

Miles Costello
Petworth
Collection

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THE PETWORTH SOCIETY
Magazine

No. 158, December 2014



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Coates Church



Coates Church a hundred years ago. See "With Ian to the Black Hole."
A postcard by H. Rapley, Fittleworth.

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CONSTITUTION AND OFFICERS

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 of residence who is interested in furthering the objects of the society.

The annual subscription is £12.00, single or double, one magazine delivered. Postal £15.00 overseas nominal £20.00. Further information may be obtained from any of the following.

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FRONT COVER designed by Jonathan Newdick.
Cover illustration: Agricultural Show in Petworth Park, probably 1913.
From an unattributed photograph.

Chairman's notes

The talk on the new Window Press production "Eleven Sussex Books" is to come as I write. I have printed 100 numbered copies at £15. I append the *Observer* notice – without the accompanying photograph! I have no idea whether any copies will still be available when this Magazine appears. If you are interested please ring 342562 to check.

I think the quarter's activities are adequately covered in the following pages. Once again I have an excess of material and have had to be selective. Otherwise I would draw your attention to the attractive winter and spring talks we have for you.

[Proofreading a fortnight after originally writing gives me the opportunity to lament the passing of Max Bradley a great friend of this Society and instrumental in setting up the Cottage Museum. His cheerful, helpful presence will be much missed. 5th November.]

Peter
18th October

Classic Sussex authors brought back to life again

They are some of the best authors from a classic period of Sussex writing and now their books have been brought back into the light by Petworth historian Peter Jerrome.

Eleven Sussex Books looks at authors writing during the last years of Queen Victoria up to 1939. In the words of Mr Jerrome: "Taking a particular book by each author with, where appropriate, a sidelong look at other works from the same hand."

A number of the books featured formed part of Petworth photographer George Garland's 'Sussex' collection.

"He left the books to me and I have always felt I owed it to him to do something about them," Mr Jerrome told the *Observer*.

"I think all the authors have particular aspects of interest."

"Tickner Edwardes could be the one I like the best. But John Halsham is an absolutely classic Sussex author and the rector of Rusper was an extraordinary man. I don't think any of these people should be forgotten."

The authors range from Tickner Edwardes and his contrasting experience of

nature and war to the forthright clergyman AA Evans.

There is Rhoda Leigh's fragile vision of a vanishing rural Bedham and Edward Martin's determination to endure life in a derelict windmill.

Then there's Russell Thorndike's villainous but fictional Dr Syn and the harsh reality of Edward Synnott's turbulent ministry at Rusper during the 1914-1918 war. There is the wit of another clergyman, John Coker Egerton, and the Quaker upbringing of Maude Robinson at Saddlescombe near Brighton.

The book also looks at John Halsham's classic *Idlehurst* and Walter Wilkinson with his travelling puppet show who, said Mr Jerrome, "casts a quizzical 1930s view on a still half familiar world".

Mr Jerrome has used George Garland's photographs to illustrate *Eleven Sussex Books*.

It is designed and produced by Jonathan Newdick and limited to 100 individually numbered copies priced £15 each with £3 for postage and packing.

It is available from the Window Press, Trowels, Pound Street, Petworth.

Visit to Alfriston. 16th July

Reading this early in December, you may feel July a long time ago, but thinking of the visit to Alfriston is a reminder of one marvellous day in a glorious summer. Alfriston was only a name to me, familiar at most from an occasional black and white George Garland print of the famous Star Inn in the 1930s.

Travelling directly east across Sussex we entered a leafy coach park within reach of a village very much set up for visitors. A host of small shops and eating places, spread out along a single narrow street. If the weather had been unkind we might perhaps have struggled, but not today: all lay open beneath the sun. The focus of our visit, Alfriston Clergy House, wasn't large enough to accommodate our considerable party as a single group so we dispersed with instructions to meet again in the coach park at 2.15.

As we wandered round, it was as if the Petworth we had left in the Sylvia Beaufoy car park had somehow transmuted into Alfriston: everywhere were pockets of familiar faces. Sandra and Don had come down from Epsom and I was lucky enough to have their jovial company. A quick look into a pre-lunch Star Inn revealed a cavernous interior but we had tea and toast in the small garden of an unpretentious tea-shop with a garden looking out over the green in front of the mighty St Andrew's church. "Why such a remarkable building was provided for Alfriston, a village of a few hundred souls, has yet to be discovered," says the Guide Book.

We make the trip uphill to tiny Lullington church, over the reedy river Cuckmere, all the while looking back to the Downs. Tiny as is the present church, it is in fact only the chancel of a larger building, originally a chapelry of Alciston.

Back in Alfriston it's time for a leisurely light lunch at Ye Olde Smugglers Inn but hardly time to do justice to the Much Ado Bookshop, particularly after a weekend Book Sale, then time for the Clergy House, the National Trust's first ever acquisition at a princely £10!

On a day like this the magnificent garden means the medieval house receives less attention perhaps than it deserves. All too soon we're on the way to the coach park, en route for Eastbourne. "How we lived then" perhaps merited several hours but this wasn't indoor weather. Some snatched a quick look at the beach and a leisurely ice cream. It was that sort of day. So much preparation by Debby (and Gordon) but a real day to remember.

P.

Linda and Ian's "Madehurst" walk. July 20th

Madehurst and Gumber Farm? So the posters. But it was a blazing hot day. Time for democracy. We decided Madehurst could live for another time and we'd seek the welcome shade of Lavington Common. The car park seemed busy enough but we didn't meet a soul in the silent woods. Out of the searing sun it's cool under the trees but quite rough walking initially, tree roots stretched like lengths of rope across the path and even ruts filled with stagnant water to clamber round. Water pepper still in pale green leaf bestrides the centre of the track and an expanse of brown leaf bears witness to encroaching rhododendrons killed by chemical spray. A warning notice recommends care.

We're gradually moving in an anti-clockwise direction. It's a path marked out for someone else; every so often we come across three spots of flour, but there is no sign of those who have travelled or are proposing to do so. Their absence gives a sense of mystery that their presence would soon dispel. Through the sunlit pines we can see Tillington in the distance rising over the harvest fields. The bracken is already summer high and we're in a kind of tunnel of holly bushes, reminiscent of Hungers Lane. The road opens out; we disturb a baby adder which scuttles quickly into the safety of the verge. A peacock butterfly stretched out on the track is less shy. All these tracks will come out into Cathanger Lane. Did the name really once reflect a profusion of wild cats? The tarmac seems new. Is that a car coming up the lane? No, it's simply the wind in the branches. Up to the crossroads, on,

and, after a few hundred yards, left. Prunella or self-heal in the verge and the eternal bracken. Like bugle you sometimes see prunella for sale in garden centres. Here there's a definite effort to reinstate the old heathland at the expense of pine plantation. Ian picks up a piece of flint, clearly worked by man. The area is known or Neolithic remains. Yes, it would have been too hot for Madehurst.

P.

Linda and Ian's Gumber walk. 21st September

It had been too hot for Gumber in July, but this was a perfect afternoon. To Whiteways, glancing right to the ranks of motor cycles, then right again for Madehurst immediately off the roundabout. A narrow road, a half cluster of houses, a pillar box by a farm, all shrouded in the fragile green of late September.

We continue and park the cars. High corn cobs, one cyclist passes, then another. No cars allowed after this point. By chalky fields and silent woods, turn-your-ankle flints and the occasional sharp ascent. We meet no one until we arrive at Gumber itself, high, isolated, exposed. Bill Moulard¹ told me Gunter was peculiarly exposed to snow. As often or not he'd take a matchbox full down to school just to prove the point. 350 Welsh mountain sheep tended by just father and son. It would be the late 1930s and the very beginning of the war. Gumber now belongs to the National Trust and is still a sheep farm. The "bothy" offers good basic accommodation for campers. "Lift up your hearts in Gumber" a plaque proclaims. I felt Gumber a little understated for Belloc's flights of rhetoric.

Gumber had been a decoy airfield during the war, something of which Bill Morland had direct experience. With these thoughts we set off down another flinty track, past a barn in good order and a farm pond clearly long obsolete and covered in green slime. Fluffy heads of spent hemp agrimony by the path, all colour gone as too with the deeper red of woundwort. Beech nuts of a high orange brown crackle under foot, the early fall of a dry September. Second growth white dead nettle in the path, the occasional yellow toadflax beacon. A sudden screeching. A woodpecker chased by a sparrow hawk has crashed into the wire sheep fence. All seems to end well. A classic Linda and Ian walk.

P.

1. See PSM 147 March 2012.

This may be the only account of Gumber at this time. It will certainly be the best.

With Ian to the Black Hole. 24th August

Linda being unavailable this particular Sunday, Ian offered a solo variation on a familiar walk. With not even a nod to the famous Lord's Piece "cricket"¹, we cross the road to follow a track running parallel with the Sutton road, skirting a huge pool in a gigantic rut and making way for two young riders in the narrow lane, other than the occasional car the only sign of life we would meet on this grey day of light breeze and fitful sun.

We emerge by Keyzastons on the Sutton road to plunge left into the woods. Ian picks an apparently nonchalant way from lane to lane, each much like the last. Fine silt in the ruts, brambles, seeding docks, calves in an enclosure and an unexpected signpost for Byworth.

Then to the Black Hole, peat-stained water. A notice calls attention to the rare wetland habitat. We venture along a plank bridge over still, shallow, water, gauze perhaps to offer an additional foothold. A solitary bog bean in flower. There are apparently forgotten iron workings at Burton. We return to the road, conscious of the weather, sombre under a leaden sky. Is there a snake under that square of rusting corrugated? Ian peers underneath. No. We continue to criss-cross paths and roads. Past a long-suffering byre, pheasants in yellow stubble, the occasional sky blue head of chicory, big blackberries, discoloured hedgerow lords and ladies, knapweed. Finally Coates church. Apparently it needs £245 a week to keep it going but there's no one here today. Self-heal and second growth nettle beside the path. Thanks very much Ian.

P.

1, PSM 154 December 2013.

Thoughts on the Society dinner. 10th September

In what, if anything, lies the Society's strength? Perhaps in its stable committee, perhaps in its large and varied membership. Very different people with only one bond, some kind of Petworth interest. This may be relatively new: it may be age-old. Residence isn't the whole story; postal membership has always run into the hundreds. For some, involvement begins and ends with this Magazine. For some, perhaps, the Society is simply synonymous with the monthly Book Sale, attended of course, not just by members but by many for whom the Society otherwise means nothing at all. Debby's outings can be magical: think of Saddlescombe last

year or Alfriston in July, while, some four decades on, the walks attract a dedicated clientele prepared for any kind of weather, and, I suspect, a rather greater number who prefer the vicarious exercise of reading about them in this Magazine.

