

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY  
*magazine*

No. 166, December 2016

Miles Costello  
Petworth  
Collection



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The Surrey Yeomanry in Station Road 1913.

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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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Printed by Bexley Printers Limited, Unit 14,  
Hampers Common Industrial Estate, Petworth  
Telephone: (01798) 343355.

Published by The Petworth Society which is  
registered charity number 268071.

The Petworth Society supports The Leconfield  
Hall, Petworth Cottage Museum and The  
Coultershaw Beam Pump.

### WEBSITE

[www.petworthsociety.co.uk](http://www.petworthsociety.co.uk)

FRONT COVER designed by Jonathan Newdick.  
Cover picture: "Undertones of War".  
With the Surrey Yeomanry in Petworth Park. Summer 1913.  
Courtesy Mr and Mrs Knox, Hangleton.

## Chairman's notes

The usual juggling of contents, possibly even the occasional regular feature put off to March. No account of the September dinner: for reasons of space I have let Ian's pictures tell their own story of an evening to remember and the usual marvellous mix of Petworth old, new and exiled which is perhaps unique to this Society. I have however included the Quiz.

Peter

## Tread Lightly Here (?)

"Tread lightly here. This is a hallowed place. The very air is heavy with memories." So "BGH" visiting Petworth for the Southern Weekly News in 1935. What possible resonance might these words have in a 2016 Market Square awash with hurrying strangers, every other immersed in a digital world of their own? Even to echo BGH seems to play a descant on a lost melody.

Yet Petworth is still "heavy with memories". The firebells on the Town Hall, the incongruous figure of William of Orange, the Toronto Scottish connection, the school bombing, the legacy of Garland and Kevis, the Virgin Mary Spring, the Barry obelisk, the great house and its echoes of old House/Town ambivalence, the understated Leconfield livery paint, Fred Streeter, the Bartons, "Round the Hills", the ridged fields, Petworth fair, 346 High Street, Grove Street still leafy but in thrall to parked cars – make your own list. Petworth is what it is and what it was: what it will be is defined by the first two.

Perhaps we should not dismiss BGH as a hopeless anachronism. Shorn of its history Petworth becomes one more characterless tourist town. Petworth has to be unrealistic enough to call for a living interaction between town and visitor that, however imperfect, somehow relates to the town's essential character. "Informatory" signs simply patronise and frustrate the sense of discovery. Visitors need to explore, wonder and think for themselves and Petworth retain a hint of reserve, of mystery even. Petworth should be an adventure, a striving for balance between townspeople and visitors, and in that striving it should see a chance for old and new in the town to mingle rather than drift increasingly apart.

Peter

Trafalgar Day 2016

## Society Dinner Quiz

1. Did the Romans eat fish and chips?
2. Where in Petworth might you have encountered a Running Horse?
3. The Society were much enthused by seeing an orange TITHONIA plant in the garden of Lewes Castle last year, what is its common name?
4. What is the modern name for Petworth's ancient Beast Market?
5. In Greek mythology Juno granted TITHONUS immortality but with one drawback. What?
6. What was the "Petworth Flyer"?
7. Which T.V. series featured Shipley Mill former home of Hilaire Belloc?
8. Who wrote the Tales of Old Petworth and with what local Inn would you associate him?
9. Leicester City Football club were the English Champions in 2015-2016, with what animal are they associated?
10. What nationally famous wood engraver lived in Petworth's Station Road?
11. What was the nationality of Hannibal?
12. "Crackpot and Common Bag" is a corruption of which Window Press book title published in 1979?
13. Who said "I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone"?
14. With what Petworth institution would you associate the Number 346?
15. "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest". From what poem does this come?
16. "Mulberry Lane" what would be its modern title?
17. Did Cleopatra paint her toe nails?
18. What is the date of Petworth's 2016 Fair?
19. "Of all noises I consider \_\_\_\_\_ the least disagreeable". (Samuel Johnson.) What is the missing word?
20. Who founded The Petworth Society?

21. Who said "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward"?
22. The cover of the September Magazine features a picture of "Bean Lodge" what is the more usual name for this building?
23. What was the name of Rigsby's cat in the T.V. series *Rising Damp*?
24. Of late years what has been the traditional venue for the Society's last walk of the season?

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## Betty's "Egdean" walk. 21st August

We didn't keep to the advertised programme. Perhaps, with black clouds overhead, Betty thought High Hoes and Woodruffs a step too far. In fact, following this year's pattern we made another assault on the unfamiliar lying behind what seems familiar. No cars, simply down Back Lane, up Tillington Road and into the Sunday Park, skirting the lake to pass Snow Hill on the left. The long view over the valley to the lower lake, then up the giant steps to come out at Upperton, quiet in the afternoon shade. The usual scraps of conversation, mutual connections at Cowes – white heads of yarrow in the kerbside grass. The view down the slope to the corona of Tillington church. Soon the smell of Sunday roast from the Horse Guards. It's already mid-afternoon.

Then across the busy A272 and into "Boxall's" Lane, Coxland off to the right. Sunday afternoon quiet, somehow you can't imagine walking down here on a working day. Left past Sokenholes and on over Hungers Lane, somehow less rural than one remembers, the old road from the south – the smugglers seem to inhabit an ever more distant world. A new plantation of trees as we approach Washington Copse. Why Washington? I've never known. Talk of afternoons at the Museum, the endemic yo-yo of busy and quiet – stewards have a kind of private freemasonry that comes of shared experience. Out at the Mile House and into the hurrying late summer Sunday traffic.

Thanks very much Betty.

P.

## Linda's Pulborough Wildbrooks walk. 18th September

We were last here in 2008 (PSM 134). The final walk of that season, October. This year it's September. Down the steps from Pulborough car park and immediately we're in the Wildbrooks, a light breeze disturbing the gorse and emphasising the early autumn dryness. A pleasure boat glides by on the river to our right, but the water in the ditches is late summer low. The old Roman way across the marsh to Hassocks a notice informs. We bear off left into a narrow lane, then turn again left for Wiggonholt church, dimly remembered from the last time, one of those lonely churches like South Stoke that seem to recall a lost past. Post-Norman, thirteenth century, sparse churchyard, a font, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Oil lamps and the traditional service according to the Book of Common Prayer, a kind of escape perhaps from a hurrying, modernising essentially unsympathetic world. Something for the connoisseur, for the few. And why not? Desiccated blue heads of hydrangea guarding a grave. Burial here will perhaps be a privilege. Holy Communion, 18th September, that very morning. 9 a.m. Refreshments. One wonders how many there were and who they were, the event takes on a mystery it would not have had just six hours before.

We're moving round in an arc. Open fields, and ponies in a meadow, a narrow gully with brambles face high. Not many sloes this year. A water gauge with 10cm gradations, the smell of mint and nettle underfoot, only the harsh white of convolvulus amongst the spent autumn vegetation. Finally out on to the busy main road, the traffic as ever hurrying past. Children on a bouncy castle in the pub.

Thanks very much Linda.

P.

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## Probing Rasputin's murder. The September book sale

There is really only one rule for the £2 and over table at the Book Sale: never lower the bar. The £2 table houses Book Sale aristocracy. It demands value and even perhaps a touch of pretension. There can be just one exception: older books with a price on their heads and even here the mantra is "not too shabby."



Political exiles in Akatuisik Prison.  
 In the centre is the famous woman conspirator M. Spiridonova.  
 A photograph from A.T.Vassilyev: *The Okhrana*. See "Probing Rasputin's murder".

In the last Magazine I wrote of Rothay Reynolds' "My Russian Year" and selected a couple of random themes from a wider discussion of Russia as it was in 1904-5. Reynolds was clearly the Saint Petersburg correspondent for an English language newspaper. I did not mention his nagging awareness of constant surveillance, not simply of himself as a foreigner, but of his Russian contemporaries. Anyone, concierge, drosky driver, neighbour or intimate servant, might be in thrall to the Okhrana, the Tsarist secret police, themselves desperately trying to stamp out dissidents and finding that as soon as one group was brutally suppressed, another took its place. The informer was crucial.

A. T. Vassilyev's "The Okhrana"<sup>1</sup> is a book of moderate value that merits a place on the £2 table. A dedicated monarchist, Vassilyev had achieved high office in the Okhrana and in penurious exile in Paris in the 1920s is attempting to defend what is basically indefensible. His pivotal argument is that, in the face of an unprecedented threat to the Tsarist social order, repression is justified. An ancillary argument is that, however harsh the measures employed prior to 1917, the succeeding regime proved at once more sinister and all enveloping. As his editor points out Vassilyev is in some ways a man of principle, even of ideals, but this is no brake on an ignoble ideology: it can even reinforce it. Were not the judges of the Spanish Inquisition honourable men?

A century on, Vassilyev's pre-1917 Russia carries unnerving echoes of 2016. Terrorism (capital T) and a would-be female suicide bomber apprehended with dynamite in her corsage. Here are desperate assassins infiltrating an exclusive dinner party to dynamite both themselves and their victims.

In PSM 165 I highlighted Reynolds' twin face of Russia in 1905 "the golden emblems of self-sacrifice": the eighteenth century forest ascetic Saint Serapion and the assassin with the pistol in her muff, Marya Spiridonova. If the latter represented revolution pure and simple, the former stood for the immemorial tradition of Holy Russia. The Okhrana looked to silence the voice of the new politics while warily watching for signs of "communism coloured by religion" amongst the dissident sects.

Over all hung the ever-present threat of removal to Siberia. Marya Spiridonova, fortunate to escape with her life, was languishing there in an Okhrana prison. As events stumbled toward 1917 Vassilyev would be investigating officer in the murder of Rasputin the monk. He had known Rasputin well and offers a considered appraisal.

So "The Okhrana" mingled with the £2 aristocracy. At three o'clock it had been deemed a parvenu, lying among the debris of the decimated £2 table. Too good for the Collector it has taken refuge at Trowels. And the September sale? Busy enough, but not a record month in what has been a record year.

Siberia is not as remote as you might think. See Wladyslaw Swirski in PSM 138 December 2009 and Helena Krawczuk in PSM 151 March 2013.

P.

1. *The Russian Secret Police* (Harrap 1930). The American Lippincott Edition is the more common.

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## Forty years of a small press

Members will have received with the last Magazine a celebratory brochure for the fortieth anniversary of the Window Press. Since 1976 we have sometimes lived dangerously but have had the freedom to publish what we want, usually with a local flavour of some kind. We have enjoyed our venture into a strange world. We still do. The books always bear the imprint of Jonathan's distinctive presentation style.

"Petworth: Most of the Time" is our 28th book and in origin my own attempt to emulate J. O. Greenfield's *Tales of Old Petworth*. I soon found this was impossible. I also doubted whether my own recollections would be of any interest, but in the end felt it was better to do than not to do. I did feel in writing my *History of Petworth* (2002 and 2006) that material of this kind was generally lacking. I append the opening paragraphs. It's sobering to think that Howard's Plat is now the Fire Station and the allotment land developed. I still have a few copies left (£15 post free) available from me at the Window Press while the book is also available at the Petworth Bookshop.

