.
Extra Stages of 25 Yards, at	per Stage.
Levelling, at	per Rod, of 64 Yards, superficial.
Puddling, at	per Yard, cube.
Building Locks, at	per Rod.
Building Bridges, Tumble Bays, & Sluices, at	per Rod.

*Particulars may be known upon application to Mr. May Upton,  
at the Burrells' Arms Inn, at Westgrinstead, on or after Monday the  
12th of September, Instant.*

Tenders to be delivered at the Burrells' Arms Inn, before ten  
o'Clock in the Forenoon of the 16th of September, Instant, and the  
Persons making Tenders to attend the next Meeting of the Company  
at the Burrells' Arms Inn on that Day at Eleven o'Clock in the  
Forenoon.

**ARTHUR MANT,**  
Storrington, 8th September, 1825. CLERK TO THE COMPANY.

*W. Verrall, Printer, Ann Street, Worthing.*

The Record Office already holds some of the Baybridge Canal Company archives including the original act for building the canal, a summary of initial subscriptions and loans, and expenses of building the Baybridge Canal, statements of Treasurer's accounts, papers concerning the closure of the canal and the sale of the site, and the original seal matrix of the Baybridge Canal Company.

The documents on sale clearly related directly to our existing holdings. The accounts recorded goods being transported on the canal, predominately chalk, offering an important insight into local industry and trade whilst the earlier accounts included information about the construction of the canal.

The book of reference which was also part of this lot provided the names of the owners and occupiers of land through which the proposed canal was to run, pre-dating the West Grinstead tithe map and providing important information about local landowners and residents.

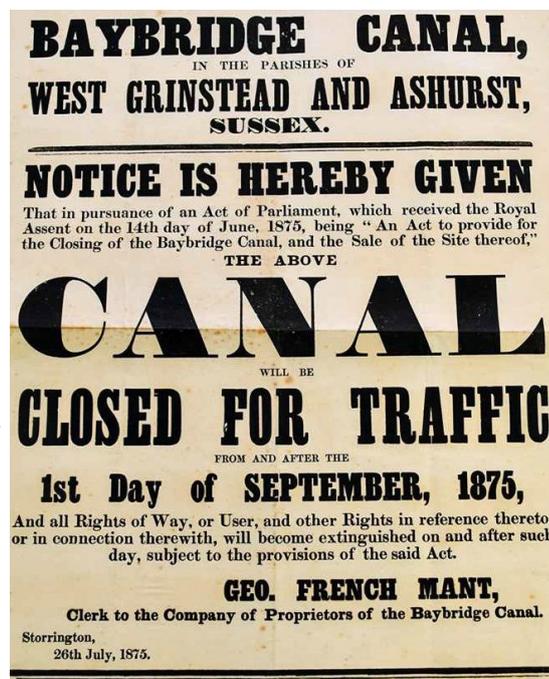
With the aid of a grant from the Friends of the National Libraries and funds from both WSAS and the Sussex Family History Group we were able to put in a successful bid and bring these documents back to West Sussex for researchers to explore and enjoy. None of the purchases that we have made over the last three months would have been successful without the generous funding of WSAS, who are playing such an important role in saving our history. I am very grateful to you all.

We are busy planning for the year ahead and looking forward to welcoming more people back to the Record Office. Our winter programme of talks is being held on Zoom but we are planning to reintroduce on site events as the pandemic recedes so do keep an eye on our

website for further details. One highlight of 2022 will be our Transatlantic Ties Symposium on Saturday 11 June at the University of Chichester. This will be the culmination of a three-year project and will explore and celebrate the historical links between West Sussex and the United States through the county's archives. Speakers will include Emily Sneff, one of the Harvard researchers involved in the discoveries surrounding the Sussex Declaration, and Professor Anthony Howe from the University of East Anglia, who will be talking about his work on the letters of William Cobden. Details of the full programme and how to book will be given in the next newsletter but do put the date in your diaries.

Finally we have been looking at ways to deliver workshops online for those who live further away and are unable to travel to Chichester. Jenny and Nichola have put together a pilot session on parish records and we are looking for volunteers to help us test this out. The workshop will be held on **Saturday 2nd April, 1.30pm-4.30pm, via Zoom** and will be free of charge. It will include an introduction to parish records and show how they can be used to explore your family history. Key record series will be introduced and attendees will be encouraged to look 'beyond' the parish registers for information. The workshop will include a case study and attendees will be asked to examine a number of documents in order to gather information about an individual and think about which other records they could use to find out more about their West Sussex ancestors. If you are interested in helping us and would like to attend please get in touch with us by email: [record.office@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@westsussex.gov.uk)

Wendy Walker



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## Forthcoming events at the Record Office

### **Tuesday Talks (online only)**

WSAS members are invited to our ongoing series of online Tuesday talks, starting at 7pm. The next two talks are as follows.