Monthly meetings are subject to a malaise common to all societies such as ours; the difficulty of getting people out on a dark night in winter or spring. Long experience warns at once about offering too many and subjects like travel or, perhaps, nature that receive saturation coverage on television. And Petworth Fair? A drain on finances certainly but something the Society does, in theory at least, for a wider Petworth. The advice here must be to take every fair as it comes and not look beyond the next year. 2015 will be the thirtieth year for Keith and myself. A sobering thought.

All which brings me to the Society dinner. Instituted originally in 2004 to celebrate the Society's thirty years of existence; almost unnoticed 2014 marked a fortieth anniversary. Same old thing? Signs of strain? Feeling its age? The eleventh such dinner swept all such reservations away. Great meal, great service, great mix of people, many from distance, and Tom Dommett's effortless outline of the season's archaeology in the Park. No one sitting on the west front steps of the great house and looking into a Turner sunset could have any thoughts but of, "Same again, next year." And the quiz? I thought the company needed a rest from intellectual exercise. How wrong I was.

P.

The September book sale

It was a conjunction to set the minds even of the astrologers and wise men of ancient Babylon racing. Society Book Sale number 157 falling within the orbit of Magazine number 157. Circling planets and rotating stars. What could this possibly portend? The evidence pointed to one thing only: the Tour of Britain cyclists passing the Leconfield Hall on Book Sale day. Even the Society's lacklustre Chairman was sufficiently enlivened to declare to a frenzied local newspaper audience, "We are not expecting the cyclists to come to the Sale. If they did we'd never get them out again!"

As predicted the cyclists did not call in at the Leconfield Hall but a large crowd of spectators had gathered in the Square. The riders were preceded by a seemingly endless parade of police motor cyclists from a galaxy of different forces. Were the same machines circling the town or was it a whole succession of them? They made curious noises as they departed, like the cry of a strangulated bird.

If 11.20 was the set time, the cyclists were a good ten minutes behind schedule. Eventually the waving of flags and the sound of cheering in the north-west corner of the Square announced the arrival of the leading pack, five riders in sombre lycra livery. It seemed an age before the peloton arrived, the Square remaining expectant and empty. All too soon they too were gone, to be followed by a seemingly endless procession of advertising cars. All over in the flash of time that is the essence of a Tour. Does that invalidate the experience? Probably not, the feeling of participation in a fleeting continuum remains.

And the Sale itself. Halcyon days. We're simply tearing up the record book. If the Tour made for a disturbance to routine, the post-race influx made up for inactivity during the Square event itself. Nearly fifteen years on there is a general realisation that the Society Sale is a monthly must, 90% fresh stock. It's a rare book that manages a second appearance.

* * * *

Understandably 2014 has seen saturation coverage of the beginning of the 1914-1918 war. Can such concentrated focus endure for four and a half years? Attention spans diminish in a digital age. Certainly there can be no thought of closure; these years have to remain an open wound, evoking the same poignancy, the same despair in 2018 or, for that matter, 2034 as it has in 2014.

What can be said that has not already been said? I'll try a change of perspective. It's November 10th 1914. Spain is not at war. Antonio Machado, poet by vocation, reluctant secondary school teacher of French by profession, is 39 and still mourning the loss of his eighteen year old wife from tuberculosis some two years before. The harsh landscape of Castile carries too many memories for him and he has moved south to another position nearer his roots. He remains at odds with himself, with providence and with his country.

There is a light patter of rain on his window. That rain, he thinks, will be heavier in Flanders and so too will be the mist, a mist that shrouds the horror of war but does not dissipate it. A Caesar has sent his troops against France and Muscovy, even dared challenge the "blond panther" that is Great Britain. Half a world at war with itself. Why this renewed descent into barbarism? Grieving womenfolk and no one to sow, let alone reap, the yellowing corn.

Spain at least has an uncomfortable peace, still licking the wounds of a shattered imperial past and now standing bemused on the sidelines. Is this an honourable stance? If Don Quixote personifies the spirit of Spain, can we hope that the rickety old knight has finally pulled his raddled wits together and is soberly preparing himself for greater things in a changed world?

Quizzical, uncertain, Spain in Peace is not a Machado anthology item. The poet

would live on to experience the agony of a civil war and die in 1939 fleeing across the French border with Franco's avenging army in hot pursuit.

The poem is translated by Mary G. Berg and Dennis Maloney in the *Landscape of Castile* (White Pine Press 2005) pages 288 and following.

P.

"Everything has to eat."

Saturday afternoon at the Cottage Museum

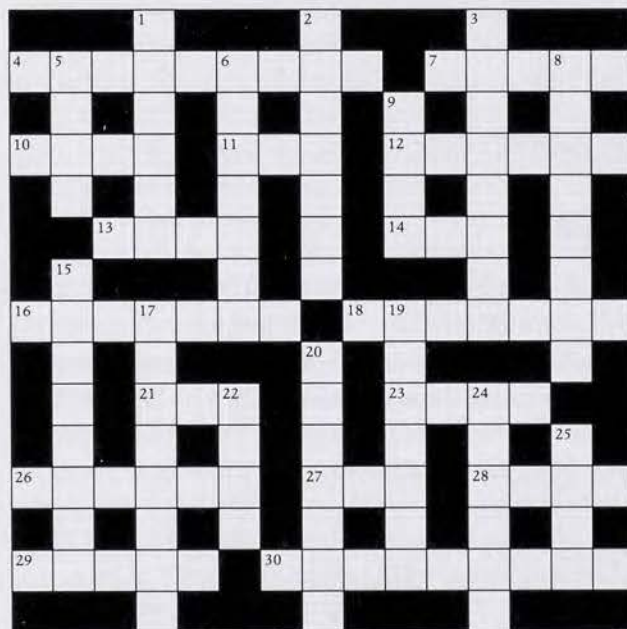
It's just after two o'clock. The parlour fire's already roaring away. There's a sound in the passage, our first visitor peers round the water barrel. She's on her own but immediately followed by a couple with two teenage children. Time for wizened gardener to metamorphose into debonair steward? Not so fast. Everyone wants to talk about the garden. Cosmos, helenium, dahlia and clary immediately visible as you come up the passage. And calendula. Even more than cosmos, they have to be constantly dead-headed. The first lady says she can't get them to grow at all: something to do with the soil. Snails, I observe, don't seem to fancy calendula but little else escapes them. Look at this full-grown dahlia, leaves stripped down to the stem. There's some vague talk of beer in saucers. "Everything has to eat," says the second lady, unexpectedly sympathetic to the criminals. But that's not a few leaves: it's a full-grown dahlia. Strangely, 346 doesn't "do" slugs, only snails. Gentlemanly predators you might say but merciless all the same. That's why the main plot looks a touch lopsided: French marigolds and late clary holding out against the invaders. Antirrhinums seem happy enough in the side border. Perhaps the Museum being unattended at night emboldens the nocturnal foragers?

I suppose no garden is ever problem free, even in the deceptively sunset air of 1910, Mrs Cummings would have had her problems too, no doubt with the ancestors of our present generation of snails. I look at the sieve in the brick outside wall of the W.C. It's falling apart: eighteen years outside have taken their toll. You can't blame the snails for that.

Eighteen years, a period of testing long foretold, even in an idealistic beginning. A time when the Museum pauses to take a second wind. On a busy Saturday afternoon there's no sign of it losing its old mystique. Its ageless mixture of the unexpected, the humorous, the informal and, even, sometimes, the apocryphal, never fails. Now if it ever did ... that would be another matter.

P.

CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 4** Plant sacred to the Druids (9)
7 Typical Christmas weather? (5)
10 Drink traditionally offered to 20dn (4)
11 "Heat was in the very ----" (Good King Wenceslas) (3)
12 A decorative ring on the door (6)
13 ---- the plate – an old party game (4)
14 Small helping of Christmas dessert! (3)
16 Santa's preferred entry point (7)
18 A virtue associated with Christmas (7)
21 Is he crazy for a healthy treat? (3)
23 Pheasant perhaps? (4)
26 & 3dn The countdown to Christmas may begin with this (6,8)

27 Orangey bit of the stocking! (3)

28 How Mary placed Jesus in a manger (4)

29 Awake early – on 1dn perhaps (5)

30 A jovial lot – God rest them! (9)

DOWN

- 1** The Sunday before Advent – when you make 14ac (4,2)
2 December 21st, "----- Day", when the rich gave gifts to the poor (7)
3 See 26ac (8)
5 Frosted the cake ... (4)
6 ... and maybe added some flavouring (7)
8 Children's Christmas play (8)

9 Exchange an unwanted gift? (4)

15 Had scare playing party game! (8)

17 Make a wish for each one you eat (5,3)

19 The angels sang to God in the ----- (7)

20 Sussex name for an actor in a mummies' play (7)

22 The Sugar Plum Fairy would wear one (4)

24 & 25 Thought about having a nice warming drink? (6,4)

SOLUTION TO WEST SUSSEX VILLAGES CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 4 Lyminster; 7 Green; 10 Iron; 11 Imp; 12 Offham; 13 Arid; 14 Ash; 16 Dragons; 18 Bramber; 21 Awl; 23 Ruff; 26 Bosham; 27 Rod; 28 Neat; 29 Adorn; 30 Lodsworth

DOWN

- 1 Bignor; 2 Felpham; 3 Graffham; 5 Yarn; 6 Slindon; 8 Evacuees; 9 Nova; 15 Treyford; 17 Go ashore; 19 Reredos; 20 Ebernoe; 22 Limb; 24 Findon; 25 Cart

"Of roughly my own age"

On a visit to Petworth to see my old friend Elsie Pennicott, I was shown the article by Ruth Rosberg in the last Magazine. It brought back many memories of Coultershaw particularly in wartime and of the mill where my father was foreman. "Mr Dawson ... with a daughter of roughly my own age." That daughter is me. I would be about eight, making the long journey on foot to Duncton School every morning. I have a vivid memory of coming home from Duncton School and seeing a low flying German plane. It was probably jettisoning bombs before returning across the Channel. Perhaps it was aiming for the prominent landmark of the mill. A bomb fell in the river nearby.

Because of the job he was doing as foreman at the mill, my father was exempted from active service but he was in the Home Guard. I imagined him, tin hat and all, watching from the top of Duncton Hill. He may well have done. I would later go to Chichester High School.

