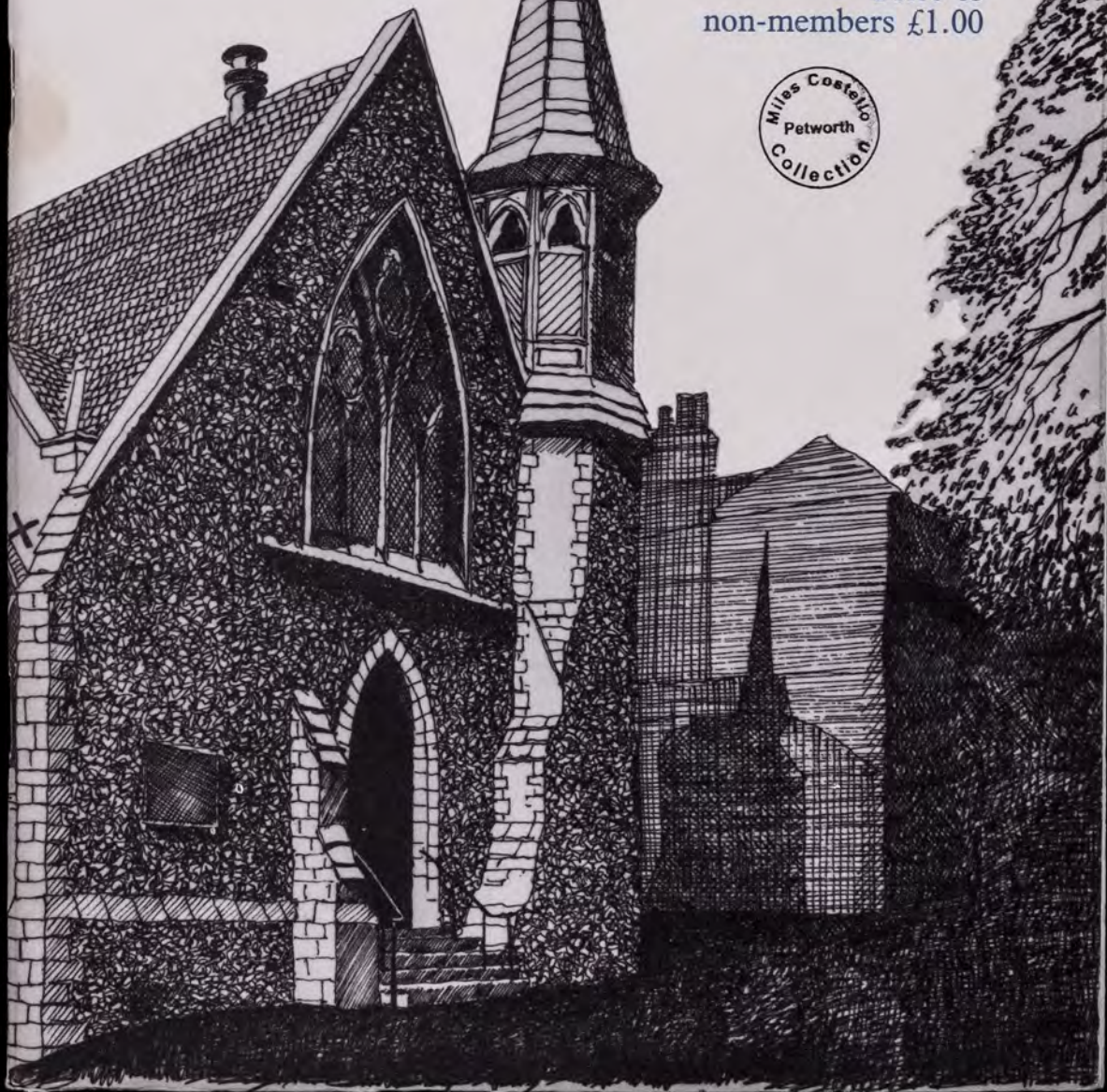


THE
PETWORTH
SOCIETY

magazine

Issue No.62
December 1990
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**Petworth Players
present**

ALADDIN

AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP

**A Pantomime
(By Wilfred Miller)**

at

The Leconfield Memorial Hall, Petworth

JANUARY 1991

THURSDAY 10th – 7.30 p.m.

FRIDAY 11th – 7.30 p.m.

SATURDAY 12th – 7.30 p.m.

SATURDAY 12th (Matinée) – 2.30 p.m.

Admission: £3.00 : (Children & Senior Citizens £2.00)

ALL PERFORMANCES

Box Office: 'David's', Market Square, Petworth.

The Petworth Society was founded in 1974 "to preserve the character and amenities of the town and parish of Petworth, including Byworth; to encourage interest in the history of the district, and to foster a community spirit". It is non-political, non-sectarian, and non-profit-making.

Membership is open to anyone, irrespective of place or residence, who is interested in furthering the objects of the society.

The annual subscription is £4.00. Single or Double one Bulletin delivered. Postal £5.00. Overseas £5.50. Further information may be obtained from any of the following:-

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and Duncton), Mr. Vincent (Tillington and
River), Mrs. Harvey (Fittleworth).

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Once again I have a situation where I have to make a selection of material for this magazine. Almost certainly space will forbid a fuller extract from Florence Rapley's Diary, still less any of the newly rediscovered "lost" Tales of old Petworth. I include fairly full accounts of Society events. These seem popular but do of course take up a lot of space.

By the time you read these notes Petworth Fair will be over for another year. Make no mistake about its historic importance: it is the last surviving street fair in Sussex, possibly even in the home counties. This year we have had the active support of both Petworth Parish Council and Petworth Business Association. Our thanks are due to the former for help with rents and to the latter for help with advertising. I am very pleased that Petworth had a Bonfire Night celebration again for the first time since the 1950s. The evening was a great success and a good foundation on which to build for another year. The Park is of course a marvellous venue. The Petworth Community Indoor Pool Association is clearly a force to be reckoned with and we are ready to help them in any way we can.

I don't know what the final decision will be on the closure of the Cut. (Wherever did this name come from? I'm sure it's not an old one). Traffic was never comfortable coming through the narrow passage on the south side of the Hall but there must be concern at the speed of cars coming down New Street and rounding the Hall. Familiarity makes for greater speed through the Market Square and the constant press of traffic seems to dissipate the essential quality of the Market Square as Petworth's very centre. The Parish Council were unanimous recently in their demand that the Cut be reopened.

The article on the Petworth Nonpareil in Issue 61 was widely taken up at local and even national level by newspapers, radio and television. The following appeared in the Peterborough column (Daily Telegraph 11th October):

Hard core
THE HILLS and downs of West Sussex will soon be crawling with apple fanciers gently sniffing the air for traces of a rare specimen.

The Rev. Donald Johnson, the vicar of Funtington near Chichester, is leading an exhaustive search for an elusive apple

called the *Petworth Nonpareil*, which was cultivated by the third Earl of Egremont in the early 19th century at his Petworth House orchards nearby.

Described in the *National Fruit Register* as "green with flecks of brown russet", it was thought that it had died out altogether.

The parson, however, is not so sure. "It sounds like a cracking apple - it's such a shame it has all but disappeared," says the connoisseur. "I'm hoping that there's some tottery old tree somewhere that people have forgotten about.

"It has a rich sub-acid flavour and a fleshy look," adds Johnson. "It must have a beautiful taste. I'd love to try it."

Donald Johnson had apple-fanciers ringing up all over the country but while several *Nonpareils* came to light the *Petworth* species remains elusive. There is talk of a census of apple varieties in the *Petworth* area, difficult to get off the ground but very rewarding if it could be done.

Returning briefly to *Florence Rapley's Diary* we would still like more information about *Duncton* as it was in the years immediately preceding 1914. We still have few memories of Mr Carruthers the Rector who left in 1912 or Mr Crillen (not Cullen) who helped with the services, still less photographs. Nor do we have photographs of the *Petworth* curates of that time Mr Knyvett, Mr Mainprice, Mr Bury or Mr Frost.

Lastly a word on the loss of Lady Shakerley - for so long a committee member and in fact one of the foundation committee. She had only been saying to me in the week before she died that she really must write down what she remembered of the Boys' School disaster in 1942. Sadly she died before she did so. Someone said that she was *Petworth's* heartbeat and I think it a measure of her stature that no one thought this was "over the top". I shall miss her as will we all.

Peter.

4th November 1990.

P.S. It has been suggested that the time-honoured formula "..... was talking to the Editor" should appear beneath the title of articles rather than at the end. Quite a break with tradition but I can do this if you would prefer it. Please let me know.

PPS. A propos of the mysterious crates of churchman's clay pipes Bob Warrington recalled being found in the cellar at *Petworth House*

(magazine 61), Mr Henry Whitcomb suggests they would almost certainly have been bought in for use by tenant farmers at audit dinners. He can remember pyramids of tobacco on the tables and the pipes leaning up against the tobacco.

PETWORTH'S OLDER STREETS

For most visitors North Street is the quintessential *Petworth*, the high wall on the west side acting as a screen on which the sun throws stationary shadows of roof and chimney from the opposite side. One wonders why the shops have gone, just a few at the top near the church, none the length of the long street. Perhaps it's the press of traffic and being on the verge of the town. Through gaps between houses rise the ridged green fields of *Shimmings*.

Where North Street is long-suffering, Church Street is forlorn; once, when houses hemmed in the churchyard, it was "the street of *Petworth*". No higher accolade than that. Now it has decayed almost to nothing. Park Road lies beyond the sweeping bend that makes crossing Church Street so difficult, a sacrifice to the hurrying uncaring traffic that scores the red bricks in the stable wall, or shakes the *Ebenezer* chapel.

Lombard Street is old and proud. *Petworth's* definitive street it claims. But is it? so different from the other streets. The cobbles ran right across until the early century, giving room for a large cart to come down. In those days Lombard Street was crammed with shops, everyday shops like a greengrocer's, a baker's and a draper's. There was a grocer's at the top. A village on its own almost. Here the showmen's caravans would lie up overnight for *Petworth Fair*. Here was home for Grandad Knight the town crier. "Oh, yes, oh yes, oh yes," he would cry and faces appear like magic at empty windows. And the steeple view; Lombard Street smarts still from the beheading of St. Mary's. It was that view that made Lombard Street the pride of *Petworth*. The steeple was taken down in 1947.

The pride of *Petworth*? East Street would challenge that. The elegant town houses on the east side were home to the well-to-do, those who leave a record behind them. Just imagine his Lordship's legal agent pilloried publicly with a gibbet and gallows, William Tyler and his servant swinging in effigy from the frame. It would need a carpenter's skill to construct such a thing and it would be

four carpenters who eventually appeared at Lewes Assizes. William Tyler's reaction had been understandably crusty. It was a time of agrarian discontent: some four years earlier in 1830 Sarah Mitchell at Master Stoveld the banker's had tried to set her employer's house alight. It was Petworth Fair time. She had been egged on partly by a mysterious stranger, partly by a reprimand from her mistress.

Barton's Lane starts where the traffic is at its worst and leads away out of it. No car can follow where the track turns and the green fields of Shimmings rise, framed between high walls. Centuries before, William Moase had had his great shed raised here to dry the coarse ribbed cloth for which Petworth was once famous. Angel Street stands too in thrall to Shimmings, green fields and a cluster of houses lying away in the mist or lit by a full sun. Some say Shimmings comes from "shim", a will-of-the-wisp, but in truth the name is age-old. The street name comes of course from the famous pub. Logically enough Angel Street was in old time "East Street".

What then of New Street, old and yet forever condemned to the "New"? Bulldozed, (hardly the right word,) through gardens and outhouses about 1800 it would now like a little respect for its age. The Red Lion, once the White Hart, commands the corner. Petworth has had so many White Harts, Great, Little and just ordinary. Now it has none. On this corner men would congregate to hear about work. "Hard weather," Bill Ede once told me, "put men out. And the winter of 1929 was hard."

Middle Street leads to the south, once part of East Street but now given self-awareness by the New Street crossroads. Houses on the east side only. Grove Street, developed late and still enjoying a leafy quiet, is the ancient link with the southern villages like Sutton. Once the House of Correction towered over Grove Street but now only the warders' cottages remain like motherless chicks. High Street, changed a century ago from mundane Back Street, could also be called East Street, South Street or Red Lion Street. The old Red Lion lay in fact a little back from the road to the south.

Golden Square has a robust character all its own. Here the Independents once had their chapel and the United Reformed Church is still a focus for Petworth life. Briefly the cousins were rivals in Golden Square. Market Square is older, already a recognisable entity under Henry VIII. Old names occur even then.

Teelings, Serles (The Swan), Belchambers (Austens) or Durance lying half across modern New Street. Here is the ancestral home of Petworth Fair, dating back, it is said, to 1273. The last true street fair in Sussex. Is there another like it in the Home Counties? I expect so but they are few and far between.

We travel southward. Saddlers Row takes its name from the saddlers on the south side, now long gone. Earlier records speak of the "Bullhouse" here. Pound Street leads definitely out of town, long, straight and traffic-swept. There was a cattle pound on the corner, hence the name. Cobbett's box-hedge survives on the left. Station Road leads to a station that's no longer there. A nice Petworth irony with which to conclude.

"Tread Lightly Here" - an affectionate look at Petworth's Ancient Streets by Peter Jerrome is just published by the Window Press, Trowels, Pound Street, Petworth at £12.95.