P.

### The Enchanted Garden

The road was quieter then: much quieter. It led eventually to the station. Just down from the junction there was a low stone wall on the left with a track leading slightly uphill. I didn't know, but the old name for the rough patch of grass immediately as you turned in was 'Howard's Plat'. There the town sweeps had once pastured their donkeys. There too the legendary showman Clunn Lewis had once brought his puppets, and a travelling company called Taylors Gaff had re-enacted the murder in the Red Barn. It would be in the years before 1914. Now it was simply rough grass. A second, parallel, stone wall marked the beginning of

allotment land. On either side of the track Mr Caine, the greengrocer, operated what was effectively a smallholding. On the narrower strip to the left of the incline there was an enclosure with a pig and neat rows of raspberry canes and asparagus: to the right, cabbage, potatoes, peas, beans and strawberries. Mr Caine kept his empire in exemplary order.

A five bar gate gave entry to further allotment land. During the summer the gate would choke with high seeding grass and some unknown presence scythe it down: once or perhaps twice a year. I could usually push the gate sufficiently open to make my way up the track. If I were on my own I would be going to meet my grandfather but this was unusual; I was usually with him.

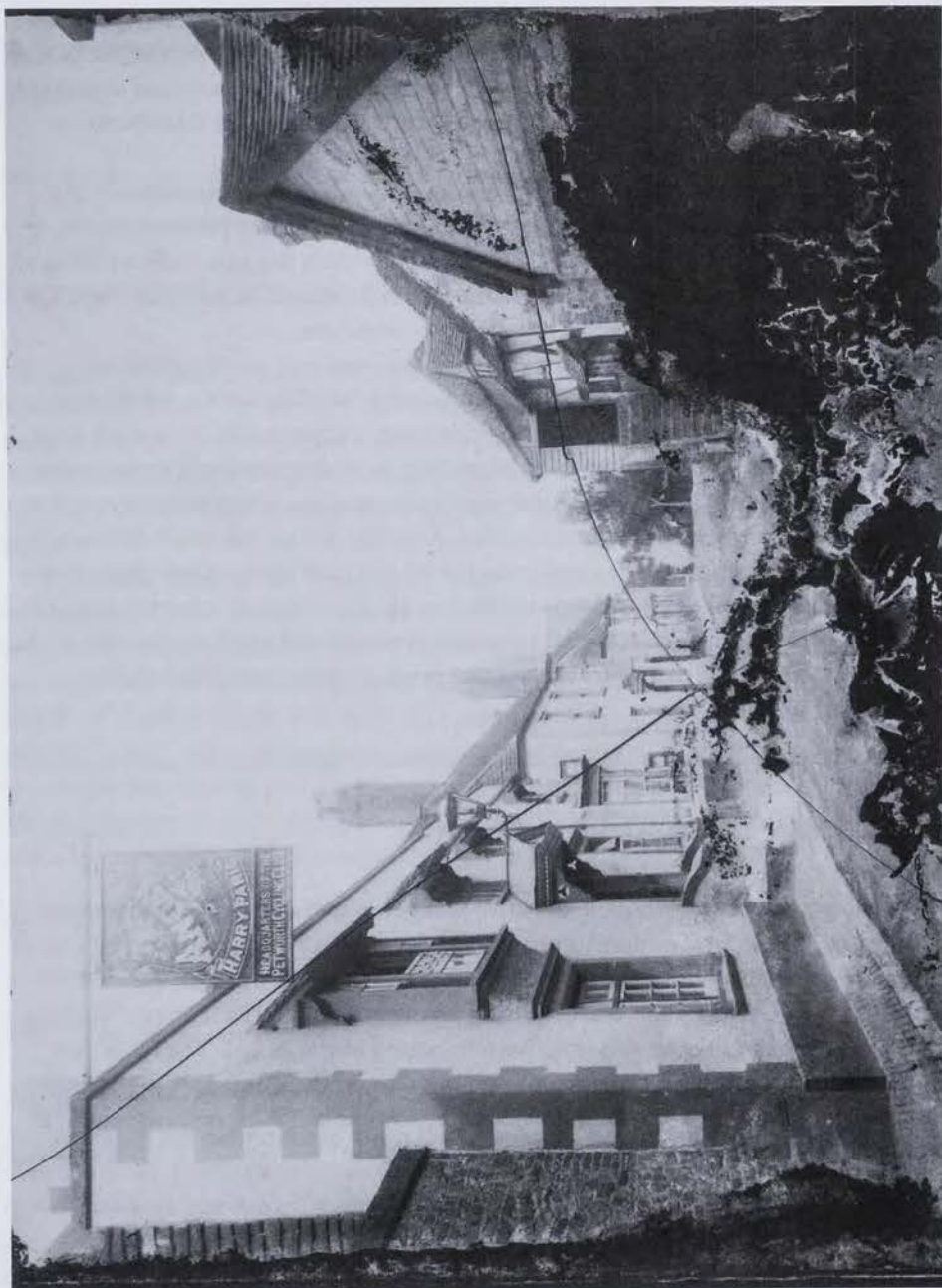
A side path bordered by a hawthorn hedge led away to a whole galaxy of mysterious allotment strips dotted with apple trees but this was no concern of mine. Instead I would continue along a wide central grass track. To my left were row upon row of Christmas trees at various stages of development, strawberries under taut green netting and row upon row of vegetables which never seemed to be picked; all was in perfect, if static, order. A stately trio of seeding leeks looked on. The whole was sometimes supervised by an old man with a tired green beret, pipe and hoe. The old man kept his empire, as Mr Caine did, in pristine order. He also kept his own counsel. A scarlet nasturtium established itself on the side of the path and was allowed to grow. I watched its progress with awe: children like nasturtiums.

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## A damaged negative

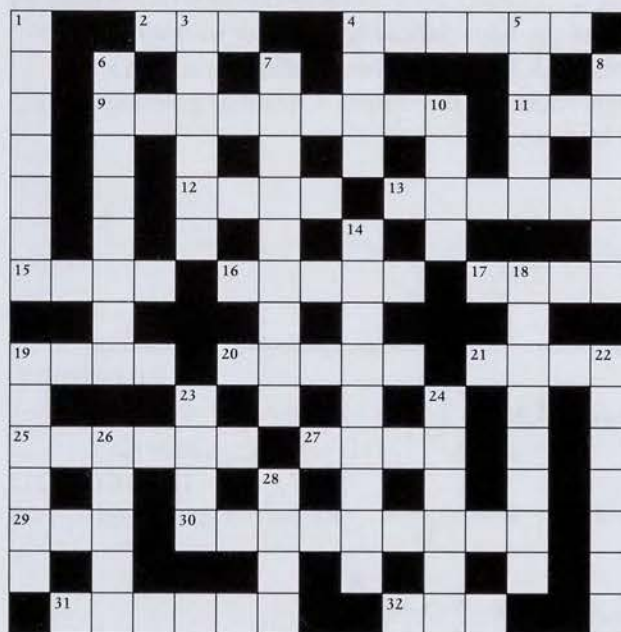
The following broken glass plate negative was given to the Cottage Museum by Eastbourne Museum. Gordon Stevenson has done what he can with it. The date is probably before 1914 but there is no indication that it is the work of Walter Kevis. The Petworth Cycling Club was originally an offshoot of the East Street Working Mens Institute but may by this time have relocated to the Angel. The timbered building<sup>1</sup> (further right) is familiar enough but that on the immediate right rather less so. The image seems to be the work of a professional. A second negative – of Saddlers Row – is too severely damaged to reproduce.

1. Demolished in 1939.



Angel Street about 1910.  
Photographer unknown.

## CHRISTMAS CROSSWORD



- 8 How they danced in 6dn? (6)
- 10 Boys' Christmas name (4)
- 18 Party game (8)
- 19 Put them in your baking ... and punch (6)
- 22 Sussex word for a mummer (7)
- 23 Jesus's grandmother (4)
- 24 Found strength to face the sales maybe! (6)
- 26 Use it to light your candles (5)
- 28 Pheasant or grouse perhaps (4)

### ACROSS

- 2 Bedding for baby Jesus (3)
- 4 One of Santa's little helpers? (6)
- 9 They provided the Society's Christmas entertainment in 2015 (9)
- 11 It's almost Christmas Day – it got lost in the revelry! (3)
- 12 Hand cosy (4)
- 13 Another word for 4dn (6)
- 15 Unusual gift – one of seven sent to me at New Year (4)
- 16 Irritated! How Santa feels after all those sooty chimneys! (5)
- 17 Covered in rime – or sugar! (4)
- 19 Old-fashioned board game (4)
- 20 Granter of wishes in pantoland (5)
- 21 Time gone – one of Scrooge's ghostly visitors came from it! (4)
- 25 Morning prayer (6)
- 27 Make a wish as you do this to your pud mix (4)

- 29 You might need to take one after Christmas dinner! (3)

- 30 Natural disaster which occurred in Lewes on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1836 (9)
- 31 Fruit at the centre of the Christingle decoration, it represents the world (6)
- 32 Much fuss (3)

### DOWN

- 1 Cinderella's friend (7)
- 3 Season when Christmas preparations begin (6)
- 4 I spotted three of these on Christmas morning (4)
- 5 Their annual display in the U.R.C. has become a special part of Petworth's Christmas (5)
- 6 They really know how to celebrate New Year here (8)
- 7 & 14 Character from a traditional mummers' play (3,6,9)

### SOLUTION TO AUTUMN CROSSWORD

#### ACROSS

- 1 Heavy Horses, 8 Acorn,
- 9 Coconut, 11 Dormant, 12 Sheep,
- 13 Russet, 15 Flayed, 19 Sloes,
- 21 Pumpkin, 22 Replete, 23 Osier,
- 25 Bonfire Boys

#### DOWN

- 2 Ego, 3 Vintage, 4 Hecate, 5 Ricks,
- 6 Larder, 7 Stop, 10 Needy,
- 14 Scorpio, 16 Limbo, 17 Donors,
- 18 Appear, 19 Serf, 20 Sheaf, 24 Ivy



## Michaelmas 1942: an echo

Mr Chris Vincent has a copy of C. S. Lewis' *The Problem of Pain* in which is pasted a letter to Mrs Stevenson widow of the Boys' School headmaster who was killed in the 1942 bombing. The writer is G. S. Provis, the former rector, who had left Petworth a little before. We reproduce the Rev. Provis' Christmas greeting to Mrs Stevenson and a transcript of his letter.

