



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Before long an appeal will be launched for funds to build a Museum and Meeting Place for the Society on land adjoining the Public Library which has been made available by the County Council.

Plans are already far advanced and a number of generous donations have been received or promised.

Particular attention is drawn to a special and unique event which will take place on July 1st, 1978, at 7 o'clock p.m. in the Herbert Shiner School Petworth. Dancers and Musicians from the Embassy of Indonesia London, will give a performance of Classical and Modern Dances, a singing group and a film in the presence of Their Excellences the Ambassador to Indonesia and Mrs. Saleh Basarah. Tickets price £2.00 and £1.50 are obtainable from "Davids", The Square or The Bookshop, Lombard Street.

This is a major event in connection with the Building Fund and it is sincerely hoped that as many members as possible will be present and assist the Society by bringing their friends as well.

To the Editor, Petworth Society Bulletin.

Petworth Cottage Hospital.  
8 June, 1978.

Sir, Since many of those concerned may not have seen the notice I sent to the local "Observer" a few weeks ago I should be grateful if you could find room for this note of sincere thanks for all the kind messages, flowers and visits from members and others since I came to this hospital, and I regret that I am unable to reply to them individually.

May I also express my gratitude to the hospital staff. Not everyone in Petworth, I think, realises how much we owe to them, especially to the many voluntary helpers who have enabled the Cottage Hospital to carry on after it was deprived, in spite of protests, of the

advantages of the National Health Service.

With all good wishes.

Yours

Alan H. Maude.

#### SHIMMINGS VALLEY BRIDGES

Three ancient bridges in the Shimmings Valley are in urgent need of repair.

Over the years coping stones, parts of the stone arches and piers have collapsed into the stream beneath. The piers, particularly, in some cases are in a very bad state of repair, and the open joints need re-pointing.

The Society has been requested to assist in the restoration of the bridges by endeavouring to organise parties of goodhearted men and women to paddle in the stream - not very deep - and retrieve as many of the fallen stones as possible.

All materials, planking, transport etc. will be provided by the Leconfield Estate Company and the stones in the stream, whether broken or not, will be used where possible in all repairs.

The Bridges involved are No.1 that nearest Barton Lane, No.2 which is approximately 200 yards south of the above and No.3 at Shimmings End.

To reduce the cost of this exercise it has been suggested one of the existing bridges might be demolished to provide useful material for repairs to the other two.

No financial burden will fall upon the Society but it is felt that it would be an excellent work of conservation in one of our most beautiful areas.

H.C.O.

#### THE RECOLLECTIONS OF MR. HARRY TREE PART I CORN IN THE PARK, SOME SEVERE WEATHER, PETWORTH TOWN BAND

Many older Petworth residents will recall the late Mr. Harry Tree and

I am told that his accordion playing is a particularly vivid memory. There survives among Mr. Garland's papers a short typescript setting out Harry Tree's recollections of life in Petworth during the last decades of the last century and some extracts from this will be given in this and following issues of the Bulletin. The typescript is probably from the late 1930's and comprises 5 sheets of quarto. Possibly it was written to be published as a newspaper article but there is no indication in the text that this ever happened. Certain omissions of dates as if to be checked and filled in later may indicate that the typescript has been set on one side without being published.

Harry Tree came from Exeter with his parents in 1870. His father came here to superintend the running of a water supply from the lake to the House for use in case of fire. Harry Tree started work on the estate and then worked for 20 years on the railway for the old London, Brighton and South Coast Company at Petworth Station. He then returned to work for Lord Leconfield as a lodge keeper. He could remember a period before the new lodges were built when corn was grown inside the Park wall by the side of the Tillington Road. In those days if one looked over the low wall opposite the entrance to Frog Farm it was possible to see the heads of corn waving inside the Park.

Mr. Tree remembered severe winters during the seventies and eighties, often 14 or 16 weeks of consecutive frost. "Plenty of skating on the pond in the Park", he recalls, "I can remember seeing three or four thousand people skating, dancing and sliding on the ice; and I can remember when bonfires were lighted on the ice, and when the Petworth Town Band played on it under the leadership of Alfred Wilmer. The Petworth Band in those days was very fine indeed. It was called the Volunteer Battalion Band, and there were 50 playing members. The standard of the band was greatly enhanced by the inclusion of the Wilmer brothers, Alfred, William and Ted; they were very fine musicians. The Petworth Band at that time of day was regarded as one of the best in South of England."