This article appeared in the West Sussex Gazette for 15th November and is reproduced by permission of the Editor.

RHODA LEIGH

Mr W. Archer of 16 Penarron Drive, Kerry, Newtown, Powys, SY16 4EA would like information of Rhoda Leigh the authoress who lived at Bedham between the wars and wrote "Past and Passing". There must be members who know of her - please contact me - or write to Mr Archer direct.

Peter.

UNCHANGING SHIMMINGS (?)

Shimmings Farm extends over 200 acres from the fields below the Withy Copse on the A283 to the A272 by Flathurst. It is a farm of steep fields and very average soil. It is unlike Moor over the road to the north in being at once less fertile and more difficult to work but above all in another and quite intangible factor:

To The Gentlemen of
The Toronto Scottish
Regimental Association

The Petworth Society
The Petworth Branch of
The Royal British Legion
The Petworth Parish Council
and the people of Petworth as a whole
congratulate

The Toronto Scottish Regiment
on their 75th Anniversary,
on the 10th November 1990

The Regiment has its own special
place in Petworth's history and its
members are most welcome in the
town at any time. Petworth does
not forget the Regiment's help and
support in the dark days of 1942.

With our very best wishes for 10th Nov
and for the future.

Peter Jerrome Douglas Cook-Martin John Caine
Chairman Petworth Society Chairman Petworth Br. Royal British Legion Chairman Petworth Parish Council

Ron Pidgley's greeting sent on the Society's behalf to the Toronto Scottish Regimental Association to commemorate their 75th Anniversary 10th November 1990. The original of course carries the three appropriate signatures beneath the legend.

anyone who farms Shimmings will come into direct and continued contact with the general public. I wonder how many people realize that while the Gog itself is common land the long path that leads from Bartons Lane to Lovers Lane is the only public footpath through Shimmings - except of course for the tributary that runs from the Roman Catholic Church and curves round to join the main footpath about halfway up. Shimmings is Petworth's breathing-space: I often walk the fields myself to give myself time to think. I wouldn't willingly deny anyone else that privilege. The great majority of Petworth people I have come to meet walking in the Shimmings fields are courteous and considerate.

A privilege can be abused however. There is the person who regularly treads down the rabbit fence in the steep sloping field on the north side of Lovers Lane and quite deliberately cuts the two top strands of wire. The fence is put up to keep the Gog rabbits from infesting the farm area and breaking the fence nullifies our efforts. Not only that: a calf will on occasion make its way over the trodden fence. Its mother tries to reach it, fails and runs distressed up and down the unbroken piece of fencing - the calf unable to get back, the mother unable to reach it.

Other people leave the gates open so that different groups of cattle get mixed up. Very serious from a farmer's point of view and very difficult and time-consuming to sort out. Often it's a group of hikers: I've seen it happen myself. The leader opens the gate and the man at the back doesn't realize, thinks the gate was open to start with and leaves it. Most walkers are good about gates but it only needs one single person to be careless.

Of course people will walk dogs in the Shimmings and of course the dogs will leave the path but some dog-owners are unbelievably thoughtless. I've seen someone out with a large dog haul a large log out of the wood, let the dog drag it along for a little while and then just leave it lying in the grass. Imagine what happens if a mowing machine runs into it! In a way the smaller logs people pick up in the woods, intend carrying home and then after a while simply drop in the grass, are more insidious. It's only too easy to do £1,000 worth of damage to a mowing-machine. Once or twice I've told people about this and been roundly abused for my pains. Even farmers have feelings and I do pay the rent after all!

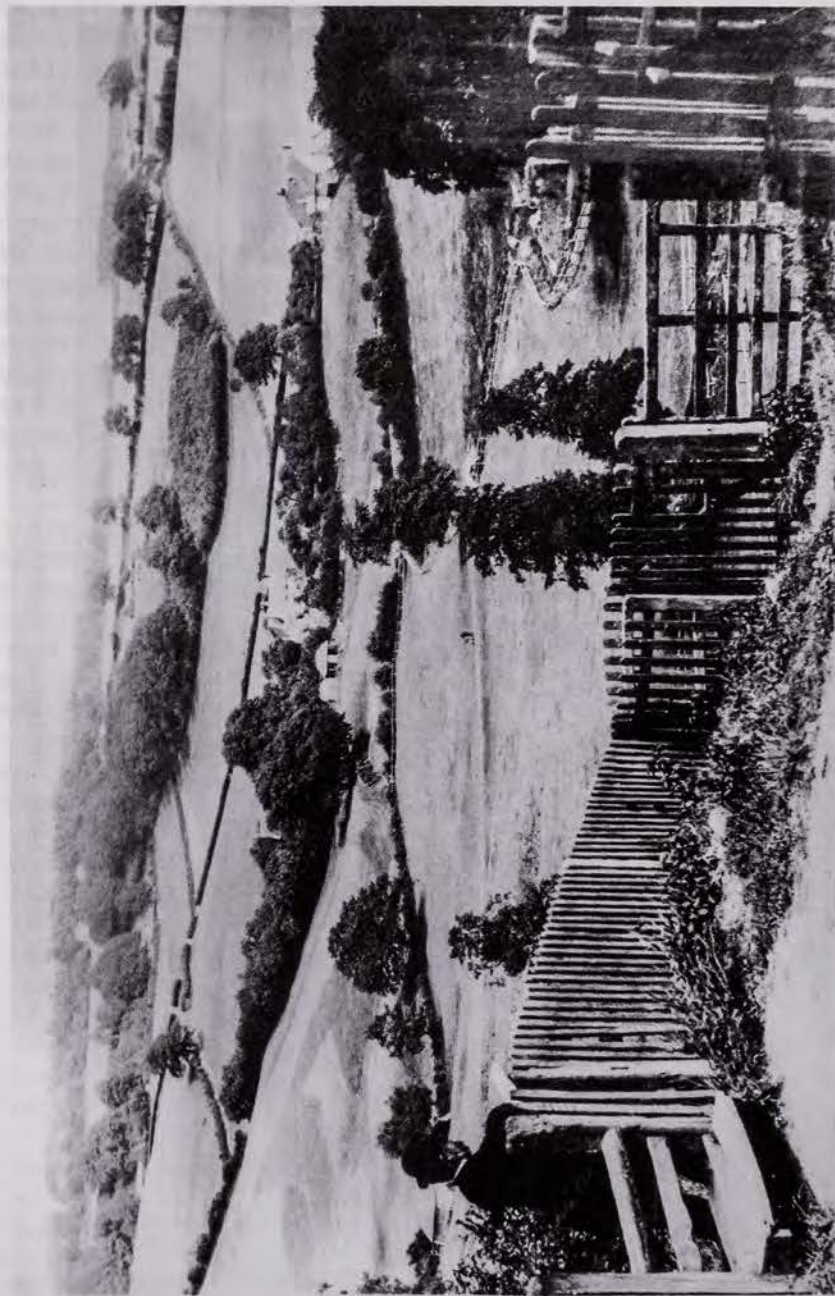
Perhaps what worries me most beside logs left at random in the

grassland is the leaving of cans or plastic bottles in the fields. Shimmings is a farm: it is not a picnic area. At the crudest level animals are inquisitive and can simply get cans stuck on their tongues - often with quite serious results. Bottles or cans lying in the grass can't be seen if you're using a cutting-machine. A glass bottle may shower anywhere but more serious than this is that a metal drink can may shear into any number of tiny metal pieces, some no bigger than a needle. The metal gets into the hay and an animal swallows a sharp piece. This is often the explanation if an animal suddenly goes off colour. Plastic bags are a particular danger. I've known a cow choke on one at Frog Farm. We were working two fields away and saw her throwing her head in the air but we couldn't get there in time to save her. Again it's surely unreasonable for me to give access to the Shimmings fields and find someone practising golf in them, when there are proper courses within easy distance. A calf can so easily choke on a golf ball.

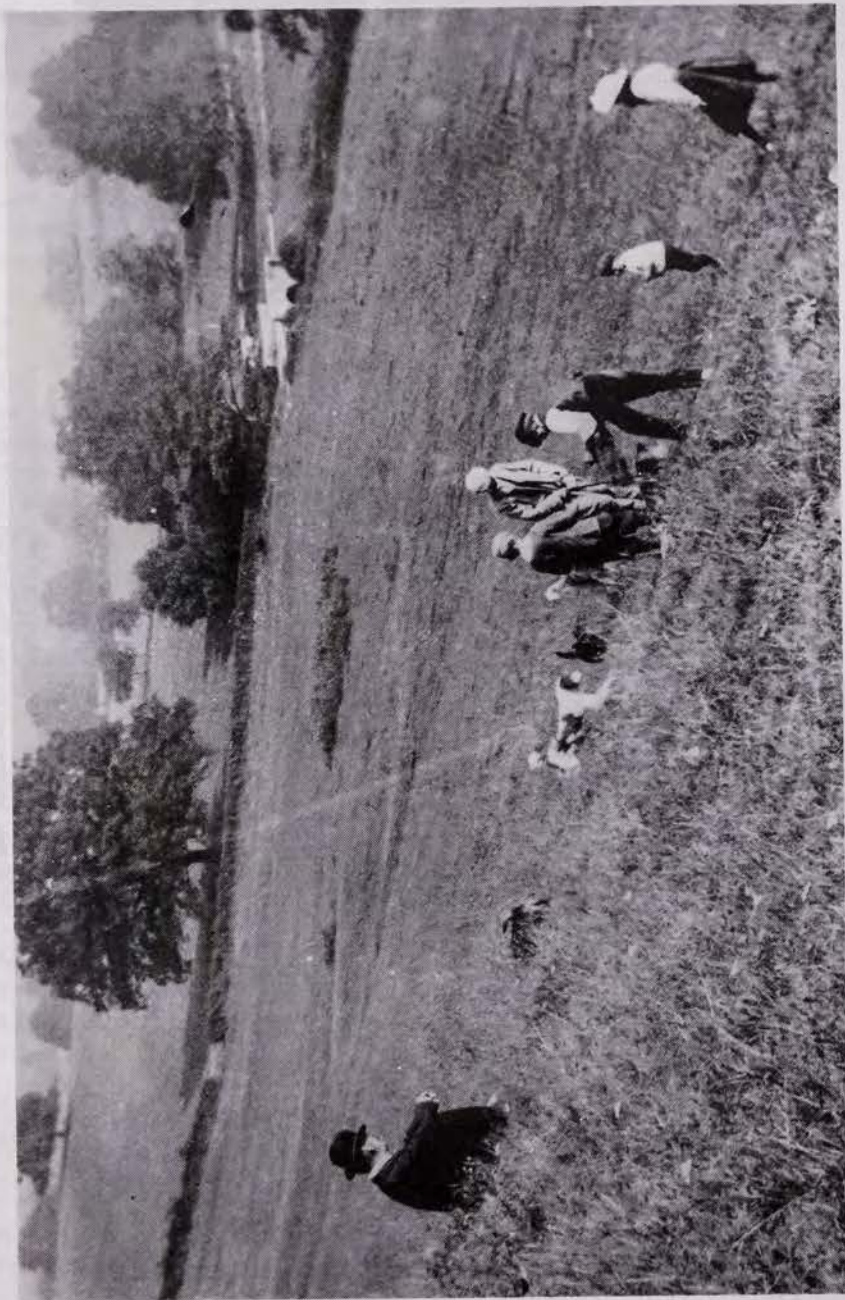
While I can get irritated, I don't get paranoid. Shimmings is a farm with a public face and whoever farms it has a certain amount of public relations to do. It's rudeness that upsets me and it's a minority of people who are rude, intolerant and careless that depresses me. There's no need for that kind of behaviour. I like to meet people when I'm out in the fields. Shimmings gives the farmer a public face.

Boys can be a problem but in a way I can deal with this - there's not the calculated rudeness about them that so irritates one in certain adults. Boys' escapades can have serious consequences however. We nearly had a major incident in the recent very dry spell when boys started a bonfire in the undergrowth to the left of the first stone bridge. Someone tipped me off and I went out. As it happened the fire didn't really get going but it could well have taken hold. Some of my regular walkers are very good about letting me know if there are signs of trouble. Sometimes too I've heard of lads chasing cows with sticks - serious enough, but as I say I find children being irresponsible less wearing than adults telling me what they propose to do in the fields I rent and to which I allow them access. Shimmings is after all a working farm.

Don't forget Shimmings is not a wild landscape. It has not been that for hundreds of years. It is a carefully controlled habitat and as such its status must always be fragile. Some people think



Shimmings 1901. Courtesy of Mrs E. Pennicott.
The photograph may be by Walter Kevis.



Round the Hills 1901. Photograph courtesy of Mrs E. Pennicott.

it's a kind of natural wilderness, an unofficial nature reserve even - it isn't. If it were not carefully farmed Shimmings would quickly revert to a mass of dock, thistle and seeding coarse grass. A periodical spray with a weedkiller is essential. A proportion too of the grass needs reseeding every year because grass will not give an effective crop after five years of bearing. This always gives rise to the idea that I'm turning pasture into arable. I can't. My lease wouldn't allow it even if I wished to and I don't wish to. It's simply that grassland needs periodical reseeding. The Sugar Loaf field is difficult: it is rock underneath and needs lime to keep the soil in reasonable condition. It's of its nature very dry and is tricky for machines because of the pronounced slopes. Last year we wintered polo ponies up there. Sugar Loaf field has to be mowed once in the year and then grazed. If it is not mown the grass gets very straggly. Our aim with all the fields is to graze lightly to keep the grass down.