Rev. G. S. Provis  
The Manor House  
LIMPSFIELD  
Surrey

Tel: OXTED 221  
21st December 1942

Dear Mrs Stevenson

You, and many others will be feeling your bereavement keenly at the Christian Festival of "Family Reunion". When I left England for Western Canada in 1911, a friend gave me a book in which was a quotation from an old Latin prayer which (roughly translated) reminds us that "Oceans may separate us, but in the Holy Communion the Christian Family is united with Christ, and with one another." This is a truth which you will find increasingly clearer as year by year our relations and friends pass over the "Great Ocean", and await us on the other side.

It is my hope that you (and any to whom you care to lend it) will find in this little book comfort and strength and the grace to persevere.

So, since we are Christians, come what may we may still wish one another, "A Happy Christmas".

Your sincere friend,

G. S. PROVIS

Mrs B. Stevenson

In memory of her husband's  
[his assistant teacher &  
his pupils] Petworth Boys  
School.  
Killed by enemy action  
Michaelmas Day  
1942  
whilst trying to save their  
lives  
Christmas 1942  
G. S. Provis  
Rector of Petworth, 1933-1940

## Did I want to leave? No

I was born on the day before war was declared in 1939, that last day of peace. I would see very little of my father during the war: he was in the Royal Navy and had been for some years. It meant he was away a lot. I was told he didn't see me until I was a year old. Certainly I can remember him later giving me a banana – he had brought it from America. It was quite black on the outside but I thought it tasted marvellous.

My mother kept house for my maternal grandfather "Dub", one of the numerous Connor family in Duncton at that time. He worked on Duncton Mill farm and the cottage was tied, one of two that are now Duncton House, and on the left as you travel south out of the village. From here my grandfather would walk every evening down to the Cricketers where he had a special seat reserved for him. He had been widowed when my mother was in her teens. She had hopes of becoming a pupil teacher but when her mother died she had to give up the idea: that was how things were in those days. Years later I said to my own mother, I'd like to be a gardener when I grow up." "That's no job for a woman", she replied.

Our cottage was one of two, the Hayter family occupying the one next door. Mr Hayter also worked on the farm. I was significantly younger than my two sisters aged 12 and 10 and my brother Stan who was 8. By modern standards, indeed perhaps by any standards, the cottages were basic. There was neither running water nor electricity. The only tap was a communal one outside, shared with the Hayters and two other neighbours. It wasn't much use in the winter if it froze solid and it often did. At best it was a matter of bucket, jug and bottle. There was a sink in the scullery but no drain: water had to be taken back out into the garden; down the brick path that divided the two gardens. There was, of course, no W.C. but each family did have its own private "thunder box" at the end of the garden – two holes, one small and one large in a wooden seat with newspaper at the side. Comparative luxury as this was, everything ran off into a common sump. Periodical emptying was one thing my grandfather simply would not do but he was prepared to pay a neighbour. All the windows had to be kept shut for this operation. Only on moonlight nights? No, I've never heard that. Grandfather would use the "black soil" on the garden. Both gardens were enormous, long and seeming to stretch out without end, ours even larger than Mr Hayter's. If the front garden was small, the back plots had apple trees, a walnut tree, rhubarb in quantity and rows and rows of vegetables. There was a running stream at the end and abundant water cress.

Duncton was famous for its apples; my grandfather would sell his surplus while the orchards at Duncton Mill were important as was the Court family fruit farm.

Anthony Connor, another relation, had an orchard at the bottom of Duncton Hill. The Knight family at Duncton had been famous wassailers, a tradition kept up by the Court family between the wars.

I went to Duncton school when I was 4, walking in. There was virtually no traffic and sometimes we'd take a short cut across the Sheepwash. I was away a good deal at the time with meningitis and mastoids and I remember being in hospital at Chichester and my father being allowed to come and see me because he was home from active service. My mother however was excluded. There weren't that many children in Duncton but the school was very well run and had a good scholarship record. My sister Ena went to Chichester High School but wasn't happy there: after living in rural quiet at Duncton she found it difficult to adjust to the long daily journey and school life in general. It was something I could readily sympathise with. My brother Stan had gone to Midhurst Grammar School, had a job with the meteorological office working with weather balloons but preferred the country life he had always known. He too would return. My sister Jean was quite different: she happily joined the A.T.S. and left the area. Miss Botting was headmistress at the school assisted by Miss Ratcliff – I remember her red hair so well – both were very kind. Mr Hildebrand the rector? The name is familiar enough but I can't call him to mind. Children came from as far away as the Kennels and Upwaltham. How did they get in? Perhaps Rapleys the garage people brought them in. I don't know. Duncton in the early 1940s seemed, as it still seems looking back, a cloistered, comforting place, primitive certainly but we had nothing with which to compare it.

Over the road from us was Mrs de Fonblanque. We didn't often see her but we could hear her singing and calling to her dog Disraeli. She had been prominent in the movement for women's suffrage before 1914. I imagine that, widowed, she lived alone with a little help in the house.

The cottage had a coal-fired range and no other means of heating so the room with the range had to be the living room too. We'd all sit round the table in the evening, playing cards or perhaps reading although we only had an oil lamp – no electric. Steps led down to the unheated scullery with its table and sink. My mother did some food preparation in there and there was a rarely used paraffin cooker which gave off a characteristic choking smell. There was a wash house in the garden shared with the Hayter family next door. It had the usual copper and mangle. Mother did the ironing indoors with a flat iron heated by being placed against the range. As you can imagine water took a long time to boil on the range. Mother didn't bake bread but she used the range for cakes. Pescods delivered from Graffham and also brought groceries. Milk still came out ladled from bulk into our own jugs and bottles by Mr House from Duncton Common farm.

My earliest memory is of sitting in the pram watching my mother searching in a drawer for my grandfather's pension book. We were on our way to Duncton Post Office, run by Mrs Goatcher and her daughter Ethel – it was at the other end of the village. Just inside the door was a little box. I always thought it was put there for me. There was no shop in the village unless you counted an elderly lady who sold a few sweets from the front room of her cottage near the village hall.

My mother and I would catch the bus to Chichester – I'd sing all the way – but be very nervous as the bus climbed Duncton Hill, it always seemed to lose power and I was afraid it would stop and roll back down the hill. We'd more often go into Petworth although even this was something of an adventure. Here the bridge at Coultershaw worried me. It was seeing the water rushing beneath. Would we fall in? Once I walked in with my father and he picked me up and carried me over the bridge. As a child different things struck me about different shops: cool lemonade in, of all places, Knights the Lombard Street bakers, or the array of clocks and intricate machinery in the Dales's shop in Lombard Street or Eagers with its till wire.

Time was coming when the family would have to move although we still went back at least once a week to see my grandfather. The cottage was very cramped and my father had one of the new wooden houses at Hampers Green: off the living room was a walk-in pantry effectively another room with a meat safe, shelves all round and in the season lots of apples. Like it or not we were moving into the modern world. No more going to bed with candles, no more shadows caused by the flickering light. My mother told me that as a girl she had woken up to see a lady standing in the room wearing a red shawl. She put her head under the covers; when she plucked up courage to look out again, the lady had disappeared. Years later Mrs Knight, a neighbour said that old Mrs Cobby in the cottage had always worn a red shawl.

Then there were the walks on the Downs, up the hill where the lime kilns were still in use, you could see the smoke rising from them. They're all filled up now. There were cowslips, primroses, wild strawberries and blackberries. And the Canadians during the war, based in Lavington Park. I was still too young to go to their film shows but my brother always went and would come home with chocolate and, for me, a Lyons Individual Pie. Once I remember rushing out of the cottage into the road as I heard the bagpipes. There they were in their kilts marching up towards the hill. They may well have been on their way to D. Day. Traffic was so rare in those days, the distant rumble of a steam engine was enough for everyone to rush out into the street.

Iris Sadler was talking to the Editor.

## Feathers at the moon.

### Petworth Fair in the 1930s

Petworth fair never seemed the same when it was revived after the war: it had, of course, been suspended during the war; Arch Knight as clerk on the market laying a symbolic plank in the Market Square to preserve the "rights". I was not back in Petworth until 1948 and felt the fair lacked something. That something was the cast-iron wheeled carts carrying what would transmute into roundabouts large and small, sideshows, stalls and coconut shies. Petrol and diesel replaced steam: twice the speed and half the romance. Did someone say an old Foden steam wagon had come that first year? If it did, the three traction engines, Little Giant, Queen of the South and the Wanderer, did not.

Before steam, the small roundabouts had been driven by man-power but steam had enabled the use of much larger equipment. It could also, of course, turn night into day. The Wanderer, as I remember, also had an electric generator, supplying light as well as the current for the dodgems and, later, even the undulating motor-bike ride. In contrast, the coconut shies set up in front of Motts the butcher at the south end of the Square still had naphtha flares. Did the flickering light make the coconuts that much more difficult to hit? It didn't matter. It was widely believed that a good few were glued into the cup stands. I remember one taking a direct hit and the wooden ball re-bouncing back past the thrower, the coconut remaining unmoved. The crowd berated the stallholder – was it still Andrew Smith? – but, to be fair, there were five balls a penny and we certainly came away with coconuts. The steam organ would give a sense of euphoria; as it played you would scream and shout, or simply ignore everyone and everything, lost in a world of one's own.

The exhibition-style entertainment was always set up on the west side of the Town Hall. See the fat lady or the man walking on red hot coals and broken bottles. Or there might be a fire-eater or sword-swallower. And do I remember animals in cages? And bottled beer for sale?

In front of the Westminster Bank would be the smaller dart throwing stalls, hoopla, flip, roll or slide a penny – for the last trying to land on the square with the highest prize. An Aunt Sally? Probably, certainly there would be a few novelty items for sale. I once bought a packet of "Bachelor's Buttons", the stallholder persuading me to take some home for Mum – "they were so quick and easy to fit." Mum said she preferred the old-fashioned way.

The Wanderer and Queen of the South were parked in front of the Town Hall entrance. The former flared up all the time; its painted flywheel and shining piston in constant motion. The hiss and smell of the steam, added to the noise and smell

from the engine turning the large roundabout merged with the wheezing steam organ with its clashing cymbals.

A little further on, toward Lombard Street was a darts stall with those cheap wooden shafted darts, weighted with a bare minimum of lead and flighted with well-worn feathers. The stall-holder took full advantage of the sloping ground; the customers having to throw upward to prevent the dart dropping too quickly. All the high values, of course, were at the very top. It was rather like throwing feathers at the moon. Add to this a wet and windy night and the chance of winning was slight, especially for a child.

Close by were the brandy snaps. They could, I think, be bought flat or rolled to take a little cream. No cooling system, or at most a bucket of ice water. In any case the fair people in those days seemed a shade averse to water in any form. Next the hand-turned children's roundabout, always a speciality of the Hammond family, finally on this side and directly in front of Major Syer the tailor and hard against the entrance to Lombard Street was the Rifle Range. At this time .22 powder cartridges, replaced later by air pistols – the latter even more inaccurate than the former. Were we old enough to fire them? The stallholder clearly thought we were.