Mr. Tree recalls that during the frost of that time his father was ordered to cut a block of ice from the Park lake to find out the thickness and it was found to be 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick. In that winter the frost was so severe that when the wild duck came to drink from the lake where the ice had been broken for them their bills froze as they drank. The deer had to be fed with hay and ivy during this period.

P.A.J.

For another view of the late nineteenth century on the opposite side of the world see "By Cobb's Coach in the Nineties" in this issue.

#### CONSERVATION GROUP

A Sub-Committee has been formed, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Pottington, to look at planning applications on behalf of the Society.

An initial meeting was held in April at which Mrs. Webber, Mrs. Thorpe and Mr. Norman Stevens were present: Mrs. Haig being unable to attend on this occasion.

Matters discussed included the condition of derelict property in North Street; the possibility of resurfacing the entrance to the old Rectory, and various other aspects of conservation.

Mr. Stevens agreed to keep a watchful eye on footpaths in the Petworth area.

It cannot sufficiently be stressed that conservation is a matter for ALL Petworth residents.

Any member of the Society should consult with the Sub-Committee as quickly as possible if any concern is felt over any conservation matter.

#### LOCAL HISTORY AND RECORDS

The Group's spring programme reaches a conclusion with the very large exhibition of photographs to be held in the committee rooms of the Leconfield Hall on Saturday and Sunday, June 17th and 18th. The exhibition will be in conjunction with Petworth Horticultural Society's Summer Show in the Upper Hall. A large exhibition of this kind involves a good deal of preliminary preparation and we shall be looking to see if there is sufficient public interest to lead up to make this an annual event. The opening times are 2-6 o'clock on both afternoons.

Since I last wrote, Mr. Vincent's slides received an enthusiastic response in darkest February and Miss Maxse's March lecture "Early memories of Petworth" lavishly illustrated with tape-recordings was highly successful. Another slide show at the Annual General

Meeting followed and my thanks are again due to Mr. Vincent for his help. On May 10th a pioneering attempt was made to present the results of the Group's three years' of work on documents relating to Petworth's past.

Despite some fearful weather many made the trip to Petworth with the Sussex Archaeological Society under the guidance of Mr. F.G. Aldsworth the County Archaeologist. Mrs. Hallam and myself took separate parties round the town. After this Mr. Aldsworth pointed out the ridges on the Gog fields, the ancient Ideshurst or Hideshurst (not to be confused with the nurseries of that name on the Wisborough Green road) which are the visible remains of Petworth's medieval open field system. The ridges are the remains of terraces built to facilitate ploughing on the steep Gog slopes. Relics of this kind are a particular rarity in Sussex that at Portfield near Chichester having long since disappeared. Unfortunately the ground was so wet underfoot that it was not possible to do more than look at the fields from a distance. Mr. Aldsworth observed that the present hedges while now old were not of the age of the field system. It would be possible roughly to date the hedges by counting the number of different plant varieties in a particular hedge, the greater number of varieties that had taken root the more venerable the hedge.

In Petworth Park Mr. Aldsworth spoke from a vantage point on Lawn Hill of the original formal gardens on the French model that Petworth House had had and of their supersession by the new more open conception of landscape gardening practised by Lancelot "Capability" Brown. A look at the old leaden water supply and its tunnels and conduits under the expert guidance of Mr. J. Taylor of the Leconfield Estate concluded a damp but enlightening morning. In the afternoon the Field Trip moved to Coultershaw.

The Handwriting Group continues to meet regularly and has not wanted for documents of interest. An account of a serious fire in 1735 is appended to these notes. A description of a fracas in the square over stalls at a fair held in May 1734 was of great interest as were depositions concerning iron mining in the 1580's. We have also considered Ralph Treswill's great map of 1610 and a newly discovered series of snapshot negatives from about 1920. Some of these are of Petworth people and places, but these are not always easy to distinguish. A selection of these will be on show in the form of photographs at the June exhibition and help from members of the

public on the further identifying of people and backgrounds would be much appreciated.