Two dry summers and the advent of the so-called mad-cow disease have put the already precarious economics of Shimmings under siege. The drought and the indifferent soil means that for the last two years it has produced only half the grass an area of that size should produce, while a drop in beef prices makes it a struggle to break even. Reseeding is essential, paying especial attention to those fields where it is safe to use machines and simply grazing the rest. A more intensive farming programme would need extensive field divisions. There are three options that can be thought about and another that effectively is not an option at all.

- 1) Sheep. Sheep could certainly be viable at Shimmings but here again the public access factor comes in. It might be possible if everyone kept to the footpaths and no one's dog came hurtling unaccompanied up the footpath from Petworth, but uncontrolled dogs and sheep are simply incompatible. It's not so much regular dog walkers that cause the trouble, it's dogs in the town who are allowed to wander off all day. Perhaps it's the fault of visitors to the town - I'd like to think Petworth people know better.
- 2) To go over to milk production. This is effectively out because of restrictions on milk-production imposed by the E.E.C. and the quota system. No quota is presently available.
- 3) To continue with the grazing of beef cattle. As I have said the

combination of dry summers and low beef prices means that the end product will hardly support the cost of production.

I do not number the fourth "option" as it is not really an option at all. That is to leave Shimmings as it is and do nothing. Shimmings, as you know it, is nature carefully controlled. Left to itself the hedges would become overgrown, tree branches left uncleared would become covered in bramble and undergrowth and the paths and fields would be impassable. It cost a great deal to clear up after the 1987 storm and then people complained about the mess made by the machinery! The stream would flood and the fields become a mass of weeds within two years. Shimmings as we have known it would be unrecognisable. The grassland would be two foot high and seedbearing, the weed grasses would establish dominance and rabbits would run wild. Do we need a two-hundred acre rabbit warren on Petworth's doorstep? In any case, as a working farmer it is my responsibility to farm Shimmings. As tenant I could not simply leave the land waste.

Could Shimmings be treated as "set aside" and thus become liable for grant? No, grassland cannot be "set aside", the provisions apply only to arable and even then of course the fields would need to be managed to a degree. Shimmings is not a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) nor is a grant available as on certain downland farms. I have looked at various means of running Shimmings economically and I think this if we go on much as we are and look for an additional source of income that would enable the area to survive economically and remain as it is without detracting from its beauty. As a farmer I am as interested in the future of Shimmings as anyone else.

After a prolonged and careful consideration of the various options my feeling is that if we designated an area starting at the northern end of the farm (Flathurst), up the slope to the Sugar Loaf Field and doubling back into the large ridged field to the left of the footpath as a cross country course for horses, additional income could be generated without being detrimental to the landscape and we could continue grazing beef cattle. Access and parking would be via Flathurst. While the course would double back over the public footpath in the Sugar Loaf Field it would not encroach at all on the normal walk from Bartons Lane to the Sugar Loaf gate. Warning signs would be posted as necessary. The course would be let out to people who wished to train their horses for

events - hardly at all I would imagine from October to February. Use in other months would be intermittent. The jumps could perhaps be landscaped with trees, and placed sideways on to the view from Petworth, or simply sited in dips so as to be effectively invisible from the town. There might be a couple of open competitions in the summer. Would this be a way of ensuring the survival of Shimmings as Petworth has known it for so long?

Richard Chandler was talking to the Editor.

Richard will take the Society round Shimmings in the Spring. (Ed.)

ANNE'S SECOND GARDEN WALK. AUGUST 5TH

It came as a relief that the temperature was only 84°F for Anne's 2nd Gardens Walk (same Anne, different gardens, the posters said). Two days at 94° had sapped everybody's energy, but 50 members had recovered sufficiently to take a leisurely stroll through four of the larger gardens in the town, which showed surprisingly little effect of the drought, still a riot of colour and luxuriant growth. We were first welcomed by Sir Owain Jenkins at Boles House, a secluded walled garden entered through a door in East Street. Here, the various hardy hibiscus, white, pink and blue, were revelling in the "sheltered, sunny, well-drained borders" they favour. Dainty, trailing pelargoniums tumbled from their ornamental urns. The well-ordered planting presented a variety of shades of green, complementing and contrasting each other and the flowers. Out into Barton's Lane, surprising some with a glimpse of the old burial ground, and down to Somerset Hospital where Angela Greenslade enjoys the fruits and flowers resulting from her husband's efforts. With bunting set out for the previous day's tea party for the residents fluttering above us, we noted the cucumbers and tomatoes weighing down their supports and reflected on our own pathetic achievements at home. Next door, at Somerset Lodge, Rosemary Harris outlined the 2½ year history of the restoration and development of the garden. We marvelled at the maturity of the lawns and pond established only last year. There is a newly completed conservatory already stocked with vines, oranges and cacti and a wooden screen, an exact copy of Parham's. Attracting great interest was the wild garden, officially registered, rampant with flowering and seeding species from two random sowings, one last autumn and the other less than three months ago. Here were the familiar poppies, hogweed, marguerites, cornflowers, teasel,

toadflax and evening primrose, together with improbable companions like viper's bugloss (sea cliffs, dunes and shingle), corn marigold (acidic arable soils), tree lupin (waste places, native of California), Deptford pink (light, sandy soil) and corn cockle (a cornfield weed). Some people managed a glimpse of the house on the way out, leading to a suggestion that we might organise a "Town Houses Walk". Numbers would be a problem. Out on to noisy, traffic-crazy North Street for a few yards before winding down between and below the houses to emerge in the drive to Thompson's Hospital where Wilma Jacobs and Kath. Meachen were waiting and the beds of begonias made an immediate impact of red and yellow. The eye then continued over the lower borders and lawns (also maintained by Mr. Greenslade), across the Shimmings Valley to the Gog and, in the north-east, the North Downs near Guildford. A debate took place as to whether butterflies favoured the lighter-coloured buddleia flowers, avoiding the dark purple variety. The evidence afforded by the tortoise shells and red admirals present was inconclusive, but the nectar-greedy bumble bees were not at all selective. Two Committee members narrowly escaped Ian's attempt to photograph them in a compromising position as they investigated the faint perfume of the Sweet Williams, recalled from childhood summers. By now it was 4.30 and, with our thanks to our hosts and to Anne, we dispersed.

K.C.T.

VISIT TO THE PRIMARY SCHOOL WILD LIFE AREA. SEPTEMBER 10TH

The school visit had to be put on early enough in September to catch the light but it was always going to be difficult to publicise properly. Posters however widely spread don't reach everyone nor does everyone look at their magazine straightaway. Even so it was a reasonable attendance for a walk and of course in a sense a walk it was. We met in the school hall then went to look at the pond while we still had the light. It looked mature already, far more so than when I had seen it with Steve in early July. The waterpepper round the edge had turned to autumn scarlet but attractive as it was it would need cutting back. It had probably come in with soil brought in by the Leconfield Estate when the pond was being made. Waterpepper grows in so many woods locally, often in the rutted paths in the Gog woods. I wondered how it had fared in the aftermath of the storm. Steve told us how the pond had taken four days to fill, the children at first surprised that the water coming out through the long pipe seemed no

more than a trickle. Behind him as he spoke the butterfly bank, just bare earth in July, was a mass of colour - cornflower, corn marigold, teasel, nasturtium and buddleia. A dock left to grow at the side had dried the darkest of blood reds. Steve recalled how the liner for the pond was put in by the two top classes holding one end the five Leconfield Estate workmen the other. Now the surface of the pond was studded with different plants. Yellow flags and water lilies, the latter of course needing to be weighed down. There were mosses and other aquatic growth but the time for maintenance as opposed to construction had already arrived. The native hedgerow species at the sides were doing well. The whole project was going well. Dark was falling and we went back into school. Steve showed some slides and answered our questions over tea. Yes, we'd very much like to come back in the summer.

P.

RILEY'S EBERNOE WALK. SEPTEMBER 16TH

We met Riley in the Village Hall Car Park at Northchapel and set off by Hortons Farm on the left hand, down into Wet Wood, looking across the fields to Goffs Farm on the main road by which we had already come. It was a confusing perspective. A great pile of tree trunks lay to the side and there was the sharp smell of cut wood. It was scuffling dry, not Wellington weather at all, although the waterpepper in the rutted tracks reminded of wetter days. We came out on the road to Pheasant Court and walked briefly up the road before veering away across the stubble fields, the wind blowing sharp and the nettle's second growth coming up at the fieldside a fresh spring green. A field of dry cow kale stalks rattled away like so many skeletons - good cover for pheasants. The footpath was one of those vulnerable ones that run right through the middle of a field. Here had been Bittlesham, pulled down over thirty years ago. The earth of the site was still a different colour, grey rather than field-brown. There had been a large cottage garden and Riley said his grandparents had once lived there. No vehicle access: Riley could remember them all walking into Northchapel to the pub on Saturday nights or Granny walking out across the fields to meet the baker.

Then through the "Moor", high bracken with a path beaten through, and at the side sweet chestnut trees flattened by the hurricane, now growing with upright stems from the fallen trunk. We eventually

came out by the rear of Ebernoe House. We crossed the road. Ebernoe Common was familiar to some: we went down the steps to the rear of the Church, skirting the pond to veer away left, arriving eventually at the old Brick Kiln - new to some, familiar to others. It had, said the notice, been last used in the 1930s. Riley could not remember this: he didn't think it had been used since the Great War. He remembered when there were houses on the Common, Golden Knob, Shotterland, and the Keeper's Cottage where the apples grew and you could scrump if you kept account of where the keeper would be on his rounds. Some of the trees were still part of the hedgerow. The smell of broken mint came up from the damp paths and there were broken bricks trodden into them. The holly berries were already yellow orange.

We climbed over a fence into fields that would bring us back onto the road. The high barns of Butcherland rose away to the right. Back in the woods we caught a glimpse of a woodpecker and plunged back into the high bracken on the Moor. Back through fields left high for pheasant cover, Riley pointed out watercress in the stream. Wet Wood again, Hortons on the right hand and back to the Car Park. Thanks very much Riley we all enjoyed it.

P.

MRS PENNY'S CAVALCADE OF FASHION SEPTEMBER 22ND

Would the tickets go? Our "customers" are used to £1 a time and these were £4. Well they did and David had a waiting list by the Saturday. We managed to pack everyone in and even the balcony was full. Les Howard and Keith had brought up the cat walk earlier, huge hollow wooden blocks from the Primary School, laid double width the length of the Hall, Keith, Ian and Phil toiling away with spanners and bolts while I tried to look as if I were doing something or was about to! Anne had asked Mrs Penny if there was anything that would particularly help the decor. Some nice flower arrangements was the answer. No problem there! Mrs Penny would say later that she had never had a venue so beautifully decorated. All set up and all tickets sold: there was a brief alarm when the flat irons downstairs couldn't be made to work but Ian soon sorted that out.

Mrs Penny knew Petworth quite well and had in fact stayed here several times with Lady Shakerley a long-standing friend. It was a

great sorrow to her that Lady Shakerley would not now be present. "Cavalcade" like so many things was something that had started almost by accident, a bye-product it appeared of amateur theatricals and a remote descendant of an original attempt to breathe life into spare costumes left discarded and forlorn in chests. £330,000 for charity and 40 shows a year over a number of years later, they were at the Leconfield Hall. Cavalcade take nothing for themselves just the £165 for the coach to come up from Dorset: the rest goes to charity. Hard work it certainly is, not arriving back in Dorset until the middle of the night and the girls having to be picked up by supportive parents. "What would the clothes look like with people in them?" is the guiding maxim of Cavalcade. Clothes after all are made to be worn.

And so to the sixty or more dresses, the first, but not the oldest, a riding habit from France of 1690. All the clothes are genuine, there are no reproductions. A Cavalcade it certainly is, with Mrs Penny's racy commentary having the audience in fits of laughter. A dress from the court of Elizabeth I embroidered with the roses of York and of Lancaster. A dress from 1694 with a high bustle. Two rare Queen Anne dresses, one in cherry coloured silk. Mrs Penny pointed out the Watteau back so soon to be superseded. There was a dress with Italian silk and a flounced front. The tight caps that were worn tended to weaken the hair and even cause baldness. Wigs were not the luxury we think them. Not all the costume was for ladies: an elegant eighteenth century gentleman's dress had a favour worn round the knee. It would be thrown from a young lady's bouquet to indicate an interest on her part; if the gentleman reciprocated he would take the favour and tie it around his knee.

Among so many we saw matched sisters' dresses from 1770 and a maternity dress in hand-woven silk from 1790. The clear-cut Regency line that followed contrasted sharply with what had gone before, and contrasted too with the Victorian crinolines. For accessories Mrs Penny showed a variety of parasols and the local Dorset bonnet, followed by a marvellous Paisley shawl, woven in such a way as to present a different texture and colouring on either side. Mrs Penny told us of face-shields for sitting by the fireside, very necessary when wax was the basis of a lady's make-up. "Can you imagine anything worse than your face sliding into your lap?" Things like face-shields, curious as they seem today were indeed the daughters of necessity. The Dorset Victorian wedding group was a delight, followed by an 1860's going-away

outfit. A baby bodice alarmed the audience while we saw the special visiting dresses children wore and the less formal clothes they wore to school. A white dress from 1903 could have come straight out of a photograph by Walter Kevis. The evening finished with the Flappers and the Charleston. I have given just a few fragments of a coherent Cavalcade. It was a magical evening and Lady Shakerley would have loved it.