Bearing right to the east side of the Square and outside Eagers the outfitters were a hoopla and roll-a-coin, while in front of Austens the ironmongers was the "Haunted House" where one sat inside on a bench, holding on to a wooden bar while the entire structure was rotated to a chorus of ghastly screams and groans.

The centre of the Square was reserved for the larger roundabouts, dodgems, switchback rides, and those infuriating electric crane machines that are set to lose power at the last minute when the prize is in sight. Filling in wherever they could were tiny stalls with lemonade, toffee apples, perhaps roast chestnuts. I particularly remember the toffee apples, tasty and, above all, cheap leaving sticky patches on clothes, often only discovered the next day.

From notes by the late Jim Taylor at Thompsons Hospital.

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## The Spirit of the Hungry Guest

I have been a member of the Society for several years, enjoy the Magazine and, like my mother, am a great fan of the Book Sale, so I am pleased to have the chance to talk about The Hungry Guest project and to offer my own perspective. Yes of course I am aware that there is a perception of The Hungry Guest as

somehow "elitist", and would like the opportunity to counter the charge and provide some background from the point of view of myself, my partner and our staff.

My partner, Khalid, is from Dubai, but he is an Anglophile with deep roots in England. He was four when he was sent here to school, and would spend many summer holidays at West Wittering. I would imagine he found the sea a touch chilly! It would be the beginning of a lifelong attachment to Sussex. Harrow and Pembroke College, Oxford would follow, and Khalid's father spent many years in the UK as his country's ambassador. The family have a passion for antiques, something I share with them. Given Petworth's early 20th Century reputation as the "Antique Centre of the South", it was natural that he and I should visit the town on a regular basis.

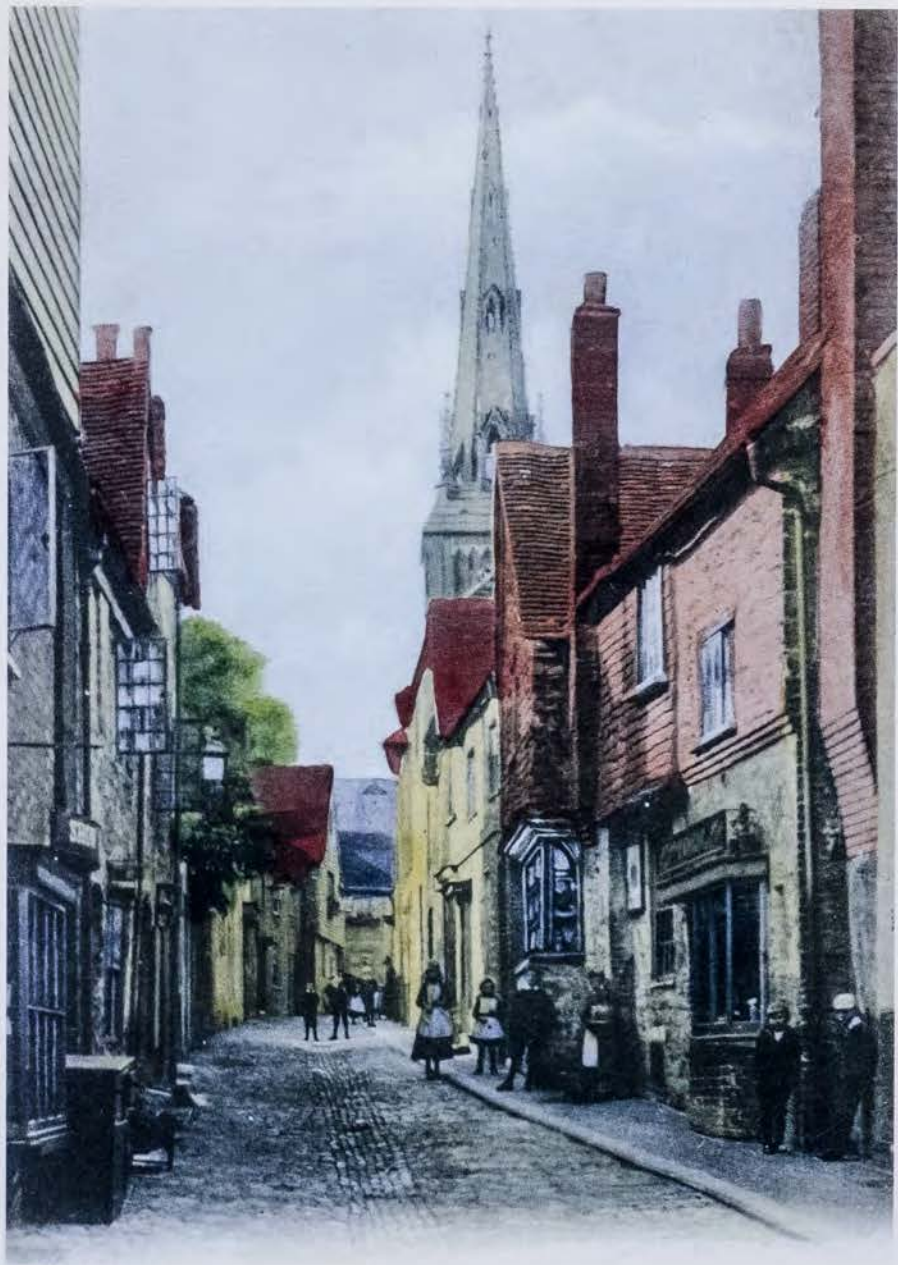
In 2004/2005 I was planning to return to the UK to live after a decade working in Dubai, and on one antiques-hunting outing to Petworth, one of the dealers mentioned that the house we had driven past and admired on East Street was on the market. I arranged with the agent to visit, and Mr and Mrs Stillwell accepted our offer. Attractive as it was, the house needed attention; the Stillwells had partitioned the house and were only living in part of it, and we faced a major threat that the Georgian façade had moved a foot away from the Tudor timber-framing and risked collapse. A two year dialogue with English Heritage ensued, in our efforts to restore the house, but other interested parties such as the Georgian Group, Victorian Society and sundry others also became involved. Every weekend for five years we came to Petworth to monitor progress on the house, and we developed a strong kinship with the town and some of its residents.

Claire Wilson had been running Red Lion Antiques on the corner of New Street and Middle Street. Formerly the Red Lion pub, it had been a classic Petworth social centre, particularly in pre-television days. For generations, the Red Lion had been synonymous with the Purser and latterly the Dean families. Was there an opportunity here to translate our feelings for the town into practical terms? How about a really good restaurant? So "The Leconfield" was born in 2010. The new venture might provide a modicum of employment opportunities in a town where prospects for younger people, as in so many small towns, were limited. It might also draw visitors to Petworth.

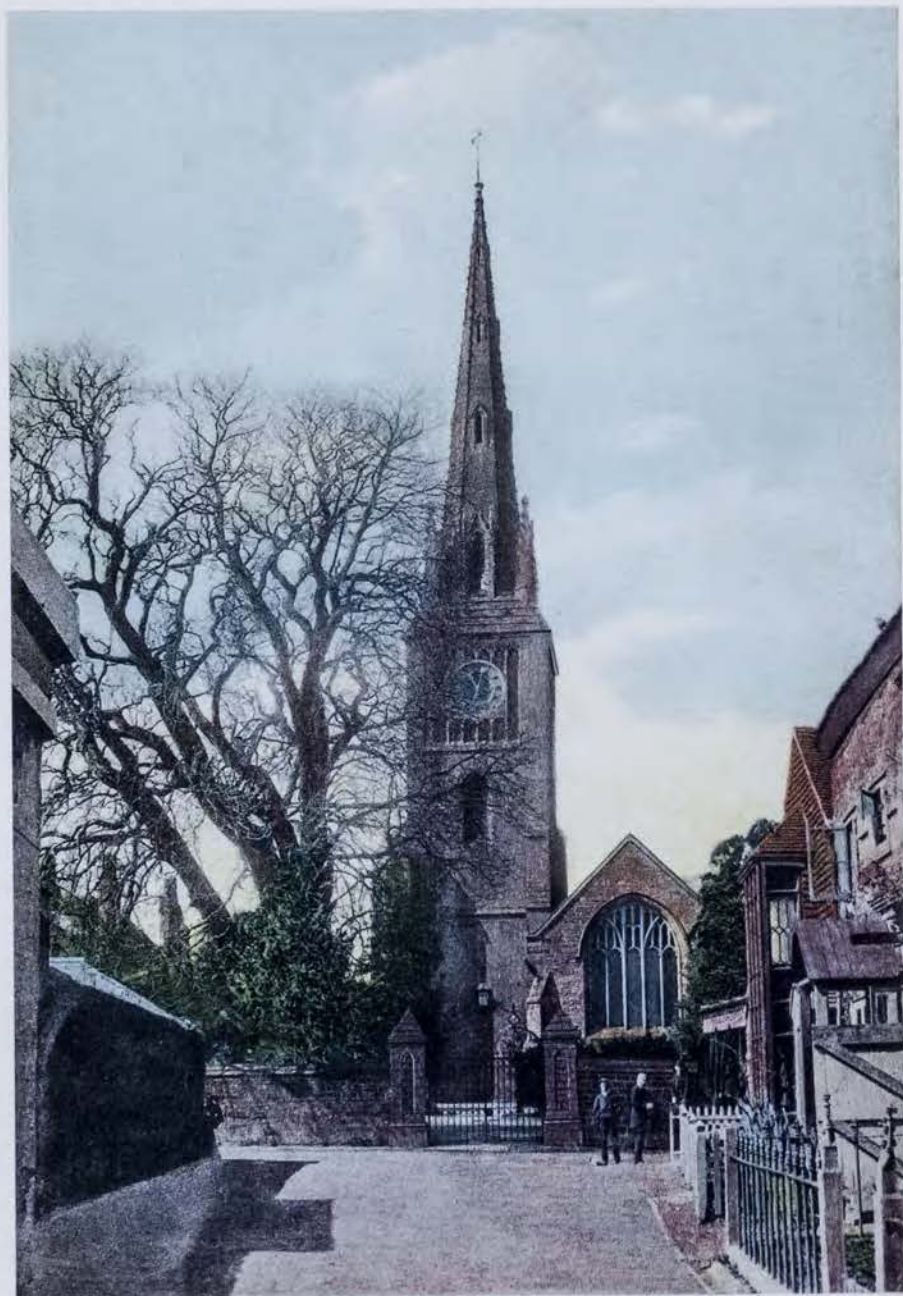
From this it was a natural step to consider the future of the former Petworth Provisions, another classic piece of Petworth's past rapidly receding into memory. For generations Hazelmans, the bakers and grocers, it had transmuted into a second hand bookshop (not an easy option in the internet age), while the incumbent was looking to move on. By the time we bought the place, the empty units known as Hovis House has been on the market for almost three years. As



Echoes of a long past. Norman Wisdom with the Dean family at the Red Lion 1960s.  
See "Spirit of the Hungry Guest".  
Photograph by G. G. Garland.