I have been to the Public Record Office in London in search of more material on the disputed enclosure of Petworth Common and Outwood at the close of the sixteenth century, and was fortunate to find the tenants' replies to a series of questions in Star Chamber which we had presumed lost. Work on this important dispute is proceeding well and we hope it will not be too long before we make our conclusions available.

P.A.J.

#### SMALL GARDENS IN PETWORTH

It is hoped that Members will be able to make a tour of some of the delightful small gardens in Petworth on Saturday July 8th.

This will start from Alfriston House, Middle Street, at 2.30 p.m. on that date.

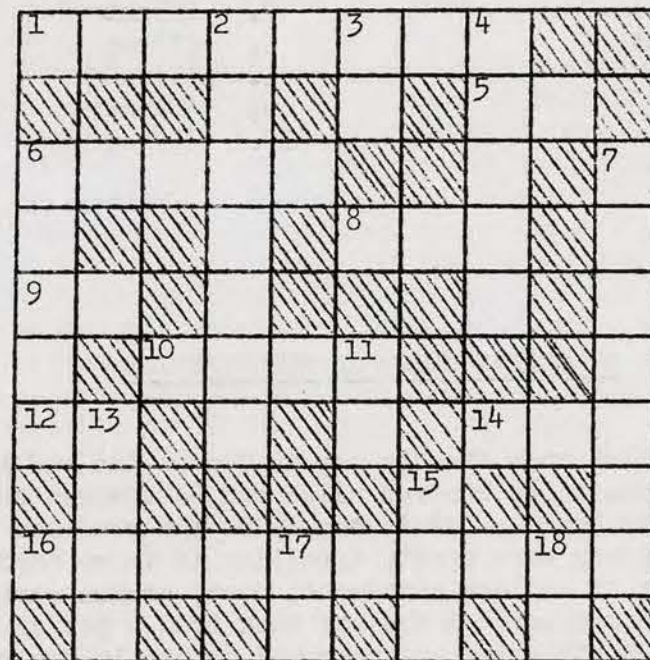
Those wishing to go on their own will find the list of gardens open on our notice board in Lombard Street or at the Blackbirds Book Shop.

M.S.

#### NEW MEMBERS

1. Mrs. A. Blunden, 30 Littlecote, Petworth.
2. Mrs. I. Chaffer, 18 Somerset Hospital, Petworth.
3. Mrs. Donaldson, Grey Dawn, Sheepdown Drive, Petworth.
4. Mrs. B.L. Haig, Burton Mill Lodge, Petworth.
5. Mr. & Mrs. B.R. Marshall, "Teelings", Market Square, Petworth.
6. Mr. & Mrs. W. Mills, Burton Mill Bungalow, Petworth.
7. Mrs. Mott, Ivy House, Fittleworth, Pulborough.
8. Miss E.K. Peacock, Flat 16, Somerset Hospital, North Street, Petworth.
9. Mrs. L. Voice, 29 Littlecote, Petworth.
10. Mr. & Mrs. J.R. Waldy, Dales House, Lombard Street, Petworth.

#### A more conventional crossword from the Young Petworth Society Group at the Herbert Shiner School.



#### Clues

##### Across:

1. Our town.
5. Either.
6. We have a magnificent view of these.
8. Our dentist holds this.
9. This man may practise in 6 down.
10. A street in one direction.
12. Turner belonged to this, briefly.
14. Its members may be found at the swimming pool.
16. The Earl is also Baron here.

##### Down:

2. The family surname.
3. The only compulsory school subject (1944 Education Act)
4. Petworth's most famous building.
6. A bridge-builder?
7. The cobbled street.
11. 1 across has often been featured on this.
13. For the Park, this is 3500 acres.
15. In short, do it yourself.
17. What the National Trust said about the by-pass through the Park.
18. 50 years ago the U.N.O. was this.

## Last Issue's Answers

### Across:

1. Petworth
2. (H)ouse
3. (E)gremont
4. (T)avern
5. (N)ew
11. (P)ark
12. (K)ennels
13. (S)chool
14. (L)ombard
15. (D)enman

### Down:

6. (W)yndham
7. (M)ant
8. (T)own
1. (P)ound
9. (D)amers
10. (S)hop

### BY COBB'S COACH IN THE NINETIES

The road which runs from Sydney to Condobolin and beyond is sealed now and the three hundred miles can be covered comfortably in seven or eight hours. But in the 1920s the road was bad. All roads west of Sydney were pretty appalling in those days and when I told my mother of endless punctures, dust, broken springs and other hazards encountered on the way back from a job of work in the far west of New South Wales she reproved me mildly for making such a fuss. Here is what she said - and subsequently wrote.