P.

VISIT TO FUNTINGTON RECTORY. OCTOBER 7TH

It was one of those mellow autumn afternoons, a clear blue sky brilliant sun and a slight chill where the sun did not reach. Coming down the hill from the Benges the sea shone on the horizon like a silver lining in the clouds. It was a clear day and you could see for miles. Funtington is a tidy village on a straight road from Chichester and a mile or two from Bosham. I had thought of a party of, say, a couple of dozen when we assembled in Market Square but in fact there were twice that number, so many having come direct. Donald Johnson led us up the gravel path to the Rectory and its gardens. Rectors of Funtington were not, it appeared, birds of passage, Mr Dunlop his predecessor had held the living for 41 years and others too had served long and well. Donald with 12 years pronounced himself a mere beginner. A large yew beside the church might or might not predate the building. We were thinking of dates around 1300. Had Robert of Bosham set eyes on that yew? We could not know.

And so to the garden, some relics still surviving from a certain Victorian splendour. A large brick stable complex used now for the present incumbent's sheep but a reminder, I supposed, of days when the Rector would visit on horseback. Donald pointed out the remains of a heated frame extending from the Victorian greenhouse, an "English light" as it was called. It was used now for strawberry plants and the pipes running from the heated greenhouse still lay under the soil-unused now we supposed for generations. Such remains testified to a more leisured age and a less limited labour force.

There in small plots beside the greenhouse were our first apples, a small tree of Worcester Pearmain, picked by the commercial growers before they were really ripe Donald said. Ideally they should be

left until they are ready to fall from the tree. They then have a vinous strawberry smell to them. "Vinous" appeared the apple connoisseur's particular adjective. Pixie another apple was a newer variety, a seedling from Cox O.P. or Sunset. There were two blueberry plants grown in an acid ericaceous compost in large pots. They had fruited well this year. There too was the old-fashioned Codling apple and pear Josephine de Malines, wiped out this year and last by a late frost when in full bloom. Wheeler's Russett was an eighteenth-century apple, possibly earlier, and Donald had a box for us to try - proffered with some diffidence - Petworth being the home of the Egremont Russett. A quick look at the poultry, unusual breeds here too, then a well-loaded tree of Cornish Aromatic, a very old variety of a very full red colour. Donald said he should have thinned the crop. Cornish Gilliflower was another old apple probably from the same region. Here too was a quince and more pear trees. Annie Elizabeth raised by Mr Greatorex in Leicestershire in the 1850s and named after his two daughters was a large tree and clearly an earlier planting. It is a cooking apple that can be kept well into summer. Donald had a big box of "fallers" at the rectory for us to take home.

By the far wall Donald had grafted unusual apples on to fresh stock. Decio was said to be the oldest apple in cultivation and dated back to the fifth century. Just one small green fruit hung precariously there as an earnest of future crops. Here too was a Howlett's Costard, a variation on the archetypal medieval apple, recorded from the days of Edward I. From "costard" comes the term "costermonger" for a retailer of fruit. Here too was a Golden Reinette another apple with a wealth of tradition behind it. More varieties followed, Claygate Pearmain and Margil, Ribston Pippin, King of the Pippins, Sussex Forge and the dual purpose Lady Henniker. In all there were 23 different varieties of dessert apple and 4 of cooking. 8 different varieties of pears.

Then into the vicarage where Mrs Johnson had put on tea and there was an exhibition of apples we had seen and some too of Donald's rare varieties of potato. Just an interval although a very leisurely one before we went off to Derek Chance's commercial orchard next door. Quite small I think as commercial orchards go. Derek grows ten varieties including Cox, Worcester, Lambourne, Egremont Russett, Discovery, George Cave and Katy. Long lines of trees with hardly an apple to be seen, all gathered in by now and the trees being of a height to facilitate this. Some trees were to be pulled up, others planted. There is none of the relative

permanence of the amateur's orchard. Falstaff was a new apple, a cross between Golden Delicious and James Grieve and hopefully without the latter's tendency to bruise. We had been so long at Funtington that we had to ask Derek to keep the farm shop open for members to buy what they wanted. Gradually we dispersed. We have been out often enough over the years but this was one of the most enjoyable afternoons I can remember.

P.

VISIT TO PETWORTH HOUSE PLEASURE GROUNDS AND PARK. OCTOBER 17TH

Wednesday was an unusual day for a Society visit. A miscalculation perhaps? Apparently not, there were some sixty people waiting in the Cow Yard for Trevor to take us round. Up into the House grounds via the gate by the garage and a stop to look at the working model of the new natural lights for the North Gallery - a replica of the originals. The model was in miniature and would allow an assessment of the probable effect of the lights on the contents of the Gallery. Then into the Pleasure Grounds to see at first hand how they were recovering from the watershed of 1987. We saw a huge amount of planting, for the hurricane had devastated the mature trees. The young trees were growing well in spite of two very dry summers. One plantation protected with meter square polythene mats needed no chemicals to kill the weeds and would become a haven for wildlife. The Pleasure Grounds remained to an extent a mixture of different styles, rounded paths coexisting with angles but an attempt had been made to integrate the age-old straight line concept of the Elizabethan Birchen walks - long straight paths looking to a central vista. The Doric Temple had come through the hurricane effectively unscathed but ironically had suffered damage in this January's gales. Repair work was in process. Lime, sweet chestnut, red oak, Hungarian oak and beech were just a few of the newly planted trees. Trevor pointed out a young tulip tree growing well from seed saved at Uppark. It is apparently gardening dogma that such seeds can't be raised in this country but of an original 120 this one germinated and is now a respectable-size bush.

From the high ground by the Rotunda we looked down toward the new car park. The Rotunda needs a dome to restore it to its former glory. It would eventually be put on Trevor said. Azaleas had been planted to replace the savaged rhododendrons and two hundred fritillary bulbs where the ground was damp. Better to plant an

attractive moisture-loving plant than to drain unnecessarily. Talking of bulbs: in spring the Pleasure Grounds have a massed display of more than a million. All the famed "tallest" trees are gone except for an oriental beech, the tallest of its kind in Britain but not otherwise a noticeably large tree.

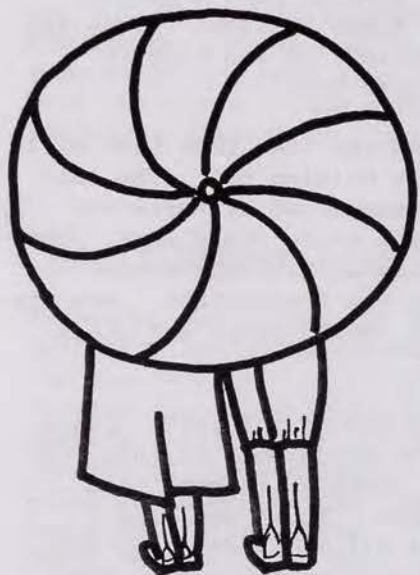
And so to the Park itself, looking down on the lake from Lawn Hill - a dull day with the threatened rain just holding off. The lake has a clay base: all dug out by hand, transported by horse and cart and then patiently puddled round. Ten years' hard work. The islands had been cut back during renovation work in the early 1980s, the large tree roots were damaging the foundations. Now the shoots were growing again and the islands looked fresh and green even on such a dull day.

We walked round past the Boathouse to the end of the lake. Plans showed that Lancelot Brown had intended to put a wood at this end of the lake and now, almost 250 years on, this is to come into being. Next winter perhaps, Trevor thought. There would be a gate, iron-railings and seats. A wood of willow, alder, oak and chestnut - a flora kept away from the ravages of the deer. The present willows would be cut back to ground level and allowed to bush, the alders and the swamp cypress would remain. Quite an extensive improvement covering some four acres.

Round again to the old bath house and stews on the west side at last taken in hand after being so long neglected. The old iron railings had gone and holm oak replanted. One of the two stews had been renovated too with the other to follow as funds and time permitted. Fish would be taken out of the lake and put to swim in the spring water of the stews to be netted later at convenience.

We moved on to the head of the lake - the second largest man-made embankment of the period Trevor said. Obviously a dam had to be made to hold the water but most people probably think of the embankment as a natural feature. Just imagine carting all that earth, shovelling it by hand and then moving it by horse and cart.

Trevor pointed out the slight straight hollow in the ground where the old road to Tillington had gone through, then further on, the site of the old stables and the route of half-forgotten West Street. Charles Seymour Sixth Duke of Somerset had, so the story goes, offered tenants a fixed sum to get out, decreasing by so much for every week they delayed. Unlike so many twice-told stories, this one is true.

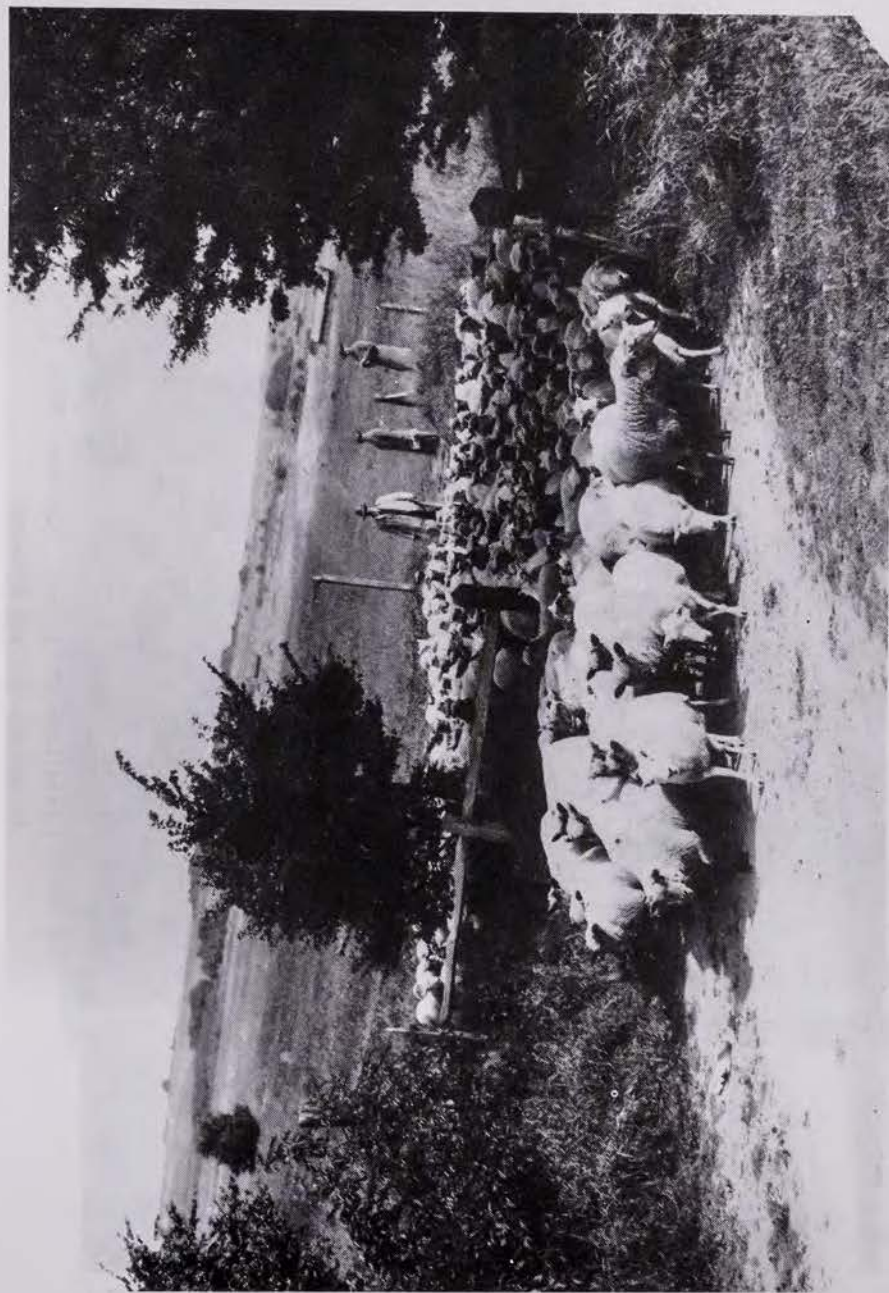


As if to defy Keith's rather ominous poster drawing it was a perfect day. clear blue skies and quite a penetrating air for November. The Balls Cross walk has become something of a tradition over the last few years - the last walk before we start again in February. Some forty members were in the Market Square but there were no problems at Langhurst Hill - plenty of room in the farmyard. Some went into the barn to look at the turkeys but before long Ian and Pearl led us across the road into the autumn woods. We'd been later last year and the ground had been hard and white with frost. This time there was no sign of frost and the leaves were still on the trees, some glorious shades of yellow and orange

but some leaves still distinctly green. It would be a late fall this year. There were fungi of all kinds, some sombre-coloured, some the brightest of orange. We had veered off into a part of the woods we had not seen before bearing round eventually to pass by the rear of Butcherland Farm admiring a miniature lake with swans. After a while we came out on the road between Balls Cross and Ebernoe. Just a short spell on the road before we eventually made our way back through the woods coming out more or less where we had started.

Once again Ruby and John had provided tea in the farmhouse: scones, jam and cream, and cakes and biscuits of all kinds. I don't know how Ruby does it. "They're always so appreciative," she had said in the woods as if this were an explanation in itself. Well so they are, but it's still a lot of work.