"The very air is heavy with memories ..."  
A hand-coloured Walter Kevis postcard franked January 10th 1905.  
Kevis left Petworth in 1908.



Petworth Church.  
Another Walter Kevis postcard franked February 28th 1905.



Tom Dommett on Lancelot Brown's home ground – Society Dinner.  
Photograph by Ian Godsmark as are the three following.



Jon Edgar's angle on Lancelot Brown – Society Dinner.



Time for the Quiz!



A general view.



Pearl Godsmark took this photograph from Martlet Road on November 11th. It shows the trees in Washington Copse planted by David Sneller and Society members in 1980 and 1991 in association with the Leconfield Estate. PSM 18 December 1979, PSM 20 June 1980 and PSM 64 June 1991.





At Wiggonholt church in September.  
Photograph by Linda Wort.

with Daintrey House and The Red Lion, Hovis House needed substantial capital investment.

Were we simply taking over? For some it obviously appeared to be the case. Would it be better for Petworth to have let matters take their course? Who can say? We did what we thought best, at a time of deep recession, both for the town and ourselves. Precedents exist; it would appear that a former occupant of Daintrey House, James Goble, was also a merchant and ran a public house in Petworth, so we felt we were perhaps continuing a tradition.

Altruism has its limits. In a changed world, it was obviously impossible to turn back the clock to a time when the town boasted several bakeries, butchers and grocers. In the 21st century, the food and grocery industry is cut-throat, and a small company like The Hungry Guest cannot compete with the multiples like Sainsbury's and Tesco. There was no room in Petworth for the mandatory car park or hanger-like sales area required by the discounter grocers, like Aldi and Lidl, and we cannot survive on profit margins of 2-3% as Sainsbury's claim. Did Petworth need a struggling mini-market?

As with The Leconfield, we wanted to bring people into the town, and encourage them to spend. We wanted to surprise the existing residents and we needed something that would mark out the new venture as individual. "The Hungry Guest" would be a local artisan food shop, which would give a pleasurable sense of discovery on entry and be a reason for returning to Petworth. The very concept of "artisan" equates with labour-intensive and that in turn involves a high production cost. The corollary, of course, is employment, but more than that, "artisan" can also mean local, with all the attendant indirect benefits. It may not cut production costs, but will inject money into the local economy. Our "Petworth Loaf" is made from local flour, our meat and greengrocery is sourced locally, and our milk is from Goodwood and so on. We have a dedicated and imaginative team, working in a purpose built unit on the Goodwood Estate, and we employ 130 people, including the café team at West Malling in Kent.

Owing to the difficulties of finding affordable accommodation, we provide a number of one bedroom flats for staff as needed, but many travel in from Petworth and the outlying villages, Tillington, Duncton, Northchapel and Lodsworth. With no late bus service, we try to arrange car-sharing or taxis. Senior catering staff, despite local advertising, tend to come from further away.

I think we need to consider the general pattern of food shopping in Petworth. It is a (possibly unpalatable) fact that internet shopping is currently running at 16%, and will grow, whilst the prospective entry of Amazon into an already competitive grocery market, will be significant in the long-term. The Co-Operative, is and will

probably remain, a convenience store, whatever the outcome of events at Swan House. Certainly Petworth would benefit from more extensive provision for everyday food shopping; who knows if it will come? The small retail outlets that defined the town between the wars and for a long time after, will struggle in the internet age, unless they can offer something different. Shop rents and commercial rates can be prohibitive, and even the smaller shops will be the prerogative of those who can charge sufficiently to cover costs. I have mentioned the growth of on-line shopping; it may be that we begin to think of central collection points and even of instruction in on-line ordering. The great age of supermarket expansion is probably past. Supermarkets (as opposed to convenience stores) look at a minimum catchment of 10,000 people and limited competition. Pulborough is too near for comfort. Petworth's population of some 4000 and its uneasy demographic pattern of relative affluence and subsistence economy is not something to appeal to supermarket pragmatism. The revived farmer's market can help fill the gap in food shopping at a more affordable level, and if the demand exists, we might be able to hold it more regularly.

What is the relation of an artisan shop to a subsistence economy? How does the artisan concept fit into the wider context? I would hope that the answer lies in the intangible but general benefit The Hungry Guest brings to the whole town in the way of visitors, local suppliers and employment, not forgetting a positive outlook. Little at The Hungry Guest is wasted, surplus food goes to charities, including Stonepillow (a homeless charity) and we contribute to the Chestnut Tree Hospice and many other local and community causes. If the benefit is indirect, sometimes not noticed, it is still there.

Nicola Jones was talking to the Editor.

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## A Toronto Scot at Gibraltar 1940-42

Two tunnelling companies of the Royal Canadian Engineers were sent to Gibraltar (a tiny British colony – 6.8 square km, located at the bottom of Spain), in late 1940 and stayed until early 1942. Why Gibraltar? Ceded to Great Britain in 1713 by treaty, Gibraltar was to become an important British presence and base for the Royal Navy as control of Gibraltar meant control of the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, which is only 13 km wide at this point.

In 1940 Royal Engineers had been given the job of lengthening the colony's runway. The runway extension was needed to land the heavy bombers that were

to be used in the Allied invasion of North Africa. At their disposal was a magnificent monolithic limestone rock, 426 metres in height referred to as the Rock of Gibraltar. Inside this massive rock, tunnels had been constructed over the centuries as part of the defensive works to protect Gibraltar's inhabitants.

More tunnels had been built by Royal Engineers prior to the war but now they were faced with a new challenge. The idea was to break-off vertical sections of the Rock while still preserving its integrity and structure. The Royal Engineers did not have the expertise to do so and it wasn't long before the Royal Canadian Engineer Tunnelling Companies were sent to Gibraltar. Most of these men prior to the war had been hard rock miners from Sudbury, and had the expertise that was needed. They began diamond drilling and blasting "scree" from the massive face of the Rock. That "scree" was then used as landfill in the Bay of Algeciras on which the extended runway was built.

In addition, the Canadian Engineers removed over 140,000 tons of solid rock in excavating the bomb proof hospital and a direct access tunnel through the Rock. At least one of the 200 RCEs was a Tor Scot – B76076 Corporal Edward Baker. He was one of the hard rock miners that Colonel Christie recruited in 1939 when he travelled to Sudbury. Baker's real expertise was in mining and thus he transferred to the RCE once in England. There may have been more than one Tor Scot at Gibraltar, of that more research needs to be done.

For their service and excellent work at Gibraltar, the Canadians were presented with a key shaped medallion in sterling silver of a hard rock miner and the "Rock" pictured, as Gibraltar's location was the key access point to the Mediterranean Sea. About 200 of these keys were awarded with the recipient's name and service number on the reverse.

Gibraltar, today, given its small area, has the only airport in the world, that I am aware of, where a roadway crosses a runway. Most travelling to Gibraltar would have no appreciation of that today – thanks to the Tunnelling Companies of the Royal Canadian Engineers.

How did the museum get this medallion? And in the years since, do the Canadians get proper recognition for their work at Gibraltar? According to the British Army's Soldier magazine article a few years back, No! Another story for another day.

Courtesy of Tim Stewart.

From the most recent issue of Toronto Scottish Regimental Association Summer Bulletin with acknowledgement. The Society and the Regimental Association keep in touch with each other. I have not reproduced the two illustrations, as the quality is indifferent. [Ed.]

## Edward James

A visit to Xilitla for the romantically minded is to enter the world of Coleridge's Xanadu. There you will find a visionary fantasy on a hill side in the Mexican rainforest where paths, lit by sunlight filtered through tall trees, lead you among strange bamboo structures covered in lichen and hanging epiphytic plants. As you climb the narrow path, walkways with sheer drops, totem poles and giant concrete hands loom ahead and an eye shaped bath appears round a corner. Cries of wild parrots fill the air. Exotic butterflies and humming birds hover in the humid atmosphere.

The structures, some over 100 feet high, are made of faded coloured concrete. They look abandoned and have unsettling names: 'The House with Three Storeys which could be Five', 'The House with a Roof like a Whale'. At 'The Staircase to Heaven' vertiginous spiral steps climb up and end nowhere. Yet there's the sense that the structures and the surrounding jungle exist in a strange symbiotic harmony.

The path reaches a glade where village children bathe in a rock pool under a waterfall. Its creator called this place Las Pozas. How did this exotic phantasmagoria come to be made by a man who grew up in the calm downland of a West Sussex estate?

Edward James, my neighbour and old friend, was one of the most eccentric people imaginable. A sensitive and childlike imagination attached to a huge, inherited fortune meant that he could live a life that barely touched on the world as most of us know it. His efforts to escape from this world led to the creation of a truly extraordinary work of art.

Edward, born in 1907, grew up at West Dean, a large Edwardian country house in Sussex with an estate of 8,000 acres. His father William James, an American millionaire with a fortune from U.S. railway and timber interests, bought West Dean in 1891. The house, which dates from the Elizabethan period, sits in a landscaped park in the valley of the river Lavant. In the early 18th century it belonged to the Peachey family who, in 1790, employed the architect James Wyatt, to gothicize the flint facade with pointed windows and mock battlements. William James enlarged the house to the size that it is today.

Edward's mother, the Scottish socialite Evie James, was a member of the Marlborough House Set, a raffish group of friends close to the Prince of Wales known for their love of parties, racing and gambling. There were rumours that Mrs James may have been the King's daughter. Her family lived close to Balmoral where her mother was known to have been one of the amorous prince's close friends. On the day Edward was born the report in The Court Circular stated that

'the King had left the palace that afternoon for West Dean Park, Chichester to honour Mr and Mrs James with a visit'.

There are framed, sepia photographs at West Dean that show the King, a regular guest in the 1900s for pheasant shoots, sitting beside Mrs James in the centre of a group of house guests. These houseparties reflected the louche behaviour and moral attitude of the King, inspiring unpublished verses written at the time by Hilaire Belloc, a Sussex neighbour.

'The party will be large and rather free  
And people will be given lots of rope  
The Duke of Dorset, MFH, KG  
Will bring a divorcee in heliotrope.  
A sturdy matron will be sent to cope  
With Lord ... who isn't quite the thing  
And give his wife the leisure to elope  
And Mrs James will entertain the King'.

Edward's childhood was unhappy. An awkward, sensitive boy, he was often uncomfortable in his parent's brittle, philistine world. The beautiful Evie neglected her five children, once calling upstairs to the nursery on her way to church to ask nannie to bring down the child from among her four daughters and son that best matched her dress.

Edward's money set him apart from his contemporaries and may have contributed to his sense of loneliness and insecurity. An aspiring writer and poet, he began his life of patronage at Oxford by paying for the publication of John Betjeman's first book of poetry.