We had moved to Petworth for the job at the mill. My father was not a local man. It was the early years of the war and for my mother it was a coming home. She was returning to her roots having been brought up at Limbo Farm on the London Road. Her great childhood friend was Nellie Tickner whose father was a gamekeeper on Lord Leconfield's Estate. The Tickners lived in the lodge across the road from Limbo. There was an often repeated family story of how, as a child, my mother had climbed out of an upstairs window at Limbo to go and visit Nellie. The London Road was quieter in those days!

Mr and Mrs Gwillim at the mill I knew as Auntie Doff and Uncle Gordon, they were, of course, my father's employers. Sometimes I'd walk into Petworth with them. I remember Tumble Bay just over the road, dangerous but then used for unofficial swimming, freezing over and Uncle Gordon teaching me to skate, pushing a kitchen chair before me to keep my balance. The Gwillims had a cabin boat on the Arun and would sometimes take me down to Littlehampton with them, judging the tide to pass under the low bridge at Amberley.

Mary Diprose was talking to the Editor.

"Next time your boys throw eggs into the river ..."

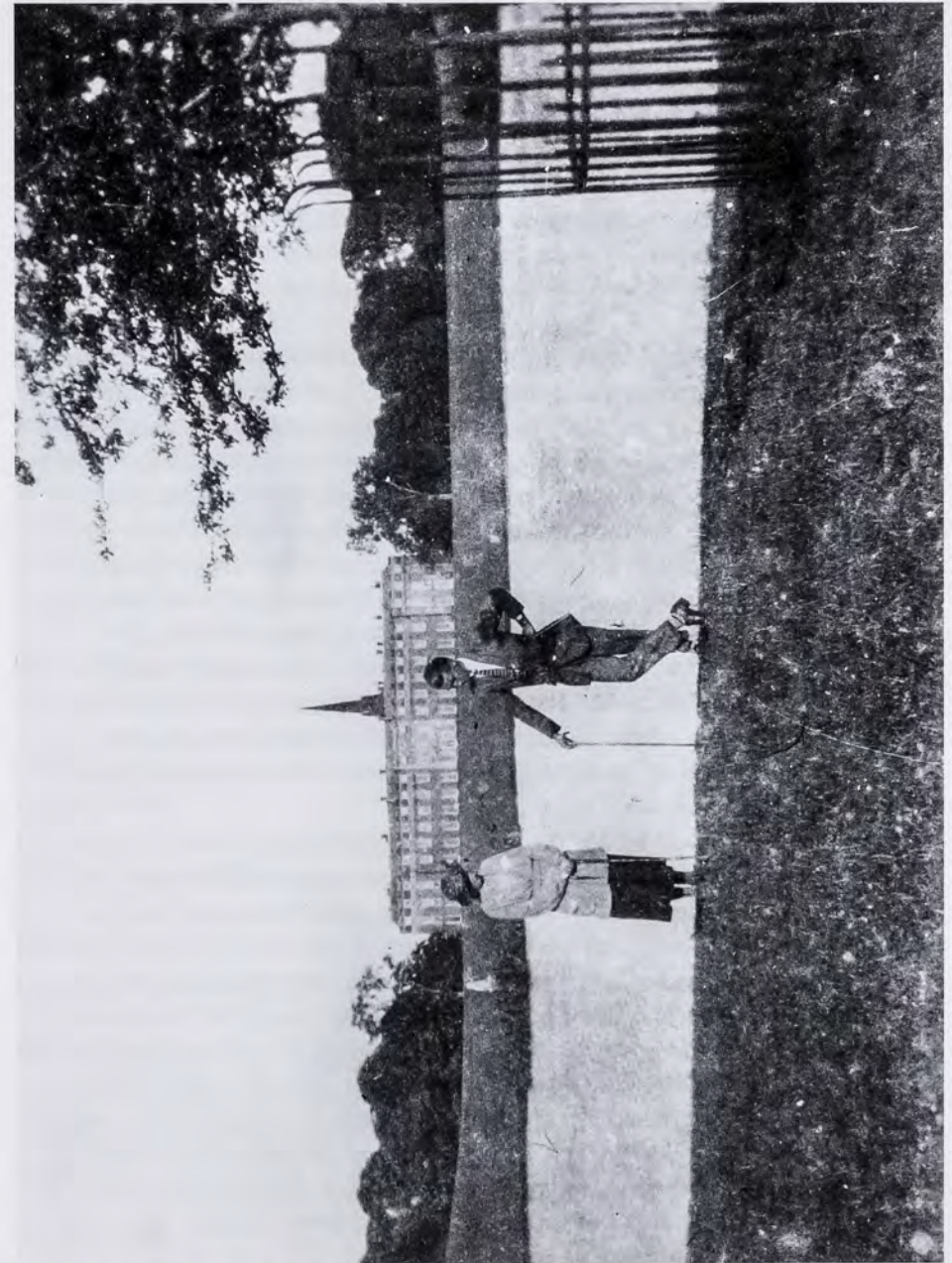
I can never remember a time when Petworth Park was not open to the public but when I first knew it in the 1930s there were certain restrictions while Jack Cross

the park keeper and his assistant Tom Welch kept a watchful eye on us local boys. We were caught once by Mr Cross in the upper branches of a horse chestnut near the lower pond and told to get down. We were careful to wait until Mr Cross had gone before we did. He had other things to think about than a few mischievous boys and he always had the option of complaining to our parents. As we were children of Leconfield Estate workers he knew who we were. Messrs Cross and Welch were park keepers, maintenance was essentially the responsibility of Mr Wilcox and the forestry department. They also, with the help of the Estate Keepers, had charge of the deer, including necessary culling, first in an old barn, then at Snow Hill (now demolished). Dogs were not allowed in the Park and the keepers kept a wary eye on visitors.

Not all the park was open access. The boathouse was kept locked, and access to the top was barred by a locked door. The boathouse itself was, of course, locked too. It held a skiff and a punt, both for use on the lake. The skiff had a single optional sail. It disappeared early in the war and was replaced by a second punt used on the river for transferring shooting parties from one bank to another. As boys we would shin up the boathouse wall on to the top of the boathouse and look over the lake. On one occasion we were surprised by Lord Leconfield himself, out with his dog on a morning walk. "What are you boys doing up here?" Of course he knew as well as anyone who we were. "Don't do it again." We did, of course, but with the precaution of keeping a sharp lookout for him.

The area to the immediate north of the lake, sometimes rather inaccurately known as "Lady Leconfield's bird garden" was always kept private with both gates locked. I have the feeling that there was a single gate in the centre of the present semi-circle, but I'm pretty sure, on reflection, that I'm mistaken. Anyway the gate or gates were kept locked. This wasn't proof against us boys who would gain a rather damp access along the side of the lake. This was very much Lady Leconfield's private area and certainly not somewhere for us to be caught. Violet Lady Leconfield took a great interest in the lake and the bird and fish life it supported. There was the famous Australian black swan and the Canada geese, strictly kept to a maximum number of eighteen. There were ornamental ducks, too, the bird population swelled by temporary visits by birds from other local ponds for instance at Burton and Arundel.

The present railings probably go back long before Lady Leconfield: the Petworth House letter books might give some idea of when they were erected. Having once used her key to gain access Lady Leconfield might be on her own or she might have the Leconfields' two adopted children with her, or one or more of her personal friends. She would use the Tillington "Monument" in a rather similar way. She loved sketching and might appear anywhere on the Estate. I remember



Petworth Park about 1920. The couple pictured may well be house guests.
An unattributed snapshot.

seeing her once at Glasshouse on the road from Fox Hill to Kirdford. She was searching the bed of the stream for traces of the old Kirdford glassmaking industry. If she was often on her own, she was always active.

The "bird-garden" area was not formally mown but kept manageable and tidy, the park keepers and the forestry department having access for that purpose. Willows were planted or osiers and kept pruned, the pruning going to Ken Sadler the local basket maker. Swamp cypress were planted too, just one or two specimen trees and kept well pruned. They are perhaps now the only survivors from the original "bird-garden". Willows are invasive and a sharp eye was kept on their progress.

Once in this area and with the gate locked, her ladyship would be in her own private world. As I say, she might have friends, the children or simply her own company. She might sit in the enclosure sketching or simply watching the birds. Or she might walk to the nearest island and from there to two smaller islands. There were a series of timber bridges with handrails. It may be that the supporting stumps still survive. On the nearest, larger island, she had a kind of hide, open for vision at the sides but with a thick straw thatch to protect from rain falling vertically. It would offer 180-degree vision. She could also take the skiff from the boathouse and row round the lake. In theory she could simply unlock the boathouse and set off, but she would be more likely to take someone with her, an Estate employee perhaps, or one of her friends. There are stone landing slopes at the edge of the lake and these could be used to land carp, eels or cultivated molluscs for House use. As late as the 1920s they would also have been used to land ice for the ice house – but not in my time.

If public access was allowed in the park, as also for football, cricket, the pre-1914 cattle show, fetes, gymkhanas and the rest, cameras were forbidden except with a permit and also of course picnics. The camera ban perhaps stemmed from a reluctance to have the park exploited for commercial purposes. Mr Greest manned the Tillington Road "cricket lodge" on a full-time basis and would lock the gates at specified times, nine o'clock in summer, sunset at other times. He would raise an eyebrow at being asked to open up for someone dallying after the set time. As I say the cricket lodge was manned at all times but I am less sure about the double lodges on the Tillington Road. Mr Spreadborough was at the double lodges at one time and sometime too Mr Webber, later head groom at the stables. As boys we never used the Hampers Green lodge. Mr Greest kept a sharp eye on people entering and leaving: antlers were not to be removed from the park. They were kept for the Sheffield cutlers.

On Sunday afternoons the Grand Entrance gate would be opened at twelve o'clock for townspeople and Frank Carver in full uniform would preside. The gate

would remain open until sundown. Permit fishing was allowed in the lake but no charge levied.

In the summer there would be extensive manoeuvres in the area and troops encamped in the Park as they would be elsewhere at places like Lavington Park or Arundel. The troops would be in the Tillington Road paddock and tents extend as far down as the "Bully Hole", the hollow between the south side of the lake to the wall bordering the A272. As boys we'd walk through their city of tents. "Have you got a sister?" we might be asked. World War I artillery was still in use in the 1930s and at certain times of the year you can still make out the horse lines on one side of the Bully Hole.

The manoeuvres would end with an eagerly awaited firework display, which the whole town came to watch. There might also be a fair or farm-show. I think this was coordinated by a local committee. One particular firework display I remember: it featured a man on a bicycle who appeared to move along as one set of fireworks succeeded another.