"Years ago one of the principal ways of travelling in Australia was by Cobb's Coaches but I am sure that anyone who does not know the Australian back country can have the faintest conception of what the experience was like. In 1892 I received an invitation from a friend who had come out to Australia to become the matron of the hospital in Condobolin which is, roughly speaking, three hundred miles west of Sydney.

In your early twenties you generally feel that you would love any new experience and although friends said: "you'll find travelling in the bush rather rough - Cobb's coaches are not English four-in-hands by any means", an early evening in March found me leaving Sydney. The railway, in those days, ran only to a point about twenty three miles beyond Molong and, as the train crawled through the night I began to have awful qualms about my undertaking. We reached Molong

early in the morning and had breakfast at the little hotel near the station. Two dishes were on the table but so covered in flies that it was impossible to see what we were invited to eat. When the waitress lifted the covers so to speak, by a wave of her arm, the cloud of flies rose and disclosed poached eggs and cold beef and I'm afraid I asked for a piece of toast.

After breakfast I climbed on to the contractor's train. The contractor himself was going on a visit of inspection to the end of the line and time after time, as we crawled over the brown countryside, he would stop the train and get out to inspect and test the work. It was incredibly dusty and blindingly hot. All along the track were the tents of the railway gangs outside which wives cooked and washed and children played. At the end of the twenty three miles, there being no more rails laid, we got out of the train and piled into a weary, ramshackle affair which stood waiting to take us as far as Parkes. At Parkes we had lunch of a sort but by this time I was not so particular about flies - then drove on another twenty miles or so to Forbes where we had dinner and were told we were going to spend the night. I was on the point of going to sleep when someone knocked on my door; this was about nine o'clock, and said "The coach is leaving and is going to take passengers for Condobolin. At once!"

Luckily I took the "at once" literally, dressed as quickly as I could and raced down to the coach. I was fortunate enough to get a seat facing the horses as those who sat with their backs to the horses had to cope with impossibly narrow seats. I may say here that during the whole of the fourteen hours the seventy mile journey took never once did I stir from my seat. Selfish? I don't really know but I try to think that our opposite passengers were all men.

The driver of that coach was a marvel; so were the horses and the coach too insomuch as under fearful provocation it never came to pieces. We hardly ever seemed to be on a real road. At its best it was a mere track; at its worst we just drove through the bush and scrub, threading our way between gum trees, in and out of creeks and water-holes, over logs and strups. Occasionally the driver got down to look at the wheels. Sometimes we pulled up at a little bush hotel to change horses. Two or three times the driver had a short sleep on the verandah while we just waited in the coach until he woke up - then on through the endless night. On posts and trees were sometimes nailed the letter-boxes of the pioneers of this vast

countryside and into these, with unerring aim, the driver flung their mail.

There was little sign of life. A few wallabies, a few scrub turkeys; once or twice we passed a flock of sheep as brown and dusty as the parched earth itself. The further we went the barer and browner looked the land. The hours crept slowly by and I kept asking, doubtlessly as monotonously and tiresomely as a child, "Are we nearly there?" At last, about eleven o'clock, the coach drew up outside the inevitable hotel where a group of people waited. We were there! It was over!"

J. Bragg.

#### A GREAT FIRE IN 1735

Petworth House in the period after its rebuilding by the 6th Duke of Somerset at the beginning of the eighteenth century had a considerable area of the present park lying in front of the house enclosed by a wall and railings; the foundations of the walls remain underground and show up in aerial photographs as dark lines on the grass. It appears that there lay inside the present track that runs from the iron gates to the lake and beyond to Snow Hill, the Duke's stables and a great barn used for the storage of hay.