He became a passionate early supporter of Surrealism, a movement born from the theories of Sigmund Freud and the political uncertainty between the wars, finding that its interest in the subconscious and release of the imagination suited his temperament. In 1938 he became a patron of Salvador Dali who, unknown and short of money, gave a year's work to Edward in exchange for a living wage. Together they created two of the 20th century's most famous Surrealist works, the Mae West Lips Sofa and the Lobster Telephone, both of which can still be seen at West Dean. Dali described Edward as 'crazier than all the Surrealists, they pretend but he is the real thing'.

In 1931 Edward fell in love with and married the Austrian ballet dancer Tilly Losch. He founded a ballet company in her name, with the Russian choreographer Balanchine as artistic director. Edward's early patronage of George Balanchine set the choreographer on his brilliant career as the creator of modern ballet and the

co-founder of the New York City Ballet in 1934. Edward's marriage lasted two years. It ended in acrimony and scandal when he accused Tilly of adultery and she counter-accused him of homosexuality.

Tilly Losch is immortalised at West Dean on the spiral staircase which leads to the bedrooms. Here Edward, as a token of love, had the treads of the carpet woven with the pattern of her wet feet left after a bath, later replacing these with the paw prints of his more faithful Irish wolf hound. The uproar over the divorce caused Edward to leave England for the United States.

By 1935 Edward found West Dean too expensive to run and the house was let. He moved into Monkton House, a shooting lodge in a wood on the West Dean estate, where he and his siblings had stayed with their nannie when the main house was filled with guests. He converted Monkton, designed by Lutyens, into his first surrealist dwelling. Syrie Maugham, the fashionable decorator, oversaw the interior design, but the surrealist touches and extravagant jokes (the upstairs windows are underhung with white plaster mouldings in the shape of drying towels) belong to Edward.

His artist friends gave advice. Dali helped to mix the purple colour for the outside walls and together they made the Mae West Lips sofa for one of the rooms. Tchelitchew, the Russian set designer, suggested the dark blue and yellow scheme for one of the rooms when Edward appeared one morning in a dark blue suit with a cowslip in his buttonhole. One room has padded and buttoned walls, another contains a four poster bed modelled on Napoleon's hearse. A chair has no back to it but a pair of outstretched arms; a glass floor lamp is designed by Giacometti and another is made from a stuffed boa- constrictor shot by Edward's uncle Frank, the Victorian explorer.

The sunny climate and easy life of California in the late 1930s offered a refuge from the complications of life in England. Edward was attracted by the writers and artists of the Hollywood film colony, particularly Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard whose interest in mysticism was based on the teachings of the Hindu prophet Krishnamurti. He rented a house in Beverley Hills and then at Laguna Beach, an artist's quarter where his sister Sylvia went to live later. During the war Edward's money in England was frozen under emergency exchange regulations. The only income to reach him was the rent that Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary, paid for Binderton House, on the West Dean estate.

After the war Edward discovered Mexico. It was in the remote town of Cuernavaca, where he stopped at the post office, that he met the man who would change his life: Plutarco Gastelum, a postal worker became his lifelong companion and guide. Together they searched for a place where Edward, a lover of orchids, could grow these exotic plants. Gastelum led him to Xilitla, a mountain village

in the Huasteca region deep in the Sierra Madre jungle, where they decided to settle.

Edward liked the remoteness of the village (ten hour's drive from Mexico City) and was seduced by the beauty of the natural waterfalls, native trees, the swarms of butterflies and the indigenous orchids in the forest. He built a house in the village where Plutarco later married Marina, a local woman and raised a family of four children. The isolation appealed to him. He particularly liked the fact that each morning Xilitla was cut off from the outside world as the telephones were short circuited by the dew which clings to the webs the spiders had spun between the cables in the night. In the afternoons the rain caused the same thing to happen.

Edward bought the nearby hillside where he constructed cages for his favourite pets, which included macaws, ocelots, armadillos and a boa constrictor and grew many species of orchid. These plants flourished until a freak frost in the winter of 1962 killed most of his collection. Snow was so rare in this region that the local people lacked the language to describe what had happened, later explaining that 'white ashes fell and burned everything'.

It was then that Edward decided to create something more permanent and dedicated the next twenty years to building the Surrealist garden of his imagination. He built over 30 fanciful structures, some over 100 feet high. The designs, often taken from the forms of his lost orchids and the vegetation of the surrounding jungle are mixed with architectural elements of Surrealism, such as those used by Gaudi in Barcelona. Hundreds of local artisans from the village were overseen by Gastelum who proved capable of interpreting Don Eduardo's giddy visions, often scribbled on a scrap of paper.

The Huastecans, like the indigenous people who had built churches for the Spaniards, worked their own vision into the structures, introducing local motifs based on their own culture and experience. Andre Breton once described Mexico as 'the most surrealist country in the world'. It's often said that the Surrealists found their promised land there.

Las Pozas found its natural home in Mexico. I have visited the site three times and believe that it could not have been built anywhere else. Once when Edward tried to persuade his local Sussex workforce to make a simple pond out of coloured concrete, the gardener told him that it wouldn't work.

James once said that he wanted Las Pozas to be discovered as the ruins of an ancient civilisation. He may get his wish as thirty years after his death the site is losing its battle against the encroaching jungle. Edward would probably have delighted in the paradox that his sculptures feed the jungle that is destroying them. Signs of decay are everywhere. Moss climbs the concrete to meet aerial plant roots spiralling down from the trees above while the jungle undergrowth is



Edward James

undermining the fragile foundations.

Because of the force of the vegetation and the natural world that threatens to engulf it, Xilitla is in a constant state of transformation, a three dimensional wonder that is a true monument to Surrealism.

On his death, Edward bequeathed his Mexican legacy to the Gastelum family. In 2002 the Xilitla Foundation was set up to preserve and restore the site and Las Pozas is now protected by the government. The Foundation foresees a future in which Las Pozas will become 'a global monument to Surrealism'.

In 1964 Edward gave West Dean house and estate to a charitable trust that became The Edward James Foundation. The trust was set up in response to Edward's vision 'To establish an educational foundation where creative talents can be discovered and developed and where culture can be spread through the teaching of art and crafts and the preservation of skills that might otherwise be forgotten'

West Dean today is an important and internationally recognised centre for the teaching of conservation and the creative arts. It has one of the best preserved historic Edwardian walled gardens in England.

Caroline Egremont

## Witch Legends of North Western Sussex: Witches and Horses

"The belief in witchcraft is by no means dead yet, and in many Sussex villages I have been told that the witch's malevolence is directed mainly against farm-horses." So wrote Dr. P. Habberton Lulham in an article about superstitions, in *Sussex County Magazine* in 1939 – less than eighty years ago.

In Sussex, as in the rest of the country, the most common type of witch legends are those that tell of witch-hares, and the second most common concern witches who immobilized wagons-and-teams. As I've already written comprehensively of the various local witches who were shape-shifters, in the last issue, this current article is about those who bewitched horses and wagons; but first, as an introduction to the subject, here is an overview of the connections between horses and the supernatural.

The association between horses and magic and the supernatural goes back to ancient times. The horse was sacred to the Celts, and their goddess Epona sometimes took the form of a little mare. The horse was also a totem animal of the Jutes/Goths who came to settle in Kent and parts of Hampshire. The Slavs who reached these shores worshipped an ancestral horse-god called Volos, and the Welsh had a similar deity called Waelsi or Waels. The witch Ceridwen of Welsh myth could change herself into various animals, but she mainly took the form of a mare. Horses were also ritually sacrificed when great chiefs or warrior champions died, to carry their spirits on to the next life, and in this way horses became associated with the Underworld and with the transition from life to death. Thus horses were also believed to be able to see ghosts and evil spirits, and to be clairvoyant, and so they were also used in rituals of divination.

Because the horse was sacred to the old religions, it was later demonised by the Church and became associated with witches, and horses were sometimes even killed because they were thought to be witches who had transformed themselves into horse-shape. On the other-hand though, as horses were believed to be able to see ghosts and other things invisible to people, they were also considered to be susceptible to the influence of witches. It was through this belief that horse-brasses were attached to the horse's harness as protection, and why horseshoes are thought to be lucky talismans. In a little booklet titled *Folklore and Legend of the Surrey Hills and of the Sussex Downs and Forests* (1928) its author notes that the horseshoe is considered lucky because: "it is made of iron, which is regarded as the most important of metals and, because a horse is liable to the power of the 'Evil Eye', anything belonging to a horse is an antidote against that power."

In a few areas, mostly in the north of Britain, witches were believed to transform people into horses and ride them, and this was known as 'hag-riding'. Some people (including myself) occasionally wake in the middle of the night, temporarily unable to move, and this frightening experience was formerly attributed to hag-riding. But the term 'hag-riding' also applied to another activity of witches. They were notorious for 'borrowing' farm-horses and riding them through the night. When horses were found to be all sweaty in the morning, and their manes and tails in knots, it was believed that they had been hag-ridden by witches during the night. Presumably this belief was quite widespread, but in West Sussex it has only been recorded of witches who lived at Albourne, Wisborough Green, Barlavington, Henley, and near Balls Cross – and at two places in the eastern half of the county.

In her article for the Folk-Lore journal in 1878, *Some West Sussex Superstitions Lingering in 1868*, Miss Charlotte Latham of Fittleworth wrote: "Not many years ago a farmer residing on the western border of Sussex and Surrey seriously declared that the witches were in the habit of riding his horses at night, as they were found by him in the morning covered with dirt and perspiration, and in a state of great exhaustion."

An old man who had been a stable-boy at a farm at Henley said that "witches were in the habit of riding horses round the stable at night" and he had known this because in the morning, he had found the horses "all of a sweat". However, these stables were also used by smugglers to hide their contra-band, so it may well be that it was they who had used the horses so.

The witch at Barlavington, Sue Redding, would always ask first if she could borrow a horse for the night. Although she was hated by the farmers and their carters, she was also feared by them and so she was often allowed to borrow their horses:

Sometimes, if the master seemed to hesitate or demur, the carter would say "Lord, sir, let Sue have the hoss," or, in an undertone, "It will be all the wus for us if you don't, for every one of the poor brutes will be hag-rid else in the night, and won't be able to do half a day's work tomorrow. Didn't you hear how Farmer Boxall's team was hag-rid a fortnight ago, when he wouldn't let she have his black mare to go to Eastdean, as she said?"

Curiously, any horses she was allowed to use were returned before daylight, ready for work, seemingly renovated and refreshed rather than tired, after their nocturnal travels. Generally though, horses which were hag-rid in the night were quite tired the next day. A carter at a farm near Balls Cross said: "If the horses

were persistently tired in the morning this would suggest that a witch was using them during the night. The remedy was to nail up an old scythe in the barn."

Some witches were well known for their ability to immobilize horses or to stop them from going beyond certain places. A witch in Milland was notorious for stopping horses from passing her cottage – and I am reliably informed that even now, all these years later, horses still shy a little when they come to the place where her cottage used to be! Anecdotes of witches immobilizing horses have been recorded throughout the country, and there were also witches who could make horses suddenly go lame or behave crazily. The witch at Barlavington once spooked a horse so much that it threw off its rider. The Graffham witch immobilized a neighbour's pony in its field all day, and on another occasion, she so bewitched the horse of a certain farmer that it became "quite helpless".