The Park wasn't our only area. In days when there were few or no public footpaths we had an unofficial freedom effectively denied to adults. I remember us being almost caught at Rotherbridge by Mr Ellerman the keeper with our pockets stuffed with pheasant eggs. We thought we'd better dispose of the evidence and threw the eggs into the river. Mr Ellerman wasn't born yesterday and reported the incident to Mr Griffith the agent. Lord Leconfield drily observed to my father, "Next time your boys throw eggs into the river, tell them to make sure they're not addled." The point, of course, was that these floated whereas the good eggs sank without trace.

From a conversation with J.T.

One last summer with Rhoda Leigh

"No, I don't do teas. Landlord he did say as he drew the line there, and so I can't have them. Now a glass of lemonade or a drop of my parsnip wine I *could* do."

Mrs Puddock smiled persuasively as she emptied half a packet of Eiffel Tower Powder into a jug, filled it up with tepid water, and stirred vigorously with the family spoon, permanently resident on the window ledge, attached thereto with a long bootlace.

"Sugar and matches you said? Yes, and candles too if you want them, only they've gone off a bit," and here she held aloft a drooping bundle of farthing tips, curtseying in various directions.

"Your cough seems better," I ventured, as the sugar and matches had not yet materialised.

"Yes, and I did cure that myself with snails. I caught a lot down in my rockwork and did pound them up in a basin and take a spoonful at a time, and the cough he were gone in less than a week."

I endeavoured to conceal the horror I felt and murmured something suitable.

"Now your father he's very bronchial. If he would take the snails now it would do him a world of good."

Just then an International Stores van sailed past, efficiency in every line of the up-to-date vehicle.

"Deliver goods from Petworth twice a week they do – I never has nothing. That petrol perforates everything and I never fancies it. Now this sugar ain't never smelt petrol."

This grim little snippet is from 'Personalities of Remote Sussex – Mrs Puddock' which appeared in *Sussex County Magazine*, January 1932, the month after Mary's first item in the magazine was published, as by Mary Metherell, and two months before 'Stater's Sunday' which was as by Rhoda Leigh, in the March issue. This sequence of events suggests that Mary coined the pseudonym early in February. She used all three items in *Past and Passing*, published in the autumn of that year, but in the book Mrs Puddock is now called Mrs Craddock and the scene about her shop is very different to the above.

One of the most significant changes concerns the treatment of the snails, for in *Past and Passing* Mrs Craddock advises merely that the shells be pricked, and to drink the water that comes out. For whatever reasons, Mary actually made the scene less horrid, and omitted the reference to Petworth as well. However, whether the end result was closer to the truth, or even more fictitious, the original idea could have been inspired by something Mary once heard or had herself witnessed, possibly in Bedham, or during childhood visits to see her mother's people at Kirdford. In a book published in 1877, for instance, *The History of Harting*, Rev. H. D. Gordon describes a syrup made of pricked snail mucous and sugar, used to cure whooping cough, and as late as 1935, the playwright Amy Sawyer, who lived at Ditchling, wrote a letter to *Sussex County Magazine* about a friend whose persistent cough had been cured after she was given a drink which, unknown to her when she drank it, was almost entirely made of snails.

Another interesting difference is that in *Past and Passing*, Mrs Craddock appears to be someone Rhoda has known a while, but the 'Mrs Puddock' piece clearly concerns one of her earliest visits to the village shop. It is not known when Mary first came to Bedham, and this incident could have occurred any time in the 1920s or even as late as 1931. *Past and Passing* is dedicated "To E.W. the owner of the

cottage' and in the book, Mary writes that they moved there eleven years earlier, when someone bequeathed the place to Rhoda's friend. This suggests about 1920, which was two years after Ethel's mother died, and certainly Ethel acquired Bedham Cottage around that time – as John Hunt, whose mother cleaned the place for her, notes in PSM No. 63, yet it seems that 'Miss West' frequently went back to Brighton, where she was still working. As some of Mary's kin had lived at Kirdford, near Bedham, it is possible that this influenced Ethel's decision to move there. Whether 'Miss Metherell' (as she was known in the hamlet) also moved there circa 1920 seems uncertain, though. However, Ethel became fifty in 1930 and as Mary was definitely there in 1931, this suggests that Ethel probably retired about this time, and the two of them then made Bedham Cottage their permanent home.

There is no reference to their relationship in *Past and Passing*, indeed Rhoda's companion features little in the book and is not even named; but in 'Last Month in Our Village' Hartie is described as her 'intimate friend' and her 'woman-friend.' In some of the episodes of 1933, it is implied that they had separate bedrooms, but from January 1934 onwards, there are instances where the meaning of the sentences describing an end of the day scene, or an early morning rise can be, at best, quite loose. All this makes it very likely that they were lovers, and certainly neither ever married, nor is there even the slightest hint that one or other was at any time inclined romantically towards somebody else. This next scene, from the March 1933 episode is perhaps the closest we get though to a snapshot of those two – at least as seen through the eyes of Rhoda Leigh.

'Here Hartie appeared in immaculate evening dress bearing a raffia-trimmed basket, her umbrella, and a pair of galoshes. Fred made a salutation of respect which might be described as a body-bending exercise. Hartie, steadying herself by leaning on me, assumed her galoshes.

"Sure to be muddy down the lane," she said cheerfully, looking scornfully at my patent slippers.

"Can't help it," I answered shortly, "I'm not taking my overshoes."

"Well, perhaps it's as well," said Hartie, *sotto voce*, "after all, at the Whist Drive you forgot them till you went up to take your prize."

"Am I never to be allowed to forget that?" I observed bitterly.'

They behave like a couple, even if it's never stated, and they lived together in a small cottage in a wood, reading books or doing the gardening, going for walks and collecting wild flowers, seeing neighbours, helping out as and when needed. At Christmas and during the summer, they used to go away for a week or so, visiting relatives. Sometimes they went back to Brighton, but more often up to London. This involved them travelling on the Tube together – though Mary was



PETWORTH SOCIETY ACTIVITIES SHEET

Spring Programme – please keep for reference

WALKS

With Ian and Linda will begin again in April.

Petworth Society Book Sales
Leconfield Hall – 10am-3pm – Admission FREE

Second Saturday – beginning 10TH JANUARY 2015

and don't forget the last Book Sale of 2014
SATURDAY 13TH DECEMBER

Books to donate? Ring: Peter on **01798 342562** or Miles on **01798 343227**

MONTHLY MEETINGS

LECONFIELD HALL – £4 – 7.30PM – REFRESHMENTS – RAFFLE

Wednesday 10th December:

David Bramwell: – The No. 9 bus to Utopia.

Soon to be released as a book, this is David's first hand account of a year travelling round the world's most extraordinary communities, from an anarchist commune in the heart of Copenhagen to a 100 strong community in the Italian Alps who have built the world's largest underground temple and claim to have conquered time travel! Packed with slides, this is a humorous but sincere appraisal of how we live in the 21st century and ends with David's own ideas of how we could make our towns and cities more Utopian.

Wednesday 21st January:

Gordon Stevenson: – "When buses were for everyone."

To mark the centenary of Southdown Motor Services, Gordon Stevenson takes an illustrated excursion through his father's entertaining memories of 37 years as a local bus conductor.

Wednesday 18th February:

Peter Jerrome: – “Petworth at the edge of memory.”

Garland slides from the 1950s and 1960s.

A small selection of these was shown as a conclusion to the Garland lecture in October. I have had many requests for a longer repeat show.

Thursday 19th March:

Martin Hayes: – “Sussex in the Great War.”

Martin introduces his new book on the subject. He is County Local Studies Librarian for West Sussex.

Wednesday 29th April:

Tessa Boase: – “The Housekeeper’s Tale.”

The women who really ran the English Country House.

Forget the secure, dignified world of Mrs Hughes in *Downton Abbey*. Real housekeepers worked surprisingly hard, often in humiliating circumstances for very little financial reward. This was not, as it turns out, such a cushy job.

Tessa Boase has trawled through old bundles of letters, secret diaries and neglected stately home archives to resurrect a series of extraordinary personal stories from 19th and 20th-century domestic service. Revelatory, gripping and unexpectedly poignant ‘The Housekeepers Tale’ champions the heroic women behind some of the most prominent households.

Peter

the one who had to get off first. She stayed at her father's house, while Ethel went to visit a posh aunt.

If Ethel also did any writing, she may have used 'Florence E. White' as a pen-name, and had four stories published in S.C.M. beginning with 'Effie' in late 1934. In 'Effie' the author has a relative called Aunt Mary and it is she who tells the story, which charts her friendship with young Effie. But if the Mary and Effie characters had each other's names, then sections of the story match with some of the known parts of the histories of Ethel's and Mary's families, and the relationship the two women had. From this and the other stories, it would seem that Florence herself was quite tall, while her dear friend was short and buxom. The stories are mostly set in an un-named village near Brighton, involve dialect speech, and a few of the characters have names which are also in Ethel's family-tree, while a number of others have certain unusual surnames that also feature in the writings of Rhoda Leigh. Indeed, one of the stories is very like an episode of 'Last Month in Our Village' and so, considering all the various 'clues' and the distinct lack of records about any Florence E. White in Sussex in the 1930s, these stories were indeed probably written by Florence Ethel West and the first, at least, is something about Mary.