22 Feb 2022: **Jam, Jerusalem, and more: West Sussex Women's Institutes**  
by Jenny Mason

29 March 2022: **The Sterns of Highdown: Cocktails, Campaigns and Chromosomes**  
by Hamish MacGillivray

## **BOOK NOW!**

If you'd like to attend, please book on **Eventbrite**. Tickets cost £5 and you don't need any special software. Visit [www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ro) and view the 'What's on at the Record Office' page for more details and for helpful links to our talks on Eventbrite.

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## From Refugees to Royalty

On 30<sup>th</sup> October forty-six people gathered in the Victory Hall Balcombe to listen to John Hilary's talk on "From Refugees to Royalty: the Remarkable Story of the Messel Family of Nymans." It was a remarkable story in a remarkable setting, a hall designed by Lady Gertrude Denman (Trudie) in 1923 who looked upon the proceedings from a fresco frieze by Neville Lytton.



The Messel family came from Bentheim in Lower Saxony contiguous to the Netherlands, territory under the rule of the Electors of Hanover. They were Jews, judged as economic competitors by their neighbours such that the Elector of Hanover signed an edict on 10 March 1763 expelling all Jews from Bentheim. The Elector of Hanover was also George III, King of Great Britain and Ireland. The family moved two hundred miles south, to Messel in the Duchy of Hesse. A village whose name was adopted by the family as a surname inspired by a Napoleonic edict in France in 1808.

There is an irony that the family became refugees because they were Jews and as Jews were not conscripted into the Napoleonic armies so prospered as they supplied military supplies in support of Napoleon's ambitions. Aron Messel founded a bank in Darmstadt, six miles southwest of Messel. It was Aron's grandson, Ludwig, who arrived in London in 1865, pulled by the expanding economy of Britain following the industrial revolution, and pushed by the impact that growth was having on the traditional industries of Germany. Ludwig secured a job at the London branch of the Seligman Bank where he prospered. In 1871 he married Annie Cussans at Brixton Unitarian Chapel and in 1873 founded a stockbroking company L. Messel and Co., becoming in time the richest member of the London Stock Exchange.

His success allowed him in 1890 to buy Nymans in Sussex, four miles west of Balcombe; a place of refuge and tranquility away from the smog and noise of London. The conventions of the time, or is it prejudice, inhibited Ludwig's acceptance by the gentry in the traditional pursuits of hunting, shooting and fishing, but not horticulture. Nymans benefits from a microclimate that protects plants from frost and with fertile, acidic soil, perfect for rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas enriched Ludwig's interest in plants. The collection of both local and rare plants, including *Davidia involucrata*, (the handkerchief tree) inspired Ludwig's youngest daughter, Muriel, who went on to catalogue the more than two thousand plant species grown at Nymans and published 'A Garden Flora' in 1918. Her promise was unfulfilled, however, as Muriel became a victim of the global influenza pandemic and died, aged twenty-nine, in December 1918.

A remarkable story that centred on a love for family shared by Annie and Ludwig and embraced by their six children and sixteen grandchildren. Amongst these the remarkable Oliver Messel, theatre and costume designer; the remarkable Rudolph Messel, film-maker, author and pacifist; and the mother of Antony Armstrong-Jones in 1930, Anne Messel.

Anne was judged 'the most beautiful woman in London'. The remarkable story continues as it was through her son that the Messel family entered royalty through the marriage of Antony to Princess Margaret in 1960. Remarkable as they were the family was not inured from tragedy, Harold Messel, for example, having served his country with the Royal Sussex Regiment committed suicide in 1920, his wife Leonora had died during childbirth two years earlier. As well as personal tragedy there also came the loss of the symbol of their success, Nymans, destroyed by fire in February 1947, damage so extensive that the building was placed beyond restoration. Its remains still stand at the heart of a glorious garden, a memorial to an immigrant line that enriched the country that adopted them and that continues to shine hope. Nymans is now managed by the National Trust, and John Hilary's book, 'From Refugees to Royalty' a fascinating, absorbing and captivating read.

**Philip Robinson**

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## 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](mailto:contact@wsas.co.uk)

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

Facebook: [West Sussex Archives Society](https://www.facebook.com/WestSussexArchivesSociety) | Instagram: [@westsussexarchivessociety](https://www.instagram.com/westsussexarchivessociety)

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## WSAS AGM

**Saturday, 26th March 2022—the AGM will be held at the Billingshurst Community and Conference Centre, Roman Way, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH 14 9QW**

The AGM is in the morning and in the afternoon our guest speaker is **Kate Pugh OBE FSA**

After working for various heritage bodies from the Victorian Society to ICOMOS UK, Kate headed up The Heritage Alliance which brings together over 100 heritage organisations in England to create a stronger voice for the independent heritage movement. Since stepping down from this in 2016, she has continued an interest in developing international relations through heritage as Chairman of the Government's Cultural Protection Fund Advisory Group, Secretary of Europa Nostra UK and of the Afghanistan Society, and as well as being on the Buildings Panel of her local amenity society. She is currently Non-Executive Director for Culture at the UK National Commission for UNESCO with a particular focus on World Heritage Sites. As ever, she is concerned about the wellbeing of the non-government heritage organisations and their volunteers who are such a strong feature of UK cultural life.