After this Ian showed slides of Society activities over the past year beginning with our arrival at Langhurst Hill last November. As usual we will show a selection of these for the Christmas meeting. The gap felt because Ian and Pearl had missed the trip to Funtington in October only emphasized how important the slides are to the Society. The Petworth Society has its own traditions and this record and members own recollections are its joint guardians.



Driving sheep over the Downs to Findon in the mid-1930s.
Photograph by George Garland.



Mrs Penny's Cavalcade of Fashion. September 22nd.
Photograph by Tony Whitcomb.



Mrs Penny's Cavalcade of Fashion. September 22nd.
Photograph by Tony Whitcomb.



Mother Goose 1967. Photograph by Charles White.

THOUGHTS ON THE SUMMER OF 1990

Fifty summers earlier I was in Dad's Army, which is not to say that today I am rising ninety, but simply that in the summer of 1940 I was at school and enrolled in the local Home Guard with everyone else who had turned seventeen. "Beaks" and boys, teachers and taught, we all paraded together in the Local Defence Volunteers as it was at first called.

This past summer I mused on what it was, fifty years ago, for which I was prepared to offer my life had Nazi paratroopers disguised as Nuns really descended on the lonely Downs. The England I went to war to defend always seemed to be downland, in many places criss-crossed by wires as an obstacle to enemy airborne landings. When we thought we were going to be invaded I remember hearing on the Downs the air raid sirens taking one another up, all along the coast from Bognor direction towards Brighton - a sound that worked on the adrenalin. I remember a battery of guns in a Wealden lane, their muzzles cocked towards the line of the Downs. Sussex was my home and I knew the South Downs well for much of their length, I spent the school terms on the wilder Wiltshire downland. When I left school it had seemed best to get on with things and I joined the Army without waiting for my call-up, which at that time came at the age of nineteen, and when I underwent recruits training at the rifle Depot at Winchester the chalk was still with me. I remember a friend of mine who coming home on leave was killed on the golf course at Brighton when a low flying enemy aircraft machine-gunned him.

I must have seen the spire of Petworth church often in my boyhood, yet later on when I came to live at Petworth and the spire had gone, unaccountably I could not remember it. Familiar enough to me, though, was the noble accompaniment of the Downs westwards to Butser Hill.

In the spring of 1944 I was stationed in Worthing of all places, this whole region being the concentration area for many troops prior to the Normandy landings. I remember a route march my company made through West Sussex in fine spring weather, in that year of 1944, through Petworth, and a night in bivouac in the woods near Parham; then a night under Chanctonbury Ring, which we defended the next day in a mock battle as "enemy" to the rest of the battalion. One week after D-Day, in the build-up of the initial assault, we sailed from Newhaven into the Battle of Normandy. We sailed at last

light, and from the deck of an infantry landing ship I had my last look at the pale white cliffs receding across the water as night came down.

On a sultry afternoon in Normandy I was sitting on a ration box in my slit trench and wrote my parents a little soliloquy on a couple of sheets of notepaper, which I sent home and they kept, and which I later came across and I have it today. "My mind always returns to the rolling Downs," I wrote. "I can see the gorse, the copses and rich tufts of grass, the chalk tracks, and beyond, the view of the Weald. No doubt the corn is ripening there, even as this Normandy corn, but there will be English farmers and English landgirls to harvest that corn. It will be made into bread, which will appear on the breakfast tables of English households, back there in the Weald. Here, the corn just stands, pitted and blasted by shell craters, or seared (sic) by tank tracks."

This past summer I stopped my car at the beauty spot above Poynings, alongside the Devil's Dyke. In my youth I had passed there frequently, but for many years I have seldom gone that way. Before me along the humping hills was spread the remembered panorama to Chanctonbury Ring and in the distance beyond to Bury Hill. The poor, broken clump of trees, mauled by the storm of '87, looked worse from the Brighton side. Do people realize that throughout all the war years Chanctonbury Ring was the beacon that meant home? Suddenly I felt very moved. In front of me was a living memory of the England I had fought for.

R.W.

"FORTY YEARS I WERE WITH THE SHEEP"

My father was a shepherd and my grandfather too, although my grandfather had worked in Hampshire. My father worked on various local farms finally ending up at Peppering Farm, Burpham. Being the son of a shepherd it was natural that even as a boy of ten or eleven I would be asked to go up on the Downs on summer weekends to keep an eye on the sheep. I'd go up at 9 o'clock in the morning and stay until perhaps 4 o'clock in the afternoon. My job basically was to stop the sheep wandering. Quite simply if one farm's sheep became mixed up with another's it was the devil's own job to sort them out again. My father would already have taken the flock up onto the Downs from the fold where they'd stayed overnight. I didn't do any other shepherding jobs at that age -

just minding. No, I didn't have a hut: if it was wet I'd have an umbrella or simply put a sack over my head. I left Burpham school at twelve, having passed my exams, and started work at Wepham Farm, the next farm to Peppering where my father worked. Mr. Grayburn was the farmer at Wepham and would be for some years.

At first I worked under another shepherd, Mr. Kingshott, a shepherd of some experience but who had formerly worked on the railway. A shepherd's basic daily task was to "pitch the fold", moving the flock off their food crop and up onto the Downs, meanwhile moving the hurdles along to take in a fresh piece of feed. Half an acre a day was a typical fold. Over a period you could gradually move right across a twenty acre field. In the winter the sheep would stay in the fold and be fed hay or linseed cake. Summer food crops might be grass, turnip, rape, kale, swede, mustard, almost anything in fact, the sheep being brought back down to the fold in late afternoon. While he was up on the Downs the shepherd had to keep an eye on the flock. I'd sit there and whittle away at a piece of yew to make collars to hold the sheep bells - held by leather straps going through the wooden collars. I've still got some of the old sheep bells: you'd put them on the lead sheep or on a sheep with a particularly long neck. You'd know then where the sheep were in the mist, or you might put a bell on a sheep you knew was likely to wander, there was always one that would have a go at getting under the wire.

The shepherd's year began with lambing in February: it might take about six weeks and involve being up half the night. We'd have a shepherd's hut for lambing, kept close to the pen. The lambs would of course need more protection than the usual hurdles; windbreaks made with bales of straw and thatched hurdles. In days before straw was baled the straw was simply loose. I'd often work on my own when I was a full-fledged shepherd but of course in the early days I was simply under-shepherd. Help depended on how many ewes were due to lamb. Mr. Grayburn had some six hundred Southdowns so there could be quite a number sometimes. What did we have to do? Basically see that the lamb was born correctly and was healthy, also check that the mother would take to the new arrival. Sometimes if a ewe had twins she would reject the second and sometimes when a lamb had died we'd skin it and put the skin on a rejected animal. The chances were that the mother would treat it as her own. We'd shut up ewe and lamb together in a small pen and they would usually take to each other. Triplets would certainly

mean a rejected lamb while some ewes had no lambs of their own. For light we used hurricane lamps, at least at this time in the 1920s, but before that it had been candles in a jam-jar. They needed careful handling with so much loose straw about! Later of course we would have torches but not, I think, before the 1930s. We'd dock tails when lambs were a fortnight old. This was to keep them clean and make them look better. The tails were burned off with a hot iron. If they bled the next day you'd have to put some ointment on them. Lambs would be weaned at ten weeks when they were gradually getting used to feeding off the food crop. In the first instance you'd pitch a small fold ahead of the crop with a very small gate in it called a lambing wattle so that they could go in and nibble at the choicest bits before the main flock got in. They used to cry dreadfully when they were weaned.

Shearing was the next great landmark in the shepherd's year but before that we'd give the sheep a good bath to clean the wool in preparation for shearing. This would be done in the river, letting the water come up at high tide, and then putting a big shutter across the river to dam up the water. The shutter was attached to a big iron post and levered in and out of position.

Shearing was done in June. You'd need at least one other man, another of the farm-workers perhaps, to get the sheep out of the pen for you and to roll up the fleece afterward. Shearing itself was hard work, bending over all day and all the cutting manual. Hand shears were effectively giant scissors. I'd do a sheep in about five minutes and a good fifty in a day. The fleeces would be packed in an enormously long bag called a "poke". Each poke was as long as the lorry on which it would be loaded and would take as many as sixty fleeces. When tightly packed down the poke would be stitched at the top. A fleece would come off in one piece, cut in a kind of sweep beginning with the head, ears and neck. I remember being at an agricultural exhibition in the 1920s and there being a New Zealander there giving a shearing demonstration. I didn't think he was up to a lot and my friend who was with me urged me to have a go. "Take him on," he said. "I'll do one for you," I said, and he agreed. He didn't however take too kindly to my doing a better job in less time, giving me £1 and telling me to "get out of the bloody way". At that time fleeces were collected by lorry and taken to a wool factory at Chichester: in the early days they had been taken away by rail. A little later I would be given a fortnight's leave in the season to go out with a shearing gang, usually four of us, although for set jobs to be done in a certain

time there might be as many as fifteen. We could go quite a long way, Beachy Head I remember once, occasionally sleeping in barns. I remember too buying a round in the pub for all fifteen of us as I was the youngest and it coming to half a crown. Beer was twopence a pint! Shearing was piece work but I never really knew what the rate was as the leader of the gang shared out the money at the end of the day. It was good money but hard-earned. I might make £7 a week with the gang. They were based at Hammerpot.

Dipping was another definite date in the shepherd's calendar coming at the end of July or early in August. Obviously there wasn't much point in doing this before the fleece had begun to grow again. We had a special concrete dip at Wepham with steps at one end. The sheep were pushed in and held briefly under the water. There was arsenic in the sheep-dip and we had to be very careful, wearing goggles and putting the sheep in a special pen after they'd been dipped so that they could shake off and dry - they would shake off the surplus water rather like a puppy and you certainly wouldn't want them shaking the dip off onto growing crops. We'd need some help with dipping - usually from the farm - the carters might help us. The local policeman too had to come and check that it was done: dipping was a legal requirement. Undipped the sheep could be eaten alive with maggots which would burrow right into the animal's flesh. I've often had to scrape the maggots out with a knife before washing the wound with diluted Jeyes Fluid.

Foot rot was something we had to be on the watch for in summer but it was hardly a problem in winter. Actually you didn't really need to look for it because it was obvious: you'd see the affected animals kneeling to eat or just hobbling. It wasn't a progressive disease if you left it but the animal could be severely handicapped by it. Treatment was by cutting off the affected portion and painting it with a mercury compound or Stockholm Tar. If there were a lot of sheep affected I might take twenty or so into a shed and do them at once.

Findon Fair was the high point of the shepherd's year. I would still in those early days walk them over the Downs to Findon to be sold at the Fair. I might spend hours beforehand shampooing them so that they looked their best and I often won prizes in the competition, for the best breed or best turn-out, things like that.

The months after Findon were quieter before lambing time came again at the beginning of the next year. In my early time and certainly

in my father's time the shepherd was a prince among farmworkers. He did not deal with anything but sheep. When the shepherd began to be expected to do other general farm jobs this was effectively the beginning of the end. Cows and milk began to assume a greater importance than sheep and pig-keeping became more general. Some farmers stopped keeping sheep altogether whereas in the old days almost every farm had its flock of sheep. I worked on at different farms until I was fifty-two but the job was not what it was when I had first started at Wepham some forty years before. I still have my two shepherds' crooks one with a genuine hazel handle. One crook is a real Pyecombe one. You'd put the crook part round a sheep's back leg just above the hock if you wanted to pull a particular animal out of the flock and a very useful implement it was too. The ornamental whorl-work on the end is quite logical if you come to think about it. You wouldn't want the end to stick out in a spike, would you? The only use for my crooks now is when they're borrowed at Christmas for the local Nativity play.

Frank Oliver was talking to the Editor.

A PEOPLES' THEATRE

Petworth Amateur Dramatic Society were Petworth's drama group when we first came to Petworth in 1954 but they were then on the point of disbanding. The Hampers Green Drama Group was a quite different formation, originating in a suggestion of mine to the then Hampers Green Sports and Social Club based of course at the Sports Centre. Dr. Michael looked after the hut and we used it regularly for rehearsals in the early days. The newly formed Drama Group was not in essence a Petworth organisation at all, nor was it independent of the Sports and Social Club of which it was an offshoot. Up until we broke away in 1959 all moneys went toward the common fund or to certain nominated charities.

Although we probably did not realize it fully at the time, it was the original commitment to Hampers Green that would determine the character of the company over the next thirty-five years. Amateur Dramatic societies tend to use people with some kind of stage experience: with such a narrow catchment area as Hampers Green we simply couldn't do that. Practically no one in Hampers Green had previous stage experience. Hannah Bridger had a considerable knowledge of stagecraft and I had worked with the Meredith Players in Ealing but if we were to succeed it was obvious that we had to train people who had no previous stage experience at all. I think

this is a distinctive facet of the Players (as we would come to be known) over the years: we have always looked to produce and train local people regardless of their lack of previous experience. So many people have worked with us over the years and fostered talents they never knew they had. This has always made the Players very much a part of the local scene and an organisation that Petworth people find it easy to relate to. It is their own friends and neighbours that they see on the stage. A good early example was John Hackford. I remember him coming into our very first rehearsal and saying, "I don't act but I'm willing to help". I suggested he read one of the parts for someone who wasn't present and he grew into acting. He learned his words very efficiently and according to the book - so well in fact that I've sometimes ticked him off for reading from the book, only to find that he wasn't! He was simply a good learner. He appeared in a number of early plays before he moved from Petworth.