In the late spring of 1735 the great barn contained some 60 loads of choice old hay stacked from the east end toward the great middle door and deposited there in 1733. The west end of the barn was empty. Under the direction of Mr. Parlet during the early summer of 1735 some 50 loads of new cut meadow hay from Budham Mead (Rotherbridge) were stacked in the west end. Perhaps the weather that summer had been very wet, for by agreement the new hay was very far from being dry. Mr. Parlet was warned of the danger that in this condition the hay might eventually heat and catch fire or at any rate discolour but he made light of any warnings and had it stacked. There were precautions that might have been taken; for instance it was possible to leave a hollow open place in the centre of the rick which would allow combustible gases to escape and wicker baskets were available which would facilitate the making of such a hollow. Similarly it was standard practice never to stack hay hard against the walls of a barn, a space would be left to allow the passage of air. These precautions appear to have been to a large extent ignored.

During July a great deal of heat was generated and some claimed to detect a distinct smell of burning. About a fortnight before the fire Mr. Parlet had a precautionary cut made in the hay at the west end to give air and prevent discolouring but the workmen were even then concerned at the slackened condition of some of the hay they had removed. Mr. Parlet however felt that nothing serious was amiss. About a week before the fire Mr. Mace the bailiff went into the barn but could smell nothing but that smell which is "common to new hay". Mr. Mace was however warned by Jones and Sawyer two workmen that if the hay was heating and his Grace knew of it he would certainly order it carried out into the Park itself. On the Monday and Tuesday prior to the fire on the Wednesday afternoon John Hyalson the farrier told Mr. Parlet that the hay had certainly taken fire beneath the surface and was told in his turn that Mr. Parlet would see that it came to no harm.

On the Wednesday morning Parlet had two men Henry Heath and Ralph Coates make a "culd", apparently an exploratory opening in the hay at the west end of the barn. As they were engaged on this and throwing the hay they had removed to the top of the mow, "it began to crackle under their feet and the flame burst forth like a flash of gunpowder". Henry Heath got out of the hole he had dug to give the alarm but when he returned to fetch his coat it was already too late. "The said hay actually burst out into an open and raging fire which totally consumed the said barn and a great quantity of old and new hay which was therein, and also a considerable quantity of very valuable seasoned deal planks which lay there besides doing much damage to the other parts of his Grace's stables". What happened to the unfortunate Parlet and Mr. Mace the bailiff is not clear but we may be sure that his Grace would have been less than pleased at the disaster and at their respective roles in it. Probably the barn was never rebuilt. I am told that in a dry season the foundations can still be discerned by "parch marks" in the grass.

P.A.J.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE  
SOCIETY HELD AT THE LECONFIELD HALL ON  
WEDNESDAY APRIL 12TH 1978

In the Chair - Mr. Hilton Oakes.

About 65 members were present.

1. The Minutes and Accounts were distributed throughout the Meeting and the former taken as read. There were no matters arising.
2. The Chairman then made his report, pointing out that most matters had been reported in the Bulletins throughout the year. He went on to regret that, because of serious illness, our President, Colonel Maude, was unable to be present on this occasion. During this past year, the Natural History Section has got underway and is flourishing under the leadership of Mr. Synge and Mr. D. Sneller. The suggested Tape Recording Session, sponsored by Miss V. Maxse and Mr. Jerrrome, held an open meeting which was extremely interesting and it is hoped that this section will continue to function and that permanent records be made.

Although the great majority of members keep their subscriptions up to date, the Committee has decided that because of the rising costs of printing, the names of any whose subscriptions are still outstanding by June 30, annually, must be removed from the mailing list.

Lady Fry has been in contact with the Indonesian Embassy in London, with the result that it has agreed to send down a team of about sixteen dancers and musicians to Petworth on July 1st. Their performance will be held at the Herbert Shiner School and as much publicity as possible will be given to this event.

It is hoped that the Society will be able to be of help in the reconstruction of the Shimmings Valley bridges, and to organise teams for the work involved. Any volunteers would be more than welcome.

Because of the increasing amount of work coming before the Society Committee, it has been decided that a meeting will be held every alternate month.

Miss Doris Gundry has kindly offered to take over any work concerning publicity needed by the Society in conjunction with her Editor, Mr. Pelling, of the West Sussex and Petworth and Midhurst Gazettes. This will be of great value during the period ahead

when money must be raised for the building of the Petworth Society room.