**Members will receive AGM details including booking slips and nomination forms for membership of the committee during February.**

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## Will Longstaff: Jackaroo, Soldier and Artist

'Will Longstaff: Jackaroo, Soldier and Artist' - this was the intriguing title of the talk given to WSAS and a number of Littlehampton residents and others on 13 November by Dr John Godfrey in the attractive setting of the New Millennium Chamber in Littlehampton. The title itself raised several questions: who was Will Longstaff, what was his connection to West Sussex, and, not least, what is a 'jackaroo'?



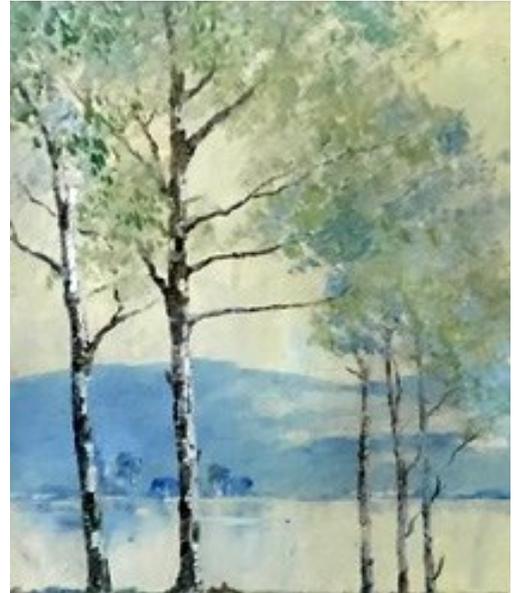
Will Longstaff was born on Christmas Day 1879 in Ballarat, a gold mining town in Victoria, Australia. After leaving school he studied art at the Ballarat School of Mines, before working on the nearby sheep and cattle stations as a jackaroo. This, we discovered, would involve working with the sheep and cattle in a role similar to that of the more familiar cowboy. However, in 1900 he set sail for England to pursue his art studies but stopped off in South Africa

on the way and joined the British forces who were in the midst of fighting the second Boer War. He eventually arrived in England and attended the Heatherley School of Fine Art in London in 1908, although his time there seems to have been somewhat desultory. However, soon after he returned to Australia where he married his wife, Mary, and settled down near Melbourne, becoming a follower of the Heidelberg School of Art (Heidelberg being an area close to Melbourne) which specialised in impressionistic landscape paintings of the bush.

However, with the outbreak of war in 1914 he applied to join the Australian Imperial Force and was gazetted captain on 11 November 1915, whereupon he was sent to Egypt and Palestine. In 1917 he joined an Australian Government official war art scheme to produce paintings showing the Australian forces at war. He was duly sent to France and the Western Front where he produced a number of atmospheric paintings. His skills were also put to painting camouflage. After his discharge from the army in 1919 he settled in London, whilst producing sketches and paintings for the Australian War Memorial. It was during this period that he painted perhaps his best-known picture, *The Menin Gate at Midnight*, in 1927. It depicts the Menin Gate memorial at Ypres in front of which can be seen the ghostly figures of soldiers who had fought and died. It was purchased by Lord Woolavington of Lavington Park near Petworth, for 2,000 guineas, who then immediately presented it to the Australian War Memorial.

It is possible that it was the Lord Woolavington connection that brought Longstaff to Sussex. The Register of Electors show him and his wife, Mary, living at Houghton Bridge, near Amberley in 1933. Towards the end of the decade, he was living at Wepham, with a new wife, Greta. During this period many of his paintings featured scenes from around the Arun Valley and Arundel. He spent his final years living at 71a, South Terrace in Littlehampton, before dying on 1 July 1953 aged 74.

This was a fascinating talk about an artist whose name would have been unknown to many of those present. However, a lively discussion took place afterwards, with some people coming up with their own stories about Will Longstaff. Apparently, a number of his paintings can be found in the Norfolk Hotel in Arundel, and it was suggested that these had been accepted in lieu of payment of his bar bill! An additional bonus was the opportunity to view some of Will Longstaff's original paintings which some people had brought along to show, including our speaker, John Godfrey. These comprised not only landscapes but also portraits and still-life subjects. Clearly, Will Longstaff was an accomplished and versatile artist of both international and local importance. Amongst the outcomes of the discussion following the talk was the suggestion that Littlehampton Museum, which already has some of his paintings, may hold an exhibition of his work, and that consideration might be given to placing a Blue Plaque on the house in South Terrace, Littlehampton, where he lived out his final days.