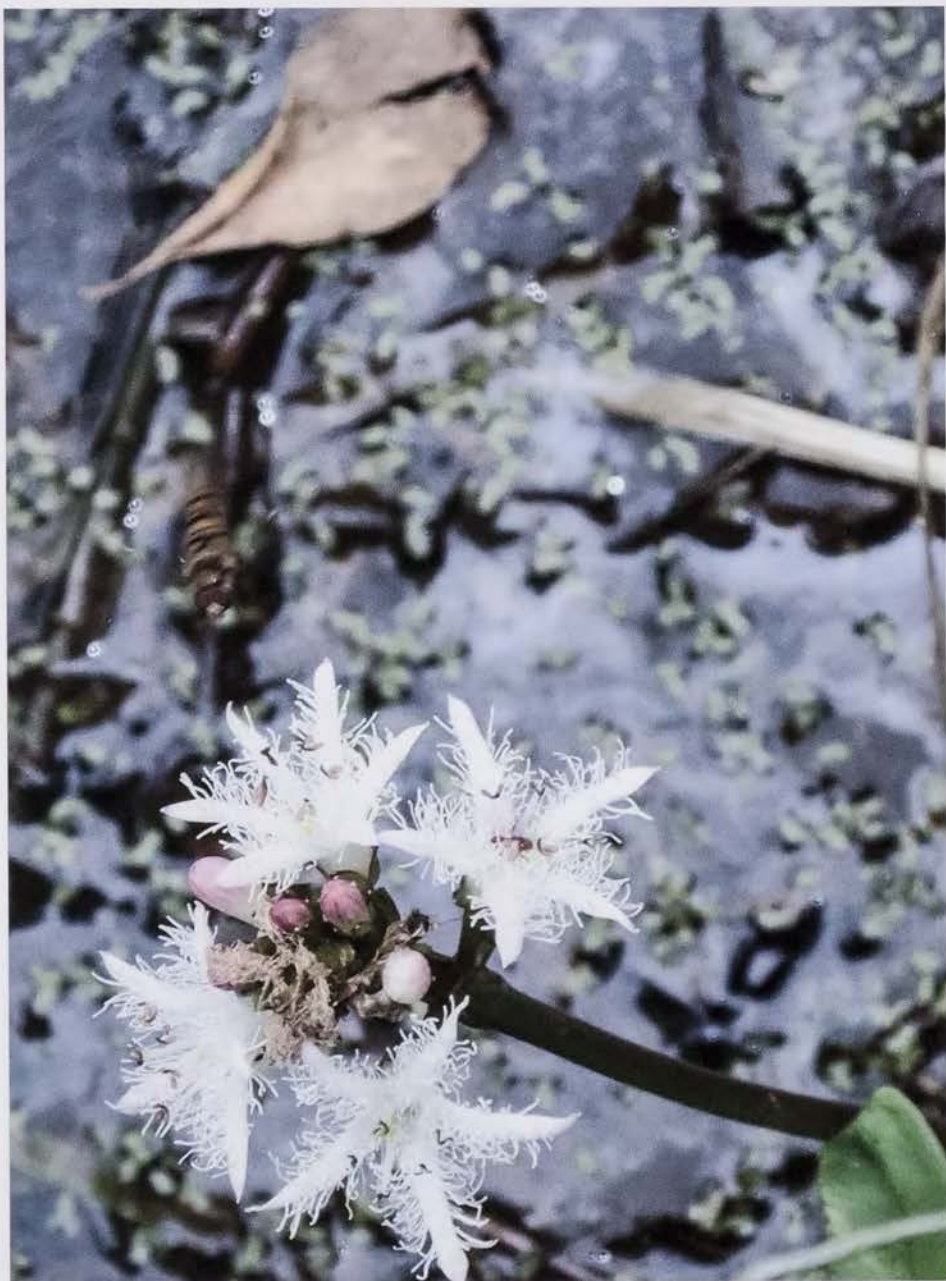
Cider with Rhoda Leigh

Sussex County Magazine often carried stories that involve dialect, and there was the well-known Sussex writer Sheila Kaye-Smith, who used dialect in many of her novels; yet no one could do it quite like Rhoda Leigh, whose mischievous *penchant* for occasionally tweaking-up the local pronunciations of various words, so that they resemble other words, makes for some quite ribald passages. In *Past and Passing*, for example, when Rhoda's friend complains about her rheumatism, while in the village shop, Mrs Craddock says: "What you wants is some pig's fat. You get your friend to masticate it well into your back night an' mornin' an' you'll soon be rid of the pain," and then, when Rhoda politely coughs to conceal her amusement at this idea, the wise woman tells her soothingly: "You're bronnical, Miss, an' that's worse than your friend's scrumaticks. Now I'll just go down to my rockery an' get you some snails ..."

Yet peculiar pronunciations or incongruous wording, no matter how entertaining – or even historically accurate, if that be the case – do not always enhance a good story, and this was something that Mary was clearly aware of. While it might be amusing to take an occasional tongue-in-cheek pot-shot at the language of the locals, in her candid accounts of the villagers and their prognostications, she was careful always to preserve the older stories in a purer form – especially those tales she had been told by her mother and various relatives



Linda and Ian's Lavington Common walk.
Photograph by Ian Godsmark, as are all the following



Bog bean on Ian's Black Hole walk.



Inside Coates church.
Ian and Linda's Lord's Piece walk.



One of the tables at the Society Dinner.



A Gumber Farm panorama.



With the Society at Gumber.
The bothy in the background.



Book Sale day.
The Tour of Britain. The leading group.



Book Sale day.
The Tour of Britain. The peloton.

in Kirdford and Littlehampton. That Mary did at least know Kirdford during her childhood is demonstrated in the opening scene of *Past and Passing*, when she recognises the spire of that village's church in the distance. An interesting aspect about her tales of family lore is that Rhoda herself does not appear in most of them, and so these are narrated as if from a third-person point-of-view – which allows for different approaches to describing the scenery and the interaction of the characters. In this next scene, which takes place in a field of wheat being harvested by men using scythes, there seem to be two stories, one of which plays like the depiction of some memory Mary may have had about a beloved older relative, and the other probably recounting how two people who were important to her – possibly her mother's parents – first began their courtship.

'A young girl in a pink cotton frock appeared at the top of the field with a can and mug. Grandad's old eyes glistened, but he did not stop working. Cobber stood still as the girl approached, and licked his lips in anticipation. She was about sixteen, half child, half woman, but she had a shrewd eye for a worker, and saw at a glance that Cobber was not one. She passed him with a mere nod and came to a standstill by Grandad.

"I'll come an' help you on my way back, Gran. I've brought lemon cider, it's nice an' coolin'."

"Thank ye, Ruth. A rare one you are. Ain't none other child ter touch yer hereabouts, an' so I tells yer mother."

'The girl laughed and hurried to the others. Tom Swift was taking his turn on the reaper and binder. This, as she knew, could be as hot a job as stook-making. She walked a few steps along the stubble and waited till he came back to her.

"Whoa, there. Whoa, there," and the horses came to a standstill, as glad to rest as their driver. Tom eyed the girl with great approval. He drank the cider with appreciation and stooped from his lofty perch to return the mug.

Knows what a chap likes, don't yer, Ruth?"

'Drone of insects soothed the ear; the horses stood motionless except for their tails for ever swishing away the tormenting flies. The scent of harvest mingled with honeysuckle went to the girl's head. She and Tom looked in each other's eyes and found them good. She instinctively put her left hand in his, the right being occupied with cider can and mug. Tom squeezed it gently.'

The note about which hand was holding the things is too precise within this context, too detailed, to be fiction; this is the story of how a real love began, almost certainly the moment that two significant people in Mary's family-tree joined – a union which led, by way of a daughter, or possibly a son, to her mother's birth. It is a sacred story, told to her by kin-folk, in the past; a story of the land; not the idle gossip of village neighbours from her later adult life there.

Another tale in the book recounts how two sisters got married on the same day, and their five other sisters were their joint bridesmaids. And this too may have been based on a legend of family lore, as Mary's mother's mother was one of seven sisters (who had two brothers as well) in a family that lived at Kirdford.

Towards the end of the chapter about the harvest, a crisp little vignette arises when Mary herself, as Rhoda Leigh, steps back in time, and meets the old man as she passes the workers on her way home through the village, at dusk – 'A golden moon was rising over the hedge.

'Cobber had left, grumbling, an hour previously. Tom Swift was missing. Grandad sat speechless on the bank, but Roper, Crapper, Ben Ede and Ruth's father toiled on doggedly.

"Evening, Grandad, fine harvesting weather," I volunteered, seeing as he was regaining his breath.

"Aye, that 'e be. Happens we'll finish next week," returned the old man cheerfully. "Here be Old Greenfield with his moosic," he ejaculated, looking beyond me.

I turned in surprise to greet the newcomer and his familiar concertina. "Come to give the lads a tune?" I asked.

"Aye. I did 'ear as there was no 'arvest supper this year. Grandad 'ere can't afford it, an' t'otherins say they 'on't 'cus the money's gone on wages, so I brings my moosic ter give th' lads a toon while they works." He perched himself by Grandad and began '*We're all Jolly Fellows that Follow the Plough.*' One by one the workers joined in, until a full chorus accompanied the completion of the last stook.'

The musician here may have been John Osborn Greenfield, of a well known Petworth family, who, if his songs in *Tales of Old Petworth* are anything to go by, seems to have been quite a musical man, and as he lived 1802-1869, it is very possible that some of Mary's Kirdford relatives had known him. Note too that the scene is set at the time when the traditional custom of the Harvest Home Supper was already passing – due to the frequently costly fall-out of the agricultural revolution. This occurred *long* before the 1930s. Another interesting name mentioned in the scene is Ede, and elsewhere in the book there is also a tale about Ben Ede when he was a boy. Other surnames featured in the book include Towner and Rutt, and while there may well have been such names in that part of Sussex, it's more likely that Mary was alluding to the local families of Downers and Butts who, along with the Edes, figure so prominently in her mother's family-tree.

Mary chose the name 'Rhoda' for her pseudonym because this was the name of her maternal grandmother, though she died when Mary was about one, and also the name of her great-grandmother. The latter, Rhoda Butt, had married John Downer of Kirdford in 1802 and they had nine children, the second of which, born

in 1807, was named Rhoda. That daughter, Rhoda Downer, married John Ede Butt at Kirdford in 1829, and they later moved to Littlehampton, where Mary's mother was born – although their first daughter was also called Rhoda. Indeed, 'Rhoda' seems to have been a firm family favourite name for first daughters, and the three mentioned here were not the only Rhodas among Mary's mother's relatives. And Kinneard too, Mary's father, had a sister called Rhoda. Mary chose the surname of her pseudonym from 'Leigh Farm' which is near to where she lived in Bedham. I think that she must have loved the countryside there, and that it gave her a sense of belonging, knowing her mother's people had lived in the area. The fictitious place-name Latstone, which features in '*Last Month in Our Village*' was based around the name of the road that leads from Bedham towards Kirdford, Wakestone Lane, and in *Past and Passing*, Mary quotes from a book of cottage remedies compiled by one of her ancestors, records lore and history of the parish, proudly, and even gives the lyrics of some very old Sussex songs – from one of which the next title comes.

Concerning of two lovers true

'It was late afternoon when I picked my way down the muddy lane, but the sky had cleared and, in the words of the weather forecast, visibility was good. Every little bush stood out distinctly, the Downs appeared quite mountainous, and the silhouette of a returning horseman was etched out on the skyline with startling effect. Yet twilight had wrapped the Downs in a mysterious cloak by the time I reached my destination. The bride herself opened the cottage door and seemed pleased to see me and my gift of a cloth, embroidered by Hartie, in the vivid colours she loved.

"Mum seems very sadly, Miss," said Minnie, blushing, "she do keep on sayin' as if she'd never tried those midsummer men she'd never 'a' lost me, but Matt an' me, us knawed as we'd wed long 'afore she tried 'un."

"Did the two plants grow?" I asked with interest.

"They did, Miss: grawed straight an' close till you couldn't tell t'other from which."