"Why, it couldn't even die. They got a gun and shot it through the head, but even then it couldn't die. It did not die till they got her to let it die."

This incident was reported by George Aitchison in the Sussex '*Notes & Queries*' in 1933. In his book *Sussex* (1936) he recorded another tale about the Graffham witch. "They do, indeed, tell here circumstantial stories of witchcraft. An old friend of mine, who lived at Graffham, has told me in his most matter of fact tone how he surprised a hare worrying a horse he was tending, how he chased the hare down a lane, saw it leap through a hole in Mother ---'s hedge, and following into the house, found Mother --- in bed, gasping and sweating as one who had run for her life."

The witch of Graffham could also immobilize a cart while she was disguised as a hare, and on another occasion she once immobilized the Rector's pony and trap for a whole day near her cottage. Immobilizing wagons seems to have been a favourite past-time of witches and the like. At Harting, there was a wise-man who could "transfix a Waggoner, Waggon, and four horse" and there was a 'wizard' near Bedham, who not only immobilized a wagon but turned it over as well – as related by Rhoda Leigh, in her book *Past and Passing* (1932):

There were witches and their male equivalents in these parts up to comparatively recent times, according to Mr. Lelliot of the cottage in the next wood. Formerly he lived and worked near the brick-field in the valley, carting faggots for the brick kiln, aided by the two sons of a wizard. The road was level and free of ruts. Yet one day while the two sons took their load safely all the way, Lelliot's, for no apparent reason, turned over twice. The cart was sound, the horse strong, and no reason could be found for such a disaster. A chuckle was heard, and Lelliot, on looking round, saw the wizard disappear round a bush.

In some accounts of wagons-and-teams having spells cast over them, it seems as if it was actually the horses who were bewitched, rather than the wagon. An example of this sort of spell was reported along the Sussex-Surrey border, where the carters used to run their knives under the horses' hooves whenever a wagon mysteriously stopped. But in other such tales, it is clear that the wagon was the target of the witch's spell, because the carters used the counter-charm of cutting or whipping the wheels to break the spell. When the Graffham witch immobilized a cart once, the carter "struck the wheel with a piece of metal" in order to break her spell. On this note there is also an interesting anecdote about a witch who lived between Petworth and Kirdford:

On the way to Kirdford there was a cottage and whenever Grandad Duncton had the stone-cart, horse and wagon of course, the horses would stop dead by the cottage. Nothing he did could move them. He was told to take out his pocket-knife and cut a piece out of one of the wheel-spokes of his cart. The horses moved on and the next day the old woman had a cut finger.

Similarly, old carters at a farm near Balls Cross once told how there were: "particular stretches of road where the horses would stop quite still and the wagon couldn't be moved. This would be the work of some witch: and it was always a woman who was responsible even if her identity could only be guessed at. The remedy was to get out a penknife and cut lightly into the spokes of a wheel. This would cut the witch's fingers and her hold on the cart."

In a few other counties too, there are tales of carters cutting or even whipping the wheels of immobilized wagons and how this counter-charm also hurt the witches who had cast the spells, but the very specific detail that it was the witch's fingers that were injured in such instances seems to have only been recorded in these tales of witches near Balls Cross and Kirdford, and of one at Plumpton in East Sussex. This subject of the strange Sussex tales about witches immobilizing wagons brings us round to another unusual one, also from the north western part of the county.

There is the story of the witch at Stedham who bewitched the horses pulling a wagon so that they could not move until she told the carter to flog the wheels with his whip.

Tales of witches telling people exactly how to break their own spells are, unsurprisingly, extremely rare, but curiously a very similar tale, also involving a carter and a bewitched wagon, was recorded at Horseheath in Cambridgeshire.

All in all, there are at least sixteen places in Sussex that have local legends of

wagons being immobilized by witches and the like. It is quite possible that some of the tales record real incidents, because, as is well known, the roads of Sussex used to be very muddy – yet if this was the reason why those wagons became immobilized, then one would expect there to be a much wider spread of such tales, throughout the whole of the county. But out of all the ones I've collected so far, none come from villages in the Downs, nor in that eastern part of East Sussex which has no Downland at all, and nine of the places that do have such tales are here in West Sussex. And also, while it is unlikely that even the most wickedest witches could transform themselves into hares, or anything else, it is actually very plausible that witches were able to immobilize horses. Horses have a very keen sense of smell, and those healers of horses known as 'horse whisperers' who knew this could well have used certain plants and substances, such as agrimony or opium, to control them, and so it is quite likely that some of the county's witches also had this knowledge. Indeed, the earliest record of a horse whisperer concerns a Sussex man, John Young, who lived during the 17th century.

Although the notion that witches turned themselves into hares dates back to before the Norman Conquest in this country, the belief that they immobilized horses and wagons probably did not arise before the 16th century, and in fact it was more likely to have been conjured up in the 17th or 18th centuries, as horses were not used as heavy farm-working animals until the agricultural revolution. Prior to that, oxen were mainly used for pulling farm wagons and the heavy ploughs. Indeed, oxen were still the main working animals on many farms, including in Sussex, up until the mid-1920s at least, and so it is curious that there are no tales of witches immobilizing wagons drawn by oxen. There is not even a hint of the belief that witches could immobilize wagons, in the book *Pale Hecate's Team* by K. M. Briggs, which covers the beliefs about witches that Shakespeare and his contemporaries knew in the 16th and 17th centuries; nor are there any in *Witch Stories* by E. Lynn Linton, which, despite its tempting title is actually about various British witch trials.

However, maybe not all wagons that became immobilized were the targets of witchcraft, and on this note there is a curious account recorded in *Old Tales of Petworth* by John Osborn Greenfield. There was a certain place in Hungerd's Lane (later called Hunger Lane) just south of the town, where wagons-and-teams often stopped, the horses refusing to pass it. This continued until a time when Lord Egremont had the lane repaired, and some human skeletons found buried there were then removed. Perhaps the horses had stopped just because they could sense the hidden grave. An old farm labourer recalled an incident that had occurred there in his childhood, when his father was the head carter of Sokenholes Farm, to which the lane leads. The two of them had taken a wagon of corn to Chichester,

but did not get back until nearly midnight, due to a series of mysterious delays which hampered their return journey. Here he tells what happened to them that night in Hungerd's Lane.

I was laying, pretty tired, in the bed of the wagon upon the empty sacks when just at that place where so many teams have stopped afore, the hosses stood stock still all at once! Well, I jumped down and asked father, what was the matter? He worn't as frightened as I was, and it worn't the first time it had happened to him; but Lord! if you 'ad seen the poor hosses how they did shake and sweat, it fell from 'em just like rain water! It was near upon half an hour before father could get 'em to move, though he cut and lashed 'em pretty near to ribbons. It was just upon the very identical spot where the men's bones were dug up.

Curiously though, the fact that the horses were shivering and sweating when they stopped is something that is often mentioned in accounts of wagons which were immobilized by witches. The last of these articles about the witch lore of north western Sussex will be covering some of the other kinds of wicked spells of our local witches, and will also include more of the strange counter-charms that were performed to break their magic – including a truly grim one from Wisborough Green.

Shaun Cooper – to be concluded.

*Folklore and Legends of the Surrey Hills and of the Sussex Downs and Forest* by Edward Lovett. 1928  
Henley hag-riders: *Fernhurst* by Alice M. Tudor. 1934/1969  
Barlavington witch, and Hunger Lane: *Tales of Old Petworth* by John Osborn Greenfield. 1976  
Milland witch: from an email to me from Val Porter in 2014  
Graffham witch: *Sussex* by George Aitchison. 1936.  
Harting wagon-stopper: *The History of Harting* by Rev. H.D. Gordon.  
Kirdford wagon-stopper: Nellie Duncton, in PSM June 1997  
Albourne witch: *The Spirit of the Downs* by Arthur Beckett. 1909  
Balls Cross tales: by 'A' in PSM June 1984  
Early Sussex horse whisperer: *Penguin Guide to Superstitions of Britain & Ireland* by S. Roud. 2003  
Sussex-Surrey border charm: Mary M. Banks, in *Folk-Lore* 52. 1941  
Plumpton witch: Amy Sawyer, in *Sussex County Magazine* 1935  
(NB. The tale of the Plumpton witch has elsewhere been given as about one at Ditchling.)

NB. The book *British Witch Legends of Sussex* by Shaun Cooper should now be available from Country Books. It is essentially a comparative study of witch legends, with a very strong Sussex emphasis throughout. It also describes the reasons why the north western part of Sussex has so many witch legends. More details in the next issue of this magazine. Visit the Country Books website to order a copy, or phone them on: 01629 640670.

## Society Dinner Quiz Answers

1. No. Potatoes came from the New World.
2. In North Street. It was a nineteenth century beer house.
3. Mexican sunflower.
4. Golden Square.
5. He would continue to age.
6. The train from Petworth that connected with the London train at Pulborough.
7. Jonathan Creek.
8. John Osborn Greenfield. The Angel.
9. The fox.
10. Gwenda Morgan.
11. Carthaginian.
12. Cloakbag and Common Purse.
13. Edith Cavell (1915).
14. Petworth Cottage Museum.
15. Gray's Elegy.
16. Back Lane.
17. Either: Yes, with henna OR No, someone did it for her.
18. Saturday November 19th.
19. Music.
20. Colonel Alan Maude.
21. Job.
22. Soanes.
23. Vienna.
24. Osiers Farm.



## Old Petworth traders (21).

### James Weeks

James Weeks would occupy for many years the Saddlers Row premises which would later be Harpers and, in more recent times, Baskerville Antiques and the Coco Café. A saddler's for generations, the premises were in the possession of James Weeks in 1907, (Kelly's Directory) but held by Arthur Morley the New Street saddler in 1918. A keen supporter of the local football and cricket clubs. James Weeks seems to have been a skilled and practical man. A Walter Kevis image of the shop about 1890 featured as the cover of PSM 146 December 2011.

PETWORTH, 31 December 1908

Wm J. P. Field Esq.

**DR. TO J. WEEKS,**  
**Saddle & Harness Maker,**  
**CRICKET & LAWN TENNIS REQUISITES,**  
 DEALER IN TARPULINS & SACKS OF ALL DESCRIPTIONS.

ROPE, LINES & TWINES      Waterproof Cloths, Capes, & Aprons  
 of all descriptions made to order.      PITCH, TAR, & WHEEL GREASE.

ALL KINDS OF BASKETS MADE TO ORDER. - SACKS LENT ON HIRE.

REPAIRS PROMPTLY EXECUTED      FARM WORK BY      CONTRACT OR OTHERWISE.

AGENT FOR SEWING MACHINES.