I knew the farce "The Happiest Days of Your Life" by John Dighton from my Ealing days and felt it wasn't too difficult for beginners to put on with a reasonable competence. It was a play too that would allow us to fit parts to the players that we had. In my own words (A.G.M. Minutes 12/2/57) "it was a play which would be fairly easy to produce and cast and would not require difficult scenery and lighting". The action revolves around the adventures of a party of schoolgirls and their teachers dispatched through a Ministry error to a boys boarding school. "The Happiest Days" was put on in the Iron Room in May 1957, first to an invited audience from the Petworth Darby and Joan Club then to full houses on the Friday and Saturday. Extra seats were needed for the Saturday performance. It was a terrific start and clearly something that touched a Petworth nerve.

We liked the old Iron Room: you could get audiences of some 230 a night. The stage was crude and we had to change together in the kitchen cum dining-room at the side but for all that we liked the Iron Room. Scenery in those very early days was very much down to Ron Pidgley as Stage Manager. He had worked with the now defunct Petworth A.D.S. and we were able to use some of their props stored at Petworth House. We had to get a van, load it up on the Friday night, work right through the weekend, have a first dress rehearsal Monday, then another on Tuesday.

"The Poltergeists" followed in November 1957 and was notable for our collaboration with the West Chiltington Drama Group. This

old-established company had put on the play a fortnight or so before and our own players went to watch them and, in my own words at the time, "get all the help they could". Collaboration went further however: when one of our leading players had to go for an interview in the Midlands on the Thursday evening Michael Williams from West Chilton took his part over for the night! Press notices were again good, the Southern Weekly News speaking of the growing strength of the group and of Ron Pidgley's set as "a model of uncluttered convenience".

Success bred confidence and for many years, certainly all through the 1960s, it was our proud boast that every one of our productions had made a profit. A notable early comedy was "Sailor Beware" with Phil Sadler and Hannah Bridger as contrasting leading ladies. An early farce was "See How They Run" in April 1958. "Random Harvest" in November 1958 was a more serious play with lighter interludes, while "Dry Rot" in 1960 was a great success. The Observer critic wrote of "Dry Rot", "Without hesitation I rank Hampers Green Drama Group's production of "Dry Rot" at Petworth Town Hall last week as the most uproarious piece of tomfoolery I have seen on an amateur stage for years. I laughed until my eyes were moist and my throat sore. This play was indeed a winner". "Dry Rot" was watched by some seven hundred people in all.

The Group tended to keep to domestic comedy: it was a genre that suited our players and their audiences too. We had moved to the Town Hall at the beginning of the decade. "Rebecca" in the late autumn of 1961 was notable among other things for the staircase erected by Ron Saunders, Jack Clifford and Bill Davies in the limited confines of the Hall. The West Sussex Gazette praised the Group's initiative in breaking away from the usual type of comedy for the first time for several years. In truth "Rebecca" is not an easy play to perform well. As the same correspondent observed, "Rebecca" is rarely seen on the amateur stage and was an ambitious choice for a group such as ours. It is a play rich in dramatic interest, with real characters and, above all, a story that holds the interest until the final curtain.

Plays like "The Brides of March" (April 1963) in which a businessman is left a harem by a grateful sheikh, and "Goodnight Mrs. Puffin" were more of our usual type of play than "Rebecca". "Friends and Neighbours" was a domestic comedy with a Lancashire setting. "Fools Rush In", another domestic comedy, had a newspaper critic writing "this company has the happy knack of raising the

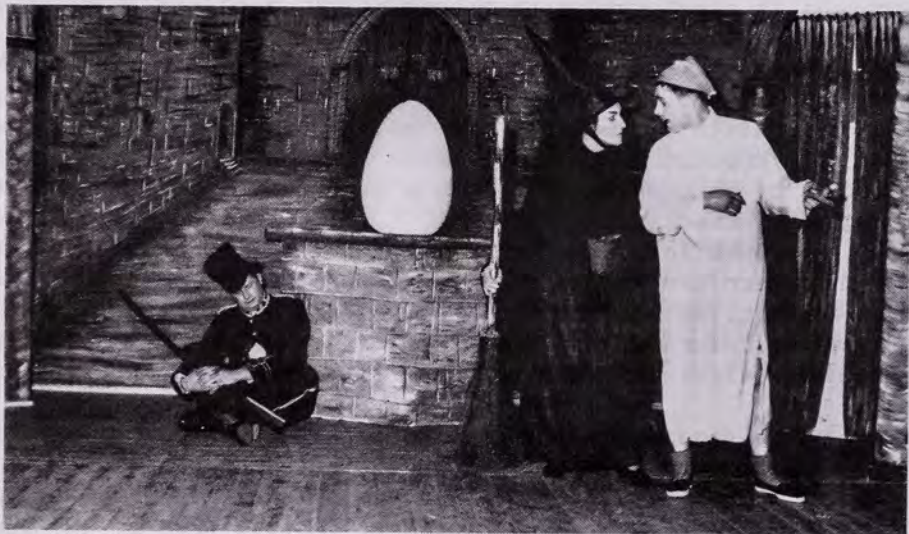
laughs without transferring the situation into farce". "Flare Path", the famous Terence Rattigan wartime play, was more serious although as in the earlier "Random Harvest" there were lighter scenes, while "The Winslow Boy" in December 1968 was another well-known Rattigan play. "Chase Me Comrade" and "Doctor in the House" were successful comedies at this time.

By this time the Players were established. People knew they would see a competent and enjoyable show, usually with plenty of laughs. "Competent as ever" said a newspaper headline of the time. The Players had indeed "arrived". There were difficulties at this time: the pantomime "Red Riding Hood" scheduled for January 1971 had to be called off because of the difficulty of obtaining adult players. Profits too could be variable; "Sit Down Adrian" made just £6 and support too was variable. It was difficult to lure people out of an evening. All drama groups find this and it is a problem that remains. Already in 1962 the Observer had sounded a strangely prophetic note with this comment on "Watch It, Sailor", "if such superb productions as the Hampers Green Drama Group staged with "Watch It, Sailor" in the Memorial Hall, Petworth, from Wednesday to Saturday, were more frequent, many more people would leave their television sets to watch amateur drama".

The Group are famous for their pantomimes and of recent years these have had a greater appeal than plays. Choice of pantomime is always left to me but we often make use of pantomimes by Wilfred Miller. Quite often we insert local or topical gags of our own. Staging a pantomime involves a great deal of hard work, the text often dividing into different almost self-contained portions which can be rehearsed separately on different nights. This can mean of course a whole succession of evenings out for the producer, in addition to the usual committee meetings and arranging for such things as programmes and tickets. An early priority after reading the script is to run over B.B.C. effects records to see what is going to be useful, playing records too to find music that will suit. Again a pantomime may need as many as fifty or sixty costumes. Flora Thomas is adept at making up costumes from pieces of material and over the years we have amassed a large props box - traditionally over the years the preserve of Joan Clifford and Ada Parvin.

It may surprise that our first pantomime "Humpty Dumpty" was not staged until 1961, a good four years after our first play. All four performances were given to capacity audiences. The scenery

alone, painted in oils by Bill Davies and his son, represented some eighty hours work! The pantomime was very well received and notable, among other things, not simply for the fourteen main characters and for a sixteen-strong chorus of soldiers, courtiers and highlanders but also for a dozen very young dancers - all from Petworth. It is the numbers that make pantomime at once hard work and extremely rewarding. It is the numbers too that make for large audiences: everyone has parents or relatives who want to see them on stage.



Tony Whitcomb and Lena Saunders elude a sleeping guard in Mother Goose (1967).

"Mother Goose" in 1967 again had a large cast but by this time we had reverted to the Leconfield Hall. Stan Chapman gave a marathon performance as Mother Goose gradually and painfully regaining her youth by the artifice of a wicked raven (Lena Saunders). "The Sleeping Beauty" came, after a long gap, in 1977 and there have been several pantomimes since. We are already working on one for January 1991 - it's scarcely possible to think it's thirty years on from "Humpty Dumpty", the Group has by this time created its own traditions.

Variety was a feature of the early days, much less of latter years. I've always felt variety is a challenge: you can't get away with any old thing. "If we are going to continue to give variety shows,

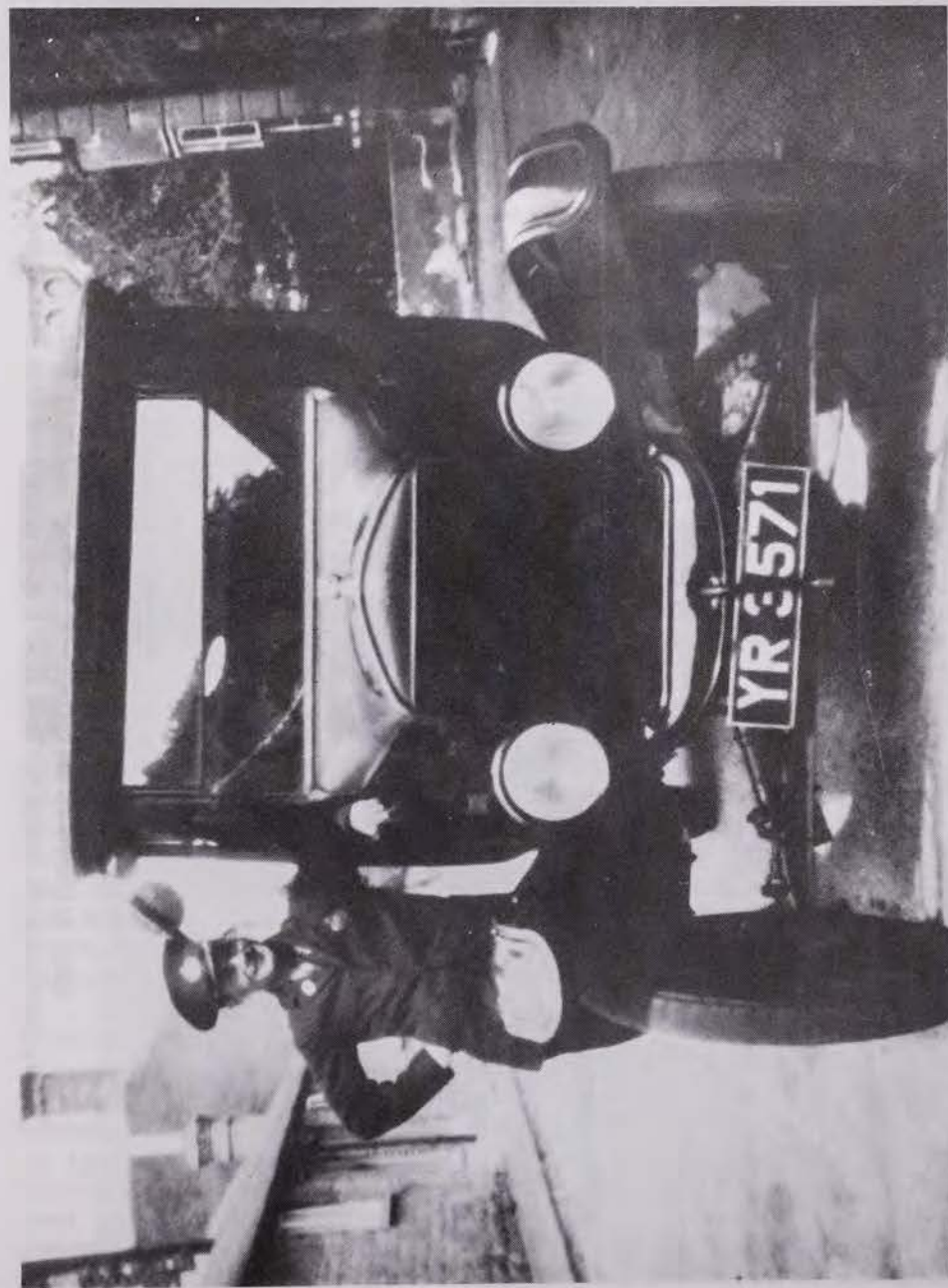
they have got to be good with no mucking about." So an early newspaper report gives me as saying and I wouldn't quibble with that now. Variety shows would be put in between the two main plays. I remember once doing a variety show in a cowshed at Balls Cross: "It's been thoroughly cleaned out" we were told, but we still thought there was a distinctly farmyard smell. Once we went down to Littlehampton for a Boys' Club Show. We would entertain too at local Darts dinners. Not all our offerings were to the taste of the newspaper critics. "I have never heard 'Bless This House' played by clarinet, accordion and drums in my life before and I hope I never shall again," wrote one who would only partially be mollified by the M.G. Quartet's subsequent rendition of "When the Saints Go Marching In". I remember when the Sussex County Show was held at Soanes Farm in 1962 we were sited in the Christian Tent next door to the wine and spirits tent. The Christian Tent was sparsely attended when we started but we soon changed that, drawing most of the patrons out of the wine and spirits. I particularly remember Jean Mouland and Fiona Faulds as singing for us. Kit Katon was our pianist for many years and also, of course, acted in many plays.