'On my return Hartie was decidedly unsympathetic. "Mrs Aspy fairly threw her daughter at that man's head," she declared, "and anyhow, their cottage will only be a few yards up the street. I think Minnie was so wise to choose the cake."

"What on earth do you mean?" I asked.

"Haven't you heard? The young man offered to pay for a wedding peal on Latstone bells, or a cake, but not both."

This scene is from the November 1933 episode of '*Last Month in Our Village*,' and the midsummer men referred to in it is a country name for orpines, which

were widely used in the love divination charm described. These and bee orchids seem to have been among Mary's favourite wild flowers. Her tales frequently include evocative little descriptions of the local scenery, with mentions of which flowers were out at the different times of the year – like this one, from early 1934: 'A week or so later, Spring was at its best. Mrs Bridger's field was carpeted with daffodils, our own copse exquisite with primroses and anemones and the gold and silver of willow branches.'

A later episode, very similar to a tale in *Past and Passing*, tells how Rhoda and Hartie led some of their neighbours against a gang of Gypsies, who came for those daffodils on a dark night just before Easter.

And perhaps such a glorious golden dream could have lasted for years, the knowing little vignettes of real villagers in a real village, almost lovingly portrayed, month by month in *Sussex County Magazine* – like a cross between the books of *The Darling Buds of May* or *Cold Comfort Farm*, and some odd kind of reality show set in the countryside of the South. But the series had a flaw: eventually and inevitably, somebody was going to recognise themselves or someone else in it, despite the use of fictitious names; and so there were certain words, such as 'London' and 'the Tube' and certain sentences, like Hartie's comments about the marriage, which should not have been used.

Indeed, it could well have been the depiction of the two villagers going to London to meet Mary and Ethel, in January 1934, which caused their undoing. Up until February of that year, 'Last Month in Our Village' might have been about any small hamlet in the Sussex Weald, or none at all, as Mary was also using fictitious place-names in most of her tales. But in the odd selection of letters that make up the February episode, she described the day in London that she and Ethel had had with two of the villagers, and of course, most of the other real villagers had known about that when it actually happened, back in January.

The last episode, published May 1934, concerns events that probably took place during the first week of April, just after Easter of that year. It covers two days and ends rather abruptly, with talk of Gypsies and a missing spade. At one point though, the day before, the following exchange or something like it took place, and the fact that Mary wrote it into 'Last Month in Our Village' suggests she didn't realize, at the time, that it was a sign of trouble looming.

"Out with it, Mrs Bridger, what is it they say?" said Hartie impatiently.

"I hardly likes to tell, Miss."

"Go on," I said firmly.

"They says as one of you ladies hev writ a book."

One of them most certainly had written a book; but 'they' the villagers didn't seem to have known which one at first, therefore it's very unlikely they had found

out by linking the 'Mrs Puddock' item in S.C.M. from 1932, to the item written as by Mary Metherell in 1931, or even linked that with the book. What may have happened was that someone had thought they recognised themselves, or somebody else in a recent episode of 'Last Month' and then, unwilling to go through the rigmarole of locating any back issues of the magazine, had got a copy of *Past and Passing* instead, and thus seen that Bedham was indeed at the very heart of Rhoda Leigh country. Or perhaps one of the villagers had just recently bought the book – almost two years after its publication; or maybe was given it as a present. But, however the truth was discovered, 'they' were not pleased.

Part of the trouble was that the introduction on the book's dust jacket, written by Mary herself, actually indicated where it was that she, and they lived, and, worse still, referred to the inhabitants as 'rustic' and 'simple.' Indeed, both of these words are used twice each in it. Lines like "Humour, intentional and otherwise, plays a great part in the lives of these simple people," could really have been written differently. And, to top it all, Mary's playfully exaggerated descriptions of the main characters were only thinly disguised and, within the community of Bedham itself, the different people she had written about were easily recognised. Mrs Puttick, who ran the village shop, was particularly offended and she confronted Mary about the book. When Mary pointed-out that she hadn't actually mentioned Mrs Puttick's name in it, the woman angrily retorted "You might as well have done!" and Mary was upset and began crying. (cf. PSM No. 63).

It might be supposed that there were even threats of legal action, and that the friendly relationship she and Ethel had had with their neighbours rapidly deteriorated. It is also likely this caused problems between the two of them as well, as it would have been almost impossible for Mary to then remain in Bedham. Not only that, but she must have known that she could no longer use the name 'Rhoda Leigh' and, consequently, that she couldn't continue writing 'Last Month in Our Village.' All this happened very quickly, once it started – as can be deduced from the fact that just before it did, she wrote a letter to the S.C.M. editor, noted in the May edition, inviting him and his wife to visit again, because "our country is looking very lovely just now." However, before he had time to reply, Mary had gone back to her father's house in Talbot Road, London, and, on the night of 12th April, hanged herself in her bedroom. She was just 48.

Ethel stayed at Bedham Cottage for the rest of her life, and she died 8th March 1950. It must have been very difficult for many years, yet I hope that sometime after the spring of 1934, Ethel would have realized that she had not been to blame for the death of her beautiful friend. Mary Caroline Metherell was a brilliant Southern writer, whose first book held much promise, and whose series 'Last Month in Our Village' was also very good – albeit slightly misguided. If she had

not written that series, she might have become a novelist, and I think, judging from everything of hers that was published, some of her books would have become classics of Sussex literature, whose praises were still being sung even now. In an obituary for her in *Sussex County Magazine*, May 1934, it said that: 'The tragic death of Rhoda Leigh, details of which appeared in the London newspapers last month, will have been a shock to those readers of the S.C.M. who knew her as the author of the 'Last Month in Our Village' series of articles which have appeared regularly during the last eighteen months. This gifted lady was an unusually bright personality, and the popularity of her monthly article was testified by the number of letters sent to this office ...'

And I hope too that one day *Past and Passing* will be published again, so that other old Sussexians may also look back to the lost village of Rhoda Leigh, and be charmed by her wistful dreams and stories of a life, and a time, just beginning to shine.

This poem by Mary, published January 1934, is all I could find, and yet it is a fitting one, almost certainly about some night the summer before, and that woman the love of her short beautiful life.

To a Posy Seen on the Tube

*Madonna Lilies drooping white,
Sweet peas, all listless, shedding flowers,
You sweetened once a summer's night,
And climbed a country garden's bowers,
All sick for home you wilt and die,
Far from the land and open sky.*

*In stupid kindness torn from earth
Carried in triumph to the town,
Bee-orchids lose their look of mirth,
Far from sweet breath of Sussex Down.
(That woman holds you much too tight)
I get out here, poor things, Good-night.*

Shaun Cooper – concluded.

An Edwardian portrait studio ... suspended in time

My lifetime interest in photography goes back to my father. Even in the 1940s he had a darkroom, enlarger and an interest in ciné photography. There was one problem, however, and it was a serious one; he was severely allergic to one of the developing agents. This brought him out in great sores, so much so that even wearing gloves, he simply could not undertake darkroom work. A pupil at Midhurst Grammar School at the time, I was expected to help; in fact do the processing and printing. I would be, perhaps, thirteen.

Given this early initiation into photographic techniques, it was perhaps inevitable that I would gravitate toward George Garland the Petworth photographer, beginning as a kind of unpaid assistant. Soon I was working on a commission only basis. This wasn't my only part-time job: summer holidays would be spent working on the Maxse fruit farm at Little Bognor.

Commission only meant going out to help with weddings and outside work. George Garland had always been a little impatient with the confinement of studio work, and while he certainly did portraits was probably not actively seeking such work. The arrangement I had was that any photographs I took that were submitted to the press would be forwarded by Garland. If accepted I would receive payment on a 60-40 basis, the lesser share being mine. Still at school, I was happy enough with this and would become more adventurous as my time at Midhurst drew towards an end.

My father and his brother were partners in Pelletts, the Market Square confectioners, tobacconists and hairdressing salon, one brother looked after the shop, the other (my father) travelling round to pubs and similar establishments in the area. I'd go down to the Square with my father just after eight o'clock to catch the school bus. My uncle would be there already. Unlike my father he was a large man, as was Charlie Bishop from the Lombard Street boot shop. Without fail the two would greet one another each morning with "Hullo Fatty," Charlie the while dipping into his snuff, and his ancient apron covered in glue and other markings of his trade. I often think about this; an exchange almost unthinkable in these rather more "sensitive" times. Another invariable early morning visitor would be the dapper Stanley Eager from the neighbouring Market Square outfitters. Commercial Petworth bestirred itself rather earlier then than now.

I suppose that, almost without being aware of it, my way of working was influenced by George Garland's own. I'd travel out with him, all too conscious of his casual attitude to time. One regular stop would be to Etheringtons' garage in

the Fleet at Fittleworth, where he might stay indefinitely swapping stories in the Sussex dialect. Junior as I was, I had sometimes to put in the occasional, "It's getting late." Findon sheep fair was another opportunity for broad Sussex stories as, too, would be a visit to Petworth House and a meeting with Fred Streeter. In the early fifties Garland was commissioned to take photographs of some of the pictures at Petworth House and took me with him as assistant. It was a short step from working under Garland's tutelage to finding my own work, again forwarded to the press from the Studio. My father, travelling round, would have his ear to the ground for likely stories. I remember being told that the octogenarian landlady at the Red Lion pub at Fernhurst was retiring and I had a feature published in the local newspaper. Another early independent item involved pictures and a write-up on a local pig farm for the magazine "Pig Farming". A similar venture was the retirement of the long-serving Mr Wilkins at Midhurst Grammar School. Looking at my scrapbook it's sometimes difficult to remember which photographs were done "officially" for George Garland and which are my own independent work and form no part of the Garland Collection at the West Sussex Record offices. The idea of keeping a scrapbook was, no doubt, suggested by practice at the Studio. Mrs Garland "Sally" kept meticulous account of press publication, not, as now it's all too easy to imagine, as a record as such, but as a purely functionary check on incoming payments.

Not all outside work involved travel, weddings might be at Petworth church and I remember photographing work on the church tower: the steeple having been removed in 1947. It would now, perhaps, be 1953. Did I go through the belfry or by a ladder on the outside? I can't remember now but either way George wasn't having any of that. The ensuing photographs went out under the Garland name.

My parents both had an interest in local motor-cycle events: scrambling and trials and I would often go with them. Motor-cycling wasn't something George was particularly interested in although he had had the famous motor-cycle and sidecar in the 1920s. I began to take photographs at events and soon established contact with the editor of Motor Cycle magazine. I already knew that I wanted to work in photography and, after I left Midhurst, was studying at Guildford College, sometimes in digs, sometimes travelling from home. I was soon covering events anything up to fifty miles away. It could be a tough schedule; the pictures had to be at Pulborough in time for the first London train and I might be working till one o'clock in the morning after a day at the event. John Willis who lived just down the road from us, took them to the station when he went to pick up the newspapers for his morning delivery round.