July 13.	1 doz Tennis Balls	13	6
Aug 12	piecing + repair fladstone bag new strap to do	3	0
			9
		17	3

## Letters to the Editor

Mrs Sylvia Chandler writes:

"Laighton"  
 22 Birkenhill Place  
 New Elgin  
 IV30 6EX

Dear Peter

I found this photograph in my mother's jewellery box. She was Winifred Ann Field from Roundabouts Farm on Upperton Common. Has anyone any idea as to who it might be? It would look to come from 1914-1918. George and Felix, members of the Wadey family served and there may be a connection. I know it's unlikely but can anyone help?

[For conversation with the Wadey Family see Miles Costello in PSM 112 June 2003 and 114 December 2003. Ed.]



James Roffey chief executive of the British Evacuees Association writes:

Dear Peter,

I was especially interested in the No. 165, September 2016 issue of the Petworth Society magazine 'Gerald Corden talking to the Editor' in which he recalls his time as a boy living in Pulborough and at the age of five attending a small preparatory school in the old Swan Hotel, until the headmistress closed it down due to the threat of bombing.

I was an evacuee in Pulborough at that time, aged eight and billeted at Burchell's shop opposite the railway station. My brother John was billeted at 'Templemead', next to the corn exchange and another evacuee friend of ours lived in the station master's house. We always met on school days and walked along Lower Street, then up a steep passageway to the village school.

However as we passed the old Swan Hotel we used to look into the window of a classroom filled with very small boys and girls. To my admission we would stand at the window pulling faces at the children. I don't think it bothered them, but the teacher used to go berserk. We ran off in case she came after us. When the little school closed we thought it was our fault, but now I know that it wasn't.

I have fond memories of Corden's shop. In fact I still have a photograph of me and my late brother John that was taken there to be part of a Christmas card to be sent to our parents in London in 1940. We were not allowed to go home for Christmas that year.

Best Wishes

James Roffey

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## October sun

Our visitors are in before Ann and I have had a chance to settle or even hang the "Open" sign on the gate but at least the fire's alight. They're from Hertfordshire, know nothing of the background and aren't refugees from the great house. The fire's smoking as it sometimes does but our visitors seem to savour a smell that, once common, has now become unfamiliar – evocative you might almost say. The October sun glints off the marbles on the solitaire board. Another couple follow on the other's heels, Ann takes charge of them.

Twenty years and more on the museum casts its own spell. It's difficult to analyse. A little out of the town, a visit demands a certain conscious effort, and, in this context, "Museum" isn't a helpful word. Mrs Cummings' cottage is better or even the simple "346", the latter sparing Mrs Cummings a publicity she would certainly have eschewed. The fact that the "Museum" isn't quite what visitors are expecting always gives a certain lift.

The sun lights up the spirals of smoke, now rapidly disappearing: sometimes the fire smokes, more usually it doesn't – it may be something to do with the direction of the wind.

Twenty years and counting, the gipsy flowers planed on a single stem are a darker brown now. Brown sugar on the tea table in a small bowl. Inconsequentially I think of John Sirgood giving a young visitor bread and butter with brown sugar. "I'm sorry my little dear, I haven't anything else in the house." A hundred and fifty years ago now, give or take. The Loxwood Dependants had a stern faith but the sun shone in often enough.

My couple are upstairs now – a Roman Catholic lady's bedroom, then the look out over Petworth roofs from the eminence that is 346, a castle of a kind. The wife doesn't fancy the stairs so the commentary comes down to her as he stands on the bottom step. A quick salute to the "Petworth" alligator in the Goss cabinet. Soon we're in the garden, cleared now and October dry. Wild columbine in pale green leaf meditating its annual spring offensive. Rummaging on the parlour table, I find a box of Masters' matches, filled with pen knibs enjoying a quiet retirement. Yes, 1996 seems a long time ago.

P.

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## It's what you know – and WHO you know. That's Capability Brown's story

But first we had to get the show off the ground: brand-new, state of the art audio-visual system in the hall. Thirty years ago it would have been Bill or Ian at the projector and the speaker with a magazine or carousel of slides. Apart from the occasional blown lamp or jammed slide, the evening would flow along smoothly – "Next, please, Bill".

On this occasion, Kate Felus's even more 'state of the art' tablet was not compatible with the hall's, but only a quarter of an hour's 'fill-in' by Peter was needed to find the essential lead to make the connection and so, to the relief of

Peter, the audience and especially, Kate, who had seemed relaxed and forbearing throughout, it was 'all systems go'.

Kate had come hot-foot from speaking at Highclere Castle, to an audience, mainly of Americans, no doubt in search of Downton Abbey. To her question, "Who's heard of Capability Brown?" there was no response.

In this year, marking the tercentenary of Brown's birth, we had become familiar with much of his achievements in landscape gardening on estates whose combined area was equivalent to that of the average English county. Kate had followed up the connections between Brown and the owners of the properties he transformed. She told us of eight, ranging from the lowly or modest to the very grand. Brown got on well with them all.

At Stowe, where he began and soon became head gardener under the owner, Richard Grenville, he not only developed the gardens, but designed architectural features to complement them.

He went on to establish cordial relationships with all the owners he worked for and with: William Pitt, Gilbert White, at Selbourne, Coplestone Warre Bampfylde at Mount Edgcumbe in Cornwall, Sanders Miller, Jemima, Marchioness Grey at Wrest in Bedfordshire, Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle and David Garrick, the actor, at his home beside the Thames.

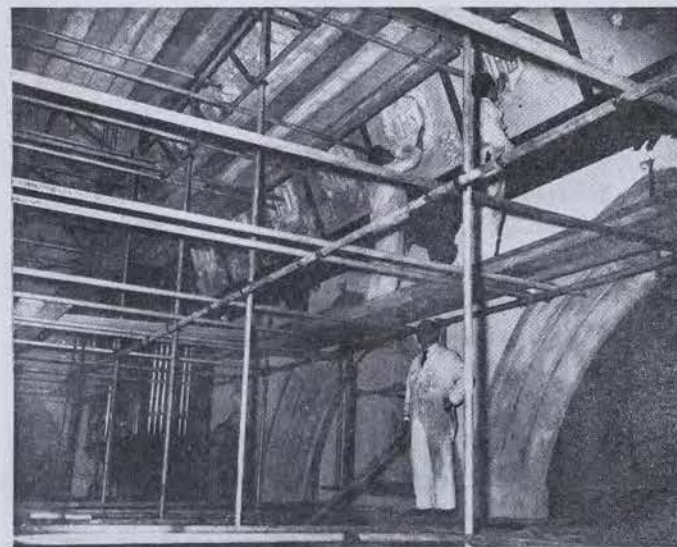
This was the Golden Age of Landscape Gardening and Landscapers. Brown was not alone, but certainly the most prolific and whose legacy has been the most enduring.

Owners would consult each other as well as the landscapers they engaged. Architecture and landscape went hand-in-hand, rarely the case today. Costs were often enormous and projects would take many years to complete, with Brown especially, making visit after visit across the country to check progress, all very time consuming, dependent upon the horse for transport and the appalling road conditions. Brown, considered a genius by many, but a vandal by some.

Kate's well-illustrated presentation was informative, fascinating and entertaining.

KCT

## PETWORTH CHURCH UNDERGOES A CLEAN-UP



This grainy image appeared in the *Midhurst and Petworth Times* in July 1956 as did the following:

The mammoth task of completely re-decorating the inside of Petworth Parish Church is well under way, and already a great improvement can be seen.

Scaffolding towers above the pews like a giant spider's web, and workmen are busy throughout the week cleaning, repairing and painting.

The biggest job is painting 144 ecclesiastical emblems in the ceiling and top part of the walls in blue, green, gold, white and red colours.

Each emblem takes about six hours to complete.

The rest of the ceiling and wall surfaces are being decorated in a white water paint, and the woodwork is being waxed.

It is expected that the work will be finished in August, when it is hoped that a large sum towards the £1,400 cost will have been raised.

Last year's church fair raised £750 towards the decoration fund, and tomorrow's Gift Day will also help pay for the work.

The Rector, the Rev. H. O. Jones, has another scheme to bring in more money.

He hopes that parishioners and visitors will give each 25s to meet the cost of painting each of the 144 emblems.

The picture shows three of the workmen working 40ft. above the ground, giving the church its first decorating for nearly 60 years. At the top is Mr. D. Ware (right) and Mr. R. Jones, and below them is the foreman, Mr. J. White.

## Hot off the Press

### Cuttings from the National Newspaper Archive

*Brighton Gazette* 6th April, 1854.

Petworth

**Fire.** On Friday evening last the Town Hall was placed in some danger by the daring act of George Coote, a fellow who had been bought in custody from Hastings on a charge of deserting his wife and family, and leaving them chargeable to the parish of Rackham. He had been placed in the lock-up, and the police officer had not left him long when a dense body of smoke was seen to issue from the under part of the hall; and a cry of "Fire" being raised, the constable went immediately to the rescue of the prisoner, who must, had the officer not been so near, soon burnt to death. We understand that the man had been very troublesome during his journey from Hastings. He jumped out of the cart, dragging the officer with him, and while in the public-house at Stopham, which they entered for refreshment, he attacked the relieving officer with a poker, and it was with the greatest difficulty he was prevented from doing mischief. The officers were obliged on starting from Stopham to tie him down to the seat of the cart.

The 'lock-up' at the Town Hall was a custody cell where the prisoners were held prior to appearing before a magistrate. On this occasion the offender received two months hard labour and would complete his sentence at the Petworth House of Correction. – Miles]

*Sussex Agricultural Express* 27th January, 1900.

Petworth

**Serious Accident.** On Tuesday, Gilbert Aylwin, second son of Mrs. Aylwin, [of] Gunter's Bridge Farm, was taking a waggon load of charcoal from Lurgashall to Petworth station. As he was trying to stop the horses, who were going rather fast, he fell, and the wheels of the waggon went over his back. He was taken home, and Dr. Beachcroft was quickly in attendance. It is feared that there are serious internal injuries. Much sympathy is felt for Mrs. Aylwin, who lost her husband a short time ago.

[Accidents of this nature were common and newspaper reports frequent. Gilbert Aylwin would survive his terrible injuries only to be killed in action in Flanders on 16th September, 1916 aged 32. His death is recorded on the Thiepval Memorial in France but regrettably not on the war memorial at Petworth –Miles.]

the 1990s, the number of people with a disability has increased in the United Kingdom (Department of Health 1999).

There are a number of reasons for this increase. One of the reasons is that the population is ageing. The number of people aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million in 1991 to 12.5 million in 1998 (Department of Health 1999). The number of people aged 65 and over with a disability has increased from 1.5 million in 1991 to 2.5 million in 1998 (Department of Health 1999). The number of people aged 65 and over with a disability has increased from 1.5 million in 1991 to 2.5 million in 1998 (Department of Health 1999).

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