It was not until 1971 that the Group finally became Petworth Players. Hampers Green after all was a very restricted base and it was astonishing that we had come so far with such a small catchment. The wider relationship with Petworth had been a matter for discussion right from the beginning. From earliest days we could ask someone from Petworth to take a particular role, provided that our non-Hampers Green membership did not rise above 20% of total membership. This situation officially continued through the 1960s, if under a certain strain and not always strictly adhered to. It's been quite different since 1971. Now anyone can join on payment of a £2.50 membership subscription each year. It is however those early days as Hampers Green Drama Group that have determined the Group's character over the years. We've always given new players a chance - we had to - if we had had to rely on seasoned performers who lived in Hampers Green we could never have started at all! It is this reliance on ordinary local people that has given, and still gives, the Group a spirit that is entirely its own. So many have appeared on stage through the existence of the Players who might never have done so. 1971 was in fact something of a watershed, a realisation that, after fifteen years, support could not be taken for granted and that we needed to look from our old base to Petworth as a whole. There was too a realization that I needed some help with producing. Lynton Morrish would now act as

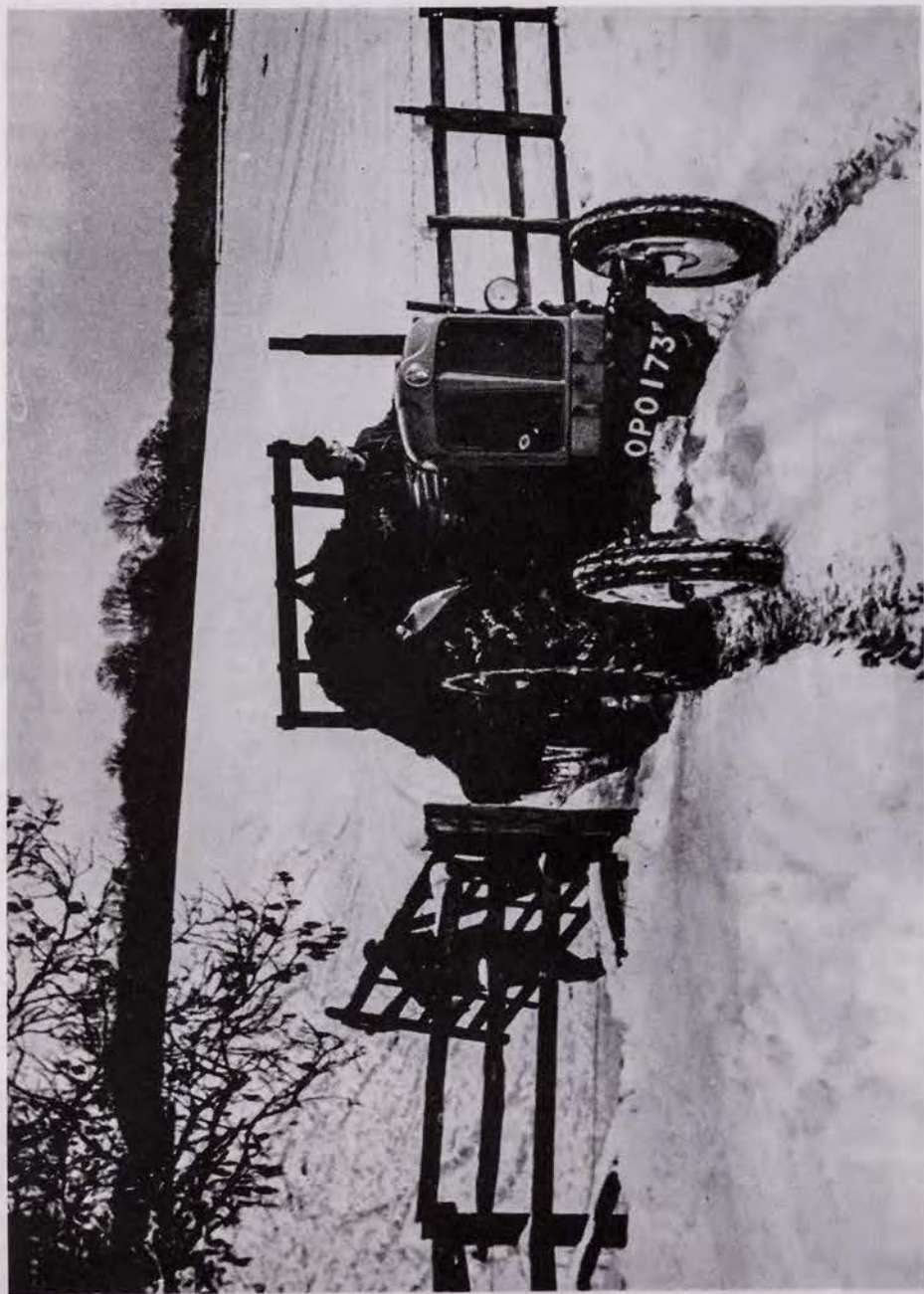
second producer. No society can be really effective without a strong stage crew led by the stage manager. Ron Pidgley was followed by Alan Clake, Bill Harding, the late Les Katon and the late Ron Saunders. Now we are fortunate in having Melvyn Bridger as stage manager. Owen Bridger was electrician for some years followed by Bert Lintill who has "semi-retired", Douglas Price having taken over.

Some things stick in the mind and will remain. Jack Clifford always helped erect the scenery. "Jack will be there," was a catchword for years when there was something that needed doing, particularly if it was a bit tricky. I'm sure Phil Sadler won't mind me telling of the scene in "Rebecca" when I had to go centre stage and take a flower out of the bowl. It was a turning point in the action and so important that it should be right. There had been two flower arrangements on stage, one on the table centre stage, the other a fixed oasis arrangement at the side. Unknown to me Phil Sadler had looked over the stage beforehand and thought the oasis looked better in the centre. When I went to pull out a flower I couldn't - it was stuck firmly in the oasis! At another time Wilfred Bevis had to give me a drink on stage but found that he couldn't open the bottle. Thinking quickly he said, "I suppose you don't really want one anyway". Some of the players were very determined. I remember one part which demanded that Hannah Bridger fall backward over a settee. She didn't like doing it much but insisted on keeping to the script. I altered the script in one play so that it ended with Hannah diving into a linen basket. In one of the later pantomimes David Reiss, who was a pilot, had a part coming in towards the end. It was in "Hansel and Gretel" I think. He telephoned me after the Friday evening performance and said, "I'm a bit stuck, I've got to fly to Majorca tomorrow and I don't know whether I'll be back in time for one of the evening performances." We arranged for his part of the pantomime to be cut out and had just reached his entrance when he rushed in. He'd been to Majorca, landed somewhere up north, got a lift to Gatwick and just made it!

People say I'm not as touchy as I used to be - but I can certainly get worked up if things don't go as I want them to. That's what producing is about. Amateurs we may be but people pay good money to come and see us and "anything will do" is not the right attitude. Yes, I can be hard on them but the years have made me more tolerant. You can't get amateurs to every rehearsal and for pantomime you're often dealing with very young people. I don't



Mr Muskett in Grove Street. Photograph courtesy of Mrs K. Street.



Nobby Blackman at Hallgate Farm, Byworth. January 1954.
This photograph by George Garland should have appeared in the last issue.

like people forgetting lines and I don't like ad-libbing, although I remember John Hackford and Bill Singleton adding a chamber-pot to a scene in one of the Sailor plays. It was good enough to keep in but definitely an exception. As a purist I don't like having raffles at our plays but financially they're absolutely vital, the members donate the prizes. We also sell sweets. We need all the income we can now, just to break even. Royalties for a play are quite high now, £80 perhaps and the hire of the Hall may run into hundreds of pounds. Support is erratic. There's more against us now than when we started in the 1950s. Television has a greater hold than ever - all dramatic societies find this.

We bought the Lombard Street hut in the early 1970s but when we were offered the Armoury because the Youth Club no longer needed it we sold the Lombard Street premises. It was long before the property boom and by the time we had paid Capital Gains Tax we were little better off financially. We still use the Armoury.

The present Players are very much a going concern, very much a part of Petworth life. We have a dozen or more youngsters of eleven to fourteen learning stage training and voice production under Gail Ratcliffe. "Ernie's Incredible Hallucination" was a recent example of their work as was the circus put on in Rosemary Gardens for Petworth Festival this year. Kathy Bridger will direct and Lynton Morrish produce this season's pantomime with Olive Fox looking after the music and Lee Lavington the wardrobe. As usual there will be the intense local involvement you always get with a pantomime. "Noah Gives Thanks" at St. Mary's Church in Festival week was very well received and something I'd always wanted to do. Bill Harding painted the backcloth so well that some took it for part of the Church! Pam and Malcolm Shepherd, two of our members, are making a video for general release to aid handicapped children which includes sequences of our "babies", the seven year olds dancing.

Looking over the years I have talked mainly of the earlier years. I remember very early on being in the Market Square and overhearing two ladies talking. We had a bill-board up on the Town Hall advertising one of our plays. "Going to see that?" said one lady to the other who was leaning on her bicycle. "No, I never go in there," said her companion emphatically. I'd like to think that over the years we've made some impression on attitudes like that. Above all however we are, and have always been, a society for the ordinary person. Anyone can come and feel at home at our plays and

if someone wants to act, we will give them a chance. We are Petworth's own theatre group. Just a few of the people I have worked with since 1957 have been mentioned by name, so many others have not. This article is a thank you to everyone who has worked with Marie and myself over the years. I have enjoyed those years as I am sure you have and I hope this is just a prologue to the continuing story of Petworth Players.

(From a conversation with Harold Huggett and a look at the Petworth Players' scrapbooks and minutes. Ed.)

A GROVE STREET CHILDHOOD (2)

I've been sitting here wondering how to begin this continuation of "a Grove Street childhood" and suddenly I remembered the gramophone - it was an old wind up one - am I right I wonder in thinking it had a horn? Either the gramophone or the records had the "His Master's Voice" label with the picture of a dog listening to a gramophone. Anyway Dad brought it and several records home one day - I remember Johann Straus's Radetzky March, Carmen, the Egyptian Ballet and later, Ernest the laughing Policeman - I laughed till mysides ached with that one. I loved them all though. Another warm and comforting memory is of the coal range fire in the kitchen of Musket Cottage. Coming home from school on a winter's day to the warm glow of the fire and the smell of bread baking. Mum always made a small loaf each for us - you know, the kind with a round base and a smaller round on top. She was a good cook - I'll never forget her roast dinners! Roast beef with crunchy roast potatoes, parsnips, brussell sprouts and Dad always loved a big onion roasted with the meat. The smell as we opened the back door when we came in from church was wonderful - we used to have little Yorkshire puddings made in a bun tin too. We went to Sunday School in the morning, then on to church and rather reluctantly to Sunday School again in the afternoon. I can just rememebr Mr. Penrose, the vicar, and Mr. Powell - also Mr. Mackie was the curate and Scoutmaster.

Monday would be wash day - the built-in copper was lit and by the time we came home from school at mid-day the washing - snowy white sheets and tableclothes blowing in the wind on the lines in the backyard. Cold meat and jacket potatoes with homemade chutney followed by blancmange and jam - that was our Monday meal - shepherds pie on Tuesday - steak and kidney pudding on Wednesday - Thursday I just don't remember but it was always fish on Friday and

hot-pot on Saturday. When we came downstairs on Saturday, Mum would be cleaning the range - Zebra polish for the main part and emery paper for the steel edges - the fender on the left in front of the fire. One thing I hated on Friday evening was when we were dosed with liquorice powder - Ugh! I hated it. Castor oil was worse though - that was for various tummy troubles. I've just remembered another piece of gramophone music - Ernest Lough singing "O for the wings of a dove" - that was beautiful! (now I have the same pleasure from James Galway with his flute - magic! and since a friend introduced me to his music last year - Luciau Pavarotti - his voice is fantastic).

I don't remember when I joined the Girls Friendly Society and the Brownies - I won a Mother of Pearl and Silver Pen at G.F.S. The meetings for these were held in the club room in the High Street - there was a boot and shoe repair shop underneath. Our school cookery classes were also held in the club room.

I think I must have been about five when I remember walking with a neighbour to a Fête at Lavington House - I was so tired when we got there that I just sat down on a grassy bank and nearly went to sleep. A faint sound of music brought me suddenly awake - I sat up and there coming along the path was a band of Scots pipers. I had never seen or heard anything like it before! To me they were magnificent! I watched spellbound and still thrill at the memory.

My two Grandma's are part of those memories - 'Big' Grandma was Dad's mother - she was a tall lady with a quiet voice - she taught me so much about cooking and washing and ironing correctly - I loved her! "Little" Gran was a roly poly lady - she wore so many petticoats and always dressed in black and had her hair screwed back in a "bun". She was a very strict lady - we children dreaded her visits. She came to live with us for a while and I remember she would never use the pavements - apparently one day she was walking down the middle of Angel Street with the traffic queued up behind her and was most indignant when the A.A. scout wanted to escort her to the pavement!

Kathleen Street.

WORKING FOR MR. MORAIS

I'd started working for Mr. Vinall in the old coalyard at Northchapel almost before I'd left Northchapel School, doing

general repair work. Engines had always interested me. When I left school I would pass a practical test at Croydon which involved driving and basic repairs. When I applied for a job at Mr. Morais' garage in Market Square I was told I could start straight away. I would be there for four years.