I had done a few months at Guildford when the college suggested I do my National Service. It would be 1954. I returned when I was demobilized. I also



The studio of Walter Kevis perhaps in the 1890s.

branched out into selling motor cycle magazines at events to supplement my income from photography. I made it my business to be on hand at Southampton when regional television was born and during preliminary trials was lucky enough to fill a gap with a silent film of cows at Guildford market, taken with a camera borrowed from the college. While waiting for a camera to be supplied, I went out and bought a suitable one of my own. I was initially to be a freelance "stringer" for television with a contract covering the area from Petersfield to Brighton. By the time I left Petworth in 1960 I was working in television full time.

Herbert Earle took over Walter Kevis' Lombard Street premises in 1908. Kevis being his uncle. Kevis had operated as the Petworth photographer from the late 1870s. Herbert Earle kept the tobacco and sundries part of the business but simply dropped the photographic side. He died in 1951. I didn't really know Earle, and in a sense he was a competitor to the family business just down the road in Market Square.

It was 1952 and, while still at school, I was already working with George Garland. Garland was told that there were glass negatives upstairs in the Lombard Street premises and that Earle's executors wanted them cleared. You say that Garland asked to pick out a few and was told he could take them all or none at all. This is perfectly possible: I simply would not be party to any such discussion.

What we didn't realize was that we were dealing with glass plate by the hundredweight, perhaps, even, by the ton. George sent me up to have a look. To my amazement, here was an Edwardian portrait studio simply suspended in time, untouched since before the 1914-18 war. You say that a Miss Coze came for a time by appointment only after 1908, and that George Garland said her appearances became increasingly uncommon and eventually ceased altogether. I've no reason to doubt this and she would have stopped coming well before 1914.

Slowly we began to clear the attic studio, bringing the glass plates down and loading them in to George's car. We made a number of trips and by the time we had finished the negatives took up a significant part of the Station Road studio. They would do so for some years. There were perhaps a couple of hundred local views, mainly whole plate and what seemed an endless array of portraits, a few whole plate, some half plate, but mainly quarter plate. Curiously there were virtually no wedding groups although Kevis certainly took such pictures.

There was also the studio equipment, obviously untouched during two wars and four decades: screens for background with clouds, rocks, vegetation and the like. I think George had the idea of using them himself but in practice they were bulky and too much of the period. I don't know what became of them eventually. Rather similar were a number of ornamental pillars and balustrades.

I had done a certain amount of routine copying of extant Kevis sepia mounted

prints for Garland, but this was something on a totally different scale. It was strange, almost exhilarating, to be able to print from the original glass negative plates, the ensuing pictures as fresh and clear as if they had been taken the day before.

George Pellett was talking to the Editor:

Christmas at Petworth House in 1890

This final extract from Daisy's Diary (PSM 157) is a transcript of Daisy's account of an unexpected and very welcome visit to Petworth House for Christmas in 1890; a sudden alteration in family arrangements allowing the Mure family to come to Petworth rather than remain in London.

Uncle Henry and Aunt Connie are the second Lord Leconfield and Lady Leconfield. Mary (later Lady Maxse) born 1870, Charles later third Lord Leconfield (1872), Maud (1874), Reggie (1876), Hugh (1877), Margaret (1879), Edward (1883) and Humphrey (1888) are the Leconfield children. Marjorie, Zell and Bo (absent) are Daisy's sisters and brother. Midge is probably a pet name for Marjorie. Bibsy is Sybil Finch a cousin. Mr Holland is of course the rector of Petworth, he and his wife constant visitors at the House. Mademoiselle is Mademoiselle Bouillot, the children's French governess.

"How people can bottle" – I do not know this usage.

The best commentary remains: *Mary Maxse* (1870-1944). Privately printed 1947.

One again I am grateful to Mrs Mary Bessemer Stewart to whom the diary belongs and to Gillian Hookway Jones for drawing the Society's attention to it.

P.

Tuesday Dec. 23rd [1890]

Went down to Petworth by the 3-55. Crowds travelling. It is so nice being here. The Xmas tree is tomorrow, and we have got to work hard. Tiny¹ not well so she went early to bed.

Wednesday Dec. 24th

Eddie has been entertaining me; he is very excited and has guessed what Maggie is going to give him. Humphrey is such a dear little thing, but very shy. Arranged the tree.

In the afternoon we did not do much till after tea, when there was a huge tree in

the audit room for the Uptons etc. and the servants got their presents. Lady Blandford and Evelyn and Norah Churchill and Lady George Hamilton and Robert came to help.

Christmas day 1890

Marjy and I went with the others to the 8 o'clock service. Mother did not go till after the morning service.

Got such lovely presents.

Prayer Book and Hymn Book from Mother

Case of 4 prs of scissors (sic) – Marjorie

Frame (?)² for photos – Zell

Châtelaine – Aunt Connie

Brooch – Uncle Henry

Fan – Tiny

Photo frame – Maud

Knife – Hughie

Selections from Browning – George

Scent bottle – Reggie

For the afternoon Mademoiselle, Zell, Midge, George and Charles and I went for a walk, the others did not go out. Such a bottle this morning. The children all gave Aunt C a lovely candle reading lamp with a pink shade. Aunt C said to Bibsy "Look what a pretty lamp I have got, I shall put it in the red library only I am afraid it will swear³ with the room." Shrieks of dismay from the family round the breakfast table. "But oh Mother we meant [it] for your dressing-room to take the place of that horrid old thing!" "My dears, nothing will ever induce me to part with that dear old lamp. It's one of my favorite [sic] belongings!" How people can bottle. It now rests in the Red Library.

Last night the dining room was fearfully cold and Uncle Henry discovered to his great horror that Aunt Connie had had the hot water pipes stopped last week. Tonight they were turned on and the room was so terribly hot that Maud exclaimed "I feel like a forced strawberry" and George nearly fainted and had to retire.

Tiny told me such a delightful story this evening. After they came home they had a small dinner and the Hollands came.

Mrs Holland: I hear your niece is engaged ...!

Mr H: Oh yes I hear Miss Mure is going to be married but I can't remember the name of the man, I think it was something like "Corkscrew". It has been

discovered that he was muddling Nelly and Skorweski with Maimie and Spencer.

Friday Dec. 26th

Down late. Everything and everybody returning to ordinary life. Mother had a tele. from M to say they were coming on Monday night.

Tiny and I, Maud and Midge went for a walk in the park. Practiced. Last night Uncle H. made me play. In the afternoon we skated, it was great fun. Practiced again after tea. Bo has sent us a lovely basket of sweets from Charbonel and Walker.

Saturday Dec. 27th

This morning Reggy went to Austens for me and bought M. and I skates. They were the last of our size he had and they are Acme's. Reggie, Hughie, M and I went at about ½ past 10 to the pond and skated till nearly 2 it was splendid. M had put her skates on to shoes but of course it was impossible for her with her weak ancles [sic] to get along and after a little woggling about she ran home and fetched boots. It was nearly 12 when she really got started. The rest, who had been to church, had joined us by then. After lunch we started off at once again and Tiny and I spent nearly all our time in trying to go backwards and do the Dutch Roll forwards. I came home at about ½ past four the rest followed nearly directly afterwards.

Sunday Dec. 28th

Tiny went to feed the Robin after Church. I stayed up in Mother's room. M. did too.

Went for a walk in the afternoon with Mademoiselle and Tiny. Sang carols and hymns after tea. Did Tiny's hair like my own. She likes it very much.

Had music after dinner. Uncle H made me play Charles' violin.

Monday Dec. 29th

This morning we all came down early so as to be able to get off skating as soon as possible. We skated till nearly 11. Our train went at ¼ to 1. Got up to London soon after 2.

1. Nickname for Mary.

2. Reading uncertain.

3. = clash (?)

A Petworth entertainment in 1903.

TOWN HALL, PETWORTH.
(By kind permission of LORD LECONFIELD.)
 In Connection with the PETWORTH CLUB AND INSTITUTE.

- - Tuesday, 3rd February, 1903. - -

PRICES OF ADMISSION:—Front Seats (Reserved) 2/-; Unreserved, 1/6; Second Seats 1/-; Third Seats, (limited) 6d.
 Plan and Tickets with Mr. STEGGLYS, Chemist, Market Place.

DOORS OPEN AT 7.30. COMMENCE AT 8. CARRIAGES AT 10.15.

PROGRAMME WITHIN.



Madam and the Misses

Flood-Porter's
MUSIC AND COMEDY COMPANY.

Including the Four Sisters Flood-Porter & Mr. Arthur Knott, Humorist.
 IN THEIR LATEST LONDON SUCCESSES
 MUSICAL COMEDIES, VIOLIN, FLUTE AND VIOLONCELLO SOLOS, SONGS, DANCES,
 → HUMOROUS SKETCHES, &c. ←

Universally admitted to be the most brilliantly attractive
 Musical Entertainment of the day.
 Communications to E. W. FLOOD-PORTER, Manager,
 17, Finsbury Street, Maiden Hill, London, W.

A Petworth entertainment in 1903.

* PROGRAMME *

PART I.

INSTRUMENTAL SELECTION "Merrie England" ... *German*
 THE PARTY

VOCAL DUET ... "Life's dream is o'er" ... *Acher*
 THE MISSES FLOOD-PORTER

VIOLIN SOLO ... "Scotch Airs" ... *Hookman*
 MISS GERTIE FLOOD-PORTER

HUMOROUS SONG
 MR. ARTHUR KNOTT

VIOLINCELLO SOLO "Tarentelle" ... *Popper*
 MISS AMY FLOOD-PORTER

SONG ... "Land of Hope and Glory" ... *Elgar*
 MISS ADA FLOOD-PORTER

FLUTE SOLO ... "A Lowly Youth" ... *Richardson*
 MISS CORA CARDIGAN

SONG ... "A Miller's Daughter" ... *Reuben*
 MISS AMY FLOOD-PORTER

PLANTATION MEDLEY (*Banjo and Mandoline Accompaniment*)
 THE PARTY

→ INTERVAL ←

PART II.

INSTRUMENTAL SELECTION "A Country Girl" ... *Munckton*
 THE PARTY

RECITATION "Aunt Abigail's Adventure" ... *De Heary*
 MISS ADA FLOOD-PORTER

PICCOLO SOLO "British Laurels" ... *Bonquet*
 MISS CORA CARDIGAN

* New, Musical & Comedy: *

"A REHEARSAL"
By HARRY BODEN. Music by HENRY E. PETHER.