Afterwards, our Chairman, Philip Robinson, thanked John Godfrey on behalf of those present for his fascinating and insightful talk on the life and career of Will Longstaff. He also thanked those at the Littlehampton Museum for all their help and support in arranging such an interesting afternoon.

**Richard Howell**

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## **The 1921 census: a tarnished jewel with a warning**

The release of the 1921 census on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022 was of great significance to historians. Over the previous three years, 18,235,242 images had been created by Findmypast from the records provided by the National Archives. These capture the population of England and Wales as it was on Sunday evening, 19<sup>th</sup> June. The census had been planned for Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April but had been delayed as it was thought that the current widespread industrial dispute might compromise the returns. As it was, the June date, a summer date, had the consequence of over-stating the population of seaside resorts.

The census came at the end of a turbulent decade; the Great War in which 702,410 British servicemen lost their lives and many more suffered serious and debilitating illness. A decade that had ended with an influenza pandemic that killed more people than died during the war. A decade that began with fears of revolution, as demands for Irish home rule increased and as women fought for recognition and the right to vote.

The publication is even more important as this will be the last release of census information until January 2052, when the 1951 census will be opened. All the returns of the 1931 census were destroyed in a fire at the Office of Works store in Hayes, Middlesex on Saturday 19 December 1942. A fire not caused by enemy action but, possibly, a careless thrown cigarette butt. The 1941 census could not take place as the country was immersed in the cataclysm of the Second World War.

This precious resource, this historical jewel, this glimpse into the detail of our collective past, this product of three years dedicated labour is tarnished as it sits behind a paywall. Access to an image of the census return of an individual costs £3.50 and for an additional £2.50 access is also provided to a transcript of that record and the benefit of additional information, such as a map of the local area, a Gazetteer and summary statistics of Society in 1921, allowing a comparison between the demographics of an individual's location and that of England and Wales.

The maximum cost to a family genealogist is £12 for parents, £24 for grandparents and £48 for great-grandparents, a total of £84. Good value for the records of two parents, four grandparents and eight great-grandparents. For most people it is unlikely that they will have the complete set of parents and grandparents, as some will have died or migrated.

The disappointment, tarnish, of the 1921 census is not for the family genealogist but the local, social, demographic historian who want to interrogate the 'big picture;' an analysis of the continuity and change affecting a community. I have, for example, transcribed the 1911 census for Chichester, population 12,588. To undertake the same task using the 1921 census data would cost £31,298 (*this includes a 10 per cent discount as a 'pro' subscriber to Findmypast*). The paywall diminishes the exploration of the 'big picture' that is the sparking jewel of the 1921 census.

Eventually, maybe this year, maybe next, the paywall will be lifted, the tarnish removed and the full effervescence of the census will become available. In the meantime, it is of interest to begin to explore the 'advanced search' facility that is available outside the paywall. As an illustration, simply putting 'Shippams' in the 'Employer Box' returns 172 results. These can be narrowed down by putting Chichester as the location which returns 79 names giving their place and year of birth. From this, it is a simple task to calculate the age profile of those working at Shippams; a mean of 30.4 years, median of 26/27 and mode of 15. The range is from the 14-year-old Earnest Thorpe, born in Littlehampton to John Shepherd, aged 72, from Duncton.

Now the warning: frustration crept in to feed an addiction. From the 1911 census I know that John Shepherd from Duncton was a Labourer, a widower, living with two of his daughters Aline and Dorothy at 10 East Pallant, Chichester. The three were still living together in 1921, but where? I couldn't resist the payment of £2.50 for the transcript. John Shepherd was recorded as a baker working for C. Shippam Ltd, Provision Merchant, living with his elder daughter Aline, housekeeper, and younger, Dorothy. His address is given as 10 West Pallant or as transcribed '10 East Tallant, Chichester'. I know there is no 'Tallant' in Chichester, so paid a further £3.50 to view the original image. It is clear that Mr. Shepherd and his two daughters lived at 10, East Pallant – a transcription error has been made.

There are many things that can be done with the 1921 census, some of us, [me] may have to join 'census anonymous' to cure the irresistible temptation to pay to view what is over the paywall. Maybe Findmypast will reimburse me for pointing out an error, but again maybe not.

**Philip Robinson**

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## **Diary Dates** Booking slips will be in *The Researcher* Issue 117—April 2022

Saturday 14th May: A walk around **Graylingwell**, Chichester

Friday 24th June: Visit to **Hammerwood Park**, near East Grinstead.

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