Mr. Morais had gone into partnership with Henry Streeter at the Railway Inn at a time when the motor-car was just beginning to make a real impression on the horse as a mode of transport. Henry Streeter had done an extensive trade in horses and carriages for hire, and had run the station bus and the Market Square Bus Office for years. These tasks Mr. Morais would take on in a changing world. My own work was basically repair but I had to turn my hand to whatever was required. In the later years I was very much in the repair shop but in the beginning I was out on the road a good deal. Mr. Morais was well able to do small jobs himself but didn't look to do the heavy repair work, and certainly didn't reckon to go down into the pit.

Repair work in the late 1920s was in essence much as it is today. Ignition trouble was more frequent as the old type petrol was much less refined than today's. Punctures of course were as much a nuisance then as they are now. Back axles were made of softer metal then and tended to break. I would go to Guildford by motor-cycle and come back with the half-shaft slung across the shoulder of the bike. We came to know most makes of car, Morris, Austin, Wolseley, Standard. I remember two ladies who lived up by the church had a Lanchester which had an unorthodox type of gearbox and the agents having to come out because we couldn't fathom it at all. This was unusual. We normally just picked up the repairs as we went along. There were manuals of a kind but we often simply puzzled things out for ourselves. Mr. Boyd did the electrical work for us; he lived in the old house (now pulled down) opposite the Angel and moved later to Tillington. Bill Baxter the blacksmith would often come over from his forge opposite the garage to help when a vehicle had got low on one side.

I remember the back spring going on the first Ford van we had in the garage. It was difficult to get the broken spring out and a special tool was provided to do this. The tool snapped as I was working on the spring and caught my hand. It took a bus driver from Haslemere to prise it off eventually with a long pole. My hand was not broken just badly bruised. It was Fair Day and there were animals in cages opposite the garage - in the entrance to the

Iron Room. People paid to see them but there was a stench from the cages which always put me off. I'm sure it wouldn't be allowed today. A staple repair job was relining or adjusting brakes: cables were all wire in those days and we'd put on cramps to tighten the wires. The equipment was improving all the while, during my time for instance we had machines that you would put under the wheel to test the pressure of the brakes.

As I have said you would have a few hours repairing and then be out on the road for several hours. The A.A. or R.A.C. would call us out for breakdown or accident. In Goodwood week the A.A. used the garage as a base, going out to patrol the road for breakdowns. The patrolmen would lodge in the town for the week. We had a Crossley which was used as the station bus at this time but it had a bar fitted for towing. If the steering had gone and the vehicle couldn't be towed we'd have to get Charlie Francis out from Rapleys with a crane. In later years Mr. Morais had a proper breakdown lorry fitted with a crane. One Christmas Eve I can remember us being down at the Railway Hotel when someone came in to say there had been an accident at Last Lodges, a Bentley had knocked the wall down. The Bentley in fact seemed in far better sorts than the wall and we towed it back to Market Square. Its aristocratic occupant, a lady, had already been collected and we heard no more of the incident.

Much of Mr. Morais' work was, as Henry Streeter's had been, hire work. Not too many people had private cars then and the garage had a busy taxi service. Not the only one in Petworth however - Pim Harper had two hire cars and Dan Hill in Angel Street had a Dodge which he used for taxi work. I remember that employees of the Royal Mint used to rent a cottage at Halfway Bridge and we used to take them out to Worthing and Brighton while they were here. We were contracted to pick up the mails for the Post Office and would go down to the station and bring them back to the East Street office. We might too deliver larger parcels direct from the railway. These would often be for the drapers, Dancy's or Fox's. Every Christmas the Post Office would hire our van and I would take Mr. Kent the postman round to the various sub-post offices in the district to drop off the mail. There was a fourteen seater private coach which was used for Goodwood Races, darts parties or football teams and we had a small van which would collect milk for Mr. Perry at Moor and take it down to the station. Yes, it was in churns but they'd help you load at the farm and the porters would help you at the station. We used also to take up all the food that had been

cooked in the Swan kitchens for the Leconfield Estate Audit Days. We'd pick up the empties too and bring them back and keep an eye out too for whatever was over! In later years Mr. Morais had a Ford lorry which Perce Simmonds drove.

The old station horse bus had of course gone by this time and been replaced by an old Crossley motor which doubled as an ambulance. All this was part of the "empire" Mr. Morais had taken over from Henry Streeter. Bill Parsons would be on call during the day and either Perce Simmonds or myself would do the evenings. We'd be effectively on stand-by. Before we'd set off we'd get the nurse out to travel with us. Our duties only extended to the driving. I think I was actually the last person to drive the Crossley before a new ambulance was bought by public subscription in 1933. Run initially by the police it would later be taken over by the council.

The garage always had someone on call until 10 o'clock, selling petrol and doing whatever needed doing. We might well be called out and, if we were, we'd have to ring through to Mr. Morais at the back to get him to come out and take over. He lived in Park Road to the rear of the garage. The fire-station was right next door to the garage then and George Henley, one of our staff, was the driver. This was one thing that wasn't part of Mr. Morais' empire - well not exactly - although we did often use the firm's van to take out the hose-pipes. What fires I can remember seem rather anti-climaxes. There was one in a Leconfield Estate cottage at Upwaltham. When we arrived the fire had already been put out using the pond that lay at the side of the road at the foot of Upwaltham Hill. There was a joke that the Leconfield Estate engine had gone out but returned because one of the men had forgotten to bring his pipe!

All tips went into a box and we'd go down to Mrs. Knight in Lombard Street for meat pies. Arch Knight would sometimes say, "Give them to the boys, they're getting a bit stale" - he meant the pies of course! In the afternoon we'd go off down to Cockshutts for cream buns. The garage had individual garages let out to people like Mr. Turner the bank manager, Mr. Cockshutt the baker and Mr. Pitfield the solicitor. The ambulance was also kept there. I've often pushed Mr. Pitfield out, getting him straight before he set off up Park Road en route for Haslemere. All stores were kept in a loft over the top.

Mr. Morais died in the early 1930s and his widow moved to Hove. Mr. Castle took over and later Mr. Kemp. After that it became Harwoods. I had however left long before then.

Bill Hall was talking to the Editor.

PETWORTH ODDITY

STANDING loftly as a prominent landmark on the top of Shimmings Hill, Petworth, by the side of the main road is a large tree. It is passed during the course of a year by thousands of people, but very few recognise anything unusual about it.

They consider it to be one of the lesser-known types of trees found in English woodlands and forests but in fact, it is an alien to this country. It is an orange tree. It stands on Baillwick Farm on Lord Leconfield's estate and it is believed there are only two which thrive out-of-doors without special care in the country.

The other is on His Lordship's Cumberland estate.

Several people who have lived in Petworth all their lives confessed that they did not know it was an orange tree, although they had seen it hundreds of times and stopped to admire the unusual foliage. It used to stand much higher than it does now, but two years ago the top branches had to be felled owing to the danger of them falling on a nearby garage.

How it came to be grown there is a mystery. The present farmer, Mr. W.J. Yeatman, who has been at Baillwick for 12 years, says it was there when he came and his predecessor warned him not to nail anything to it, because of its rarity.

Annually, the tree bares fruit, which never ripen owing to the climate. Mr. Yeatman has tried everything he knows to ripen one of the green fruits, from wrapping it in paper to burying it in sand, but every time he has had a similar result: the oranges go rotten from the inside.

But the tree itself is an excellent weather forecaster. When the blossom appears on the boughs, one can rest assured that there will be no more frosts. It is very late in blooming, so late, in fact, that the inexperienced watching it progress must wonder if summer has somehow become merged with spring in the tree's cycle of progress.

Every year since he has been at the farm, Mr. Yeatman has received letters from people all over the country asking for the fruit. Some send stamped addressed envelopes, others small packages for them to be wrapped in. Others ask him to keep them an orange so that they can pick it up during the holidays later in the year.

There are also the local residents who know of the tree's existence and who take a keen interest in it.

They walk out of Petworth along the Pulborough Road to Shimmings Hill annually, and spend hours gazing up into the foliage trying to spot the fruit. It is an absorbing pastime, for it takes plenty of time and concentration to pick out the first orange, but once one has been spotted dozens can be seen.

The presence of the tree and the confessions of the local residents prove that the old adage that people living away from a place know more about what is there than the local people, is true.

From The Midhurst Times 28th October 1950.

THE LOST TALES OF OLD PETWORTH

1) "Butter" Ede

I am pleased that we have found room to include one of John Osborn Greenfield's "lost" Tales of Old Petworth discovered for us by Janet Austin of the Ifold Local History Society. The printer's proof from which the Window press 1976 edition of the Tales was taken had probably lost its last four pages while surviving precariously as a stand-in beer-mat at the Angel Hotel in the mid-1950s. A complete version appeared in serialised form in the West Sussex Times and Sussex Standard in 1891 and 1892 under the title Petworth Chat apparently the original title of the Tales. The West Sussex Times was a direct forerunner of the present West Sussex County Times and it is perhaps unlikely that the Tales were originally published in book form. The present extract draws partly on the reminiscence of Mrs Sharp John Osborn Greenfield's mother-in-law and the first paragraph takes us back to the Petworth of the early 1760s. "My aunt" is Greenfield's own aunt. The Greenfield family were traditionally wheelwrights.

PETWORTH CHAT, OR TALES OF OLD PETWORTH

THE GUNTER'S BRIDGE WITCH.

Mrs Sharp has often amused me with stories about an old woman, who lived at Gunter's Bridge, and who was very proud of being considered a witch. She was commonly known by the name of "Butter Ede." When the children of that day, when the churchyard was their common play-ground, as well as the common thoroughfare in going from the North Street to the middle of the town, saw the old woman apparently intending to get over the gate, which had a broad wooden

step on each side, they would often say to each other, "let us stop the old witch from coming this way and make her go round by the horse chestnut tree;" and then they would put two sticks, or two pieces of straw, or even two pins, in the shape of the cross, and immediately the poor old creature came near, long before, as they said, she could possibly see the cross, she would suddenly turn away, mutter a curse or two and crawl round the other way into the town.

A HORSE'S HEART.

"Aye" said my aunt, one day, when we three were in full swing of telling such tales, "aye, I remember a young man, coming to our house at Petworth, and talking to father about a new waggon, and as he was not indoors just at the time mother asked him to sit down and wait. He did so and placed a rush basket that he had in his hand down on the floor close to his chair, of which also he appeared very careful. Presently our little dog Japper began to sniff and whine round the basket and at last mother said, "Why William," his name was William Payne from Ballis Cross, rather a weak-headed young fellow.

"Why, whatever have you got in your basket? our dog seems almost ready to tear it to pieces. Come away, Japper, come away." Well replied William, "I don't mind telling you, Mrs Greenfield for I considers you rather a sensible woman. I've got from the dog kennels a horse's heart."

A MAIDEN BETWITCHED.

"You are not going to eat it, I hope," said my mother to him. "No, but I will tell you what I am going to do with it; our maid is in such a strange way you can't think. She hasn't got no appetite, except for green gooseberries and such like; she will eat hardly anything, and goes mope-mope-moping, about house or crawls away all by herself for hours together, whenever she can, or sits crying and sighing about, and when mother asks her, what ails her, she says, she don't know she's sure, or nothing ain't the matter with her only her spirits is low, or some such excuse. When we want her to see a doctor; she's all in a twitter and won't hear of that anyhow. She says a doctor can't do her no good. Now whenever she hears anybody talk about old Butter Ede, she is all in a tremble like; and she won't go by Gunter's Bridge for anything.

A CURE FOR WITCHCRAFT.

"So putting all them things together, mother and all the neighbours think she is betwitched by old Butter Ede, and I have heard that if the man or woman who is betwitched gets a horse's heart and sticks it full of pins, saying the Lord's Prayer all the time, but nobody

must speak to them, whilst they are at it, and then writes the witch's name upon a piece of parchment, and stuffs it into one of the holes at the top of the heart, and burns it to a cinder on a wood fire, and then, when it is all in a scrump pounds it fine like dust, and throws it into a stream of water, which runs in the direction of the witch's house, that the person will get well, and the complaint will fall upon someone or something belonging to the witch; and so you see we means to try it this very night, and I am sure I hope it will do her good for I am main sorry for the poor girl, that I be."

A MORE LIKELY CAUSE.

"Perhaps after all, said mother, there may be a natural cause for the poor young thing's sickness - who knows? She may get better in a little while William, without all this trouble about the horse's heart."

I thought William looked rather foolish and red when mother spoke to and stared him hard in the face. But she was right, though for about five months after that, lo, and behold it had a natural ending, and I never heard but what she made him a very good wife.

THE WITCH'S FUNERAL.

"Well" said Mrs sharp, "did you never hear what took place on the day of her funeral, or at least of her supposed funeral - for the bearers said they were certain from the lightness of the coffin there could not have been a corpse in it, for it was not heavier than a feather; indeed they did not believe that it was a coffin at all, nothing but the shape of one; for that whilst the people were waiting at the house for the coffin to be put upon the two joint stools at the door, a great black tom cat, which had lived with the old woman years and years, beyond the age of any natural cat, kept running in and out of the door and jumping through the windows, which were kept open as the weather was very hot at the time, like a mad thing, and not at all like a real cat; and she was almost as much feared and hated as her old mistress. Well, nobody ever saw or heard of the cat after that day, but something between the shape of a cat and the likeness of old Butter Ede was seen flying out at the top of the kitchen chimney, and there came such a clap of thunder and such a stroke of lightning and such a smell of sulphur, that all who were in the house were nearly stifled. And that was the end, I presume, of old Butter Ede and her cat."

A list of new members will appear in the March Issue.