→ CHARACTERS →

MRS. THORNYCROFT (A Widow)
 MISS AMY FLOOD-PORTER

JANE (A Servant) MISS GERTIE FLOOD-PORTER.

MR. READ (Friend of Mrs. Thornycroft)
 MR. ARTHUR KNOTT

A Petworth entertainment in 1903.

An Ebernoe childhood (3)

One day one of our boyfriends came to grief when he was climbing the tree and trod on a rotten branch, and fell into the water below. We took him home and Mother undressed him and let him sit in one of our coats while his clothes were drying by the fire. This boy spent a lot of his time playing with us. His mother was glad to be rid of him as he was very lively, and being the only child he was inclined to play her up. I believe she took in washing because she always seemed to be wielding a copper stick, and she wore her husband's cloth cap back to front. I know we were very amused at seeing her with this cap on, she being a short dumpy woman. When Father had made some marigold wine and he was tasting it for the first time, the boy's father would be his taster as well and often it was more than just a taste, because he went home at least on one occasion the worse for drink, and his wife came along with her copper stick and called my father all sorts of nasty names, but it did not bother him, in fact he was amused. I expect it was seeing the cloth cap really.

Although I did not actually catch any fish from the pond I did manage to hook an eel once. I forgot to take my line out of the water and it was there all night and in the morning I found an eel (dead) on the hook. It had got tangled up in the reeds and I remember what a job it was to untangle it. There was a small stream flowing away from the pond, which ran through the bottom of the garden, or rather orchard, and eventually joined the brook. The brook ran by the side of the three meadows which all belonged to our farm. Most of the brook was overhung by trees and the water was clogged up with decayed sticks and no good for us to play in. However, in one special place there was no bank or trees to spoil our fun and it was like a small pool which was ideal for us to romp around in. I remember one lovely hot day we took all our clothes off and had a good splash, then we ran about in the meadow to dry ourselves off, as it was unheard of for us to take a towel but what fun we had. I taught myself to swim in the brook, I have always liked the water. Sometimes after a lot of rain the small stream would become flooded. Our bedroom overlooked the stream, and I was able to hear the water gushing along on waking up. I used to get excited when this happened and if it happened at a weekend or during school holidays we would take the tin bath and use it as a boat on the water with a pole to help guide us, and this was very exciting. Although it was not very wide or deep, to us it was like a large river in flood.

When there had been enough snow to play in we made the most of it. Father made a sledge large enough for four of us to ride on at a time. The stream ran through a small valley with slopes on either side and a small plank bridge crossed

the stream. We would pull the sledge to the top of one of the slopes, then all jump on, having given the sledge a start off first, and then aim for the bridge. It was only just wide enough to take the sledge but very often we missed it and we would tumble off into the snow and sometimes the stream. If we did get it right, we would be halfway up the slope on the other side and start again from the top. Very often we would make a large snowball and roll it off down the slopes.

In the autumn we always found plenty to do. We had to help with the harvesting as well, and we had to stack up the bundles of wheat as it was cut down by the binder, and of course we got some fun out of that by hiding from each other in the stooks, as they were called, about five bundles to a stook. When it was threshing time Father hired a combined harvester as most of the farmers did, and we had to help with that. It was a very dusty job and noisy. I did not like it at all. I remember a tramp used to help at this time. He slept in the barn and I remember taking him his tea in a small milk pan, and he was most grateful I recall, as he smacked his lips, saying "lovely drop of dripping, for a 'Dook'".

A lot of time would be spent blackberrying, we would spend days picking them. We would have a large basket and each of us had a tin with a handle of string and a hooked stick for reaching the higher branches. We each filled our tins and then emptied them into the basket. There was one particular place, we called the "blackberry field", an area overgrown with brambles. There was no need to hunt around for any, and there were lots on the hedges too. Having filled the large basket we made our way home, feeling very pleased with ourselves for having done so. We would celebrate by pretending to be Red Indians and used to squeeze some of the blackberry juice on to our hands, faces and legs, then walk along in single file and sing our favourite songs. The one I liked most of all was one called "Come Follow". It was a "round". One would begin by singing the first two lines, then another would start, and then another. It must have sounded quite effective, though rather noisy.

I can't imagine how our mother coped with washing us and keeping our clothes clean, not to mention feeding and looking after us when we were ill. On the other hand it was not really possible for her to be too particular about these things, but I am sure she did the best she could, and as is usual in large families, the older ones had to help with the younger ones and work hard as well on the farm. We would have been extra dirty on such days as this, and the blackberry juice could not have been easy to wash off, and no doubt our clothes had got torn on the bramble bushes.

Another harvest pastime was nut picking. There were lots of hazel trees in the hedges. Again, we would take our hooked sticks and also little cotton bags with draw strings. We used to pick them with the husks on and then find a suitable

place where we would sit down, take off the husks and then count them, by putting them in little piles of ten, and a hundred would be the number which we decided was enough to satisfy ourselves that we had picked our fair share.

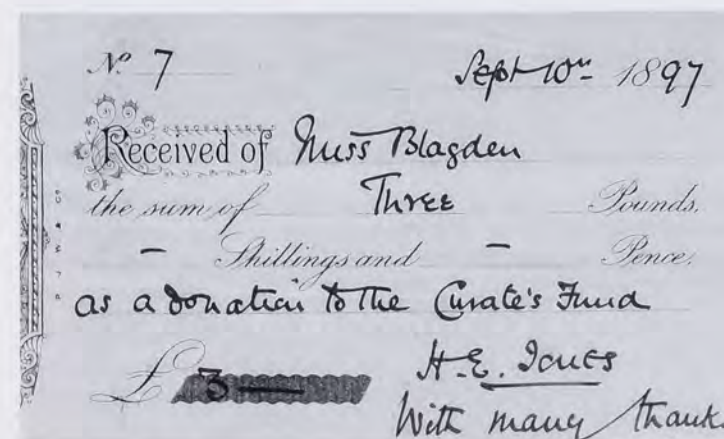
A favourite place for counting our nuts I remember was on a little wooden bridge which passed over the brook. While on the bridge subject, it calls to mind the horses pulling wagons loaded with sheaves going over the bridge, it looked too frail to take such loads but it was strong enough to bear the weight. The thudding noise of the hooves made a satisfying kind of echoing noise. Among my treasured possessions is a snap of two grubby little children sitting on top of a huge cart horse. It was of my younger brother and I (not five years old) at the end of a day's work in the harvest field in which we would have no doubt been "helping" the grown ups. Someone would sit us on the horse, pat it on the rump and the horse would make its way home. It passed the house on the way to the stables and someone would be at the gate and lift us off. I was not actually frightened about being up there on the horse's back, though how we managed to stay on has often puzzled me as all we had to hang on to was the horse's mane, no harness either. However, I remember how I used to hope someone would lift us off before the horse reached the drinking trough because we would have surely fallen off when it put its neck down to drink. Of course the cart horses were very steady and reliable and like old friends to us, or else we would not have been sat on their backs. On the other hand it was taking a risk as if we had fallen off and been trodden on by those huge hooves it does not take much to imagine what could have happened.

Every year through the winter months Father kept 100 sheep on the farm. They came from Kent where for some reason I am not aware of, it was not possible to keep them. They were brought to a village green about six miles from the farm, and some years it fell to my lot to help drive these sheep back at the end of the winter. I remember he was paid £1 for each sheep which he returned and there were usually a few losses out of 100, which was the number collected. I remember one spring my brother Albie and I, had the job. One of us had to walk in front of the sheep, I suppose the idea was that the sheep would follow. The other would be running down any side turnings to stop them from going the wrong way, and this was easier said than done. If one of them managed to make the wrong move in no time at all the rest would follow. Meanwhile my father was riding behind with the horse and trap, he seemed to be enjoying himself at our expense. All the time he was shouting out which direction to take and when the sheep started off down the wrong road, he would wave his whip and go berserk. As we had to pass through the village where we went to school, I found this very embarrassing with the school children watching. I felt like falling in a hole, but no doubt they found it very entertaining. On returning the sheep to the village green, and when Father

had been paid, we were allowed to ride in the trap and make our way home. However, we did not take the shorter route, but went rather a roundabout way, so that he might quench his thirst after all that shouting, at his favourite pub. We were left outside but he kept on bringing out glasses of fizzy lemonade and packets of crisps which we enjoyed very much. Then after taking his seat back in the trap, not so easy as it sounds in his by then intoxicated condition, it would be up to the horse to find our way home. Of course we knew it as well, but Father was holding the reins and to all intents and purposes was master of the situation. The sheep had to be properly fenced in while they were in his care because it seemed they were determined to break through any hedges or fences that were meant to keep them from straying. Another task which they presented was with regards to a worm which somehow buried itself into their thick fleece. Father used to cut off the wool round the area affected and sponge it with Jeyes Fluid, and I remember having to help hold the sheep down while he did this. Sometimes a sheep would somehow roll over on to its back and not be able to right itself. I have never heard of his happening since then, perhaps the sheep in those days had flatter backs. However, many a time we have seen a sheep lying on its back with its feet kicking up in the air and we would be obliged to roll it over. Somehow I know I was not the only one to breath a sigh of relief when the sheep went back. The pay was good but sad to say the money was not put to very good use.

Sabina Melville – to be continued.

We cannot trace the copyright owner, but will acknowledge when possible.



H. E. Jones the new rector acknowledges a generous contribution by Miss Blagden to the curate's fund. September 1897.

Old Petworth traders (14)

Drills, Mowers, Reapers
Chaff Cutters, Lawn
Mowers and Agricultural

Implements of all kinds
repaired. Soldering
and Grinding.

SECOND-HAND BICYCLES AND
TRICYCLES FOR SALE.
MODERATE CHARGES FOR REPAIRING

Mr. Pitfield Sep 1897

DR. TO P. THAYRE,
MACHINIST,
SHOERING & JOBBING SMITH,
CHURCH HILL, PETWORTH.

July 10	Taking to pieces & cleaning Bicycle, straightening front fork resulting teeth of Saddle clip.	4
Aug 31	Taking to pieces & cleaning Bicycle	5
		3.6
		9.6

P. Thayre invoices Mr Pitfield, the Market Square solicitor for repairs to a bicycle, September 1897. A very attractive billhead of the time. "Church Hill", now, I think, obsolete as a name is the very top of North Street. See an equally attractive billhead for Henry Ayling the Saddlers Row harness-maker from 1875. (PSM 37 September 1984).