3. The Hon. Treasurer presented his financial report, details of which had been circulated. The balance as at March 15th were Current account £144.02 and Deposit account £410.96. Mr. R. Sneller proposed and Mrs. Webster seconded that these accounts should be passed.
4. Members of the Committee offering themselves for re-election were as follows:- Mrs. Boss, Mr. Davidson, Lord Egremont, Mr. Jerrrome, Mrs. Johnson, Mr. Oakes, Mr. Pottington, Mrs. Rix, Lady Shakerley, Mrs. Sheridan, Mr. D. Sneller, Mr. R. Sneller, Mr. Synge, Mr. Thompson. Re-election of all these members was approved by the Meeting. The existing vacancy on the Committee was filled by the election of Mrs. Dorothea Thorpe.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Adams, who has retired this year, for all the work and help he has given during the time he served on the Committee.

5. Mr. Jerrrome then talked about the role of the Society in the development of Petworth. He said there were really two separate issues, one being the matter of the so-called 'relief road' and what was said about it. More important is the question of the sort of role the Society should play on the question of conservation. The conservation group which exists at the moment is vested rather vaguely in the Committee. Mr. Jerrrome made it very clear that he did not wish to become more involved since the Local History group took up all the time he had to spare, but he felt strongly that some action should be taken to ensure that this branch be properly represented.

There followed a general discussion and, from the audience, four names were suggested who indicated that they would be willing to serve on a sub-Committee. They are as follows:-

Mrs. Thorpe  
Mrs. Webster  
Mrs. Haig  
Mr. Stevens

6. Mr. Davidson has very kindly accepted the appointment of Architect to the Society. He told the meeting that drawings

were in preparation for the Library extension and would be ready in the next ten days. The size of the room would be 10 metres by 5 metres. The Library authorities had been most co-operative and it is at their suggestion that toilet facilities will be included in the plan and a hatch made so that refreshments can be served. Both of these improvements will be shared between the Library and the Society.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

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- Q13/1 The Midhurst and Petworth Observer have featured a series on strange happenings two of which have been set in Petworth. Are there any other local traditions of the uncanny which should be set down? Often the less sensational stories turn out to be the most interesting.
- Q13/2 With current interest in the world cup it is curious to note on Ralph Treswill's great map of 1610 a clear reference to a "Football Feilde". What kind of football was played in 1610?
- Q13/3 The kevis negatives contain a photograph of an old plan of the northern part of East Street when Henry Machin, Thomas Arnop, Mr. Cook, "Johnson the Taylor" lived there and the widow Randal had a house next to Norman Place apparently just bought by a Mr. Duke. Is there anything in this that would enable the plan to be dated? None of these names appear in the window Tax Assessment for 1762.
- Q13/4 What is meant by "pickaxe" ploughing a farming term mentioned on negatives of the 1930's in the Garland collection. Is the expression still current?

- Q13/5 Can anyone remember the Tudor Revels in Petworth Park in June 1938? Many photographs exist in the Garland collection and there survives too a cutting from the Sussex Daily News but it would be interesting to hear from someone who could actually remember them.

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

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

The annual subscription is 50p (minimum) for each adult member, or 25p for those between 13 and 18 years of age. Further information may be obtained from any of the following:-

- President - Colonel A.H. Maude, Stone House, Petworth.  
Chairman - Mr. H.C. Oakes, Woodpeckers, Sheepdown Close, Petworth.
- Vice-Chairman - Mr. P.A. Jerrome, Trowels, Pound Street, Petworth.
- Hon. Secretary - Mrs. B.G. Johnson, Glebe Cottage, Bartons Lane, Petworth. (Tel. 42226)
- Hon. Treasurer - Mr. R.A. Sneller, 16 Littlecote, Petworth. (Tel. 42496)
- Hon. Membership Sec. - Mrs. J. Boss, North Street, Petworth.
- Committee - Mr. J.W. Davidson, Lord Egremont, Mrs. Sonia Rix, Lady Shakerley, Mrs. C.M. Sheridan, Mr. D.S. Sneller, Mr. P.M. Synge, Mr. K.C. Thompson, Mrs. D. Thorpe.



1937 - 1938  
The following is a list of the names of the members of the Board of Directors of the National Board of Fire Underwriters for the year 1937-1938.

The National Board of Fire Underwriters was organized in 1917 and has since that time been the leading authority in the fire insurance industry. It is a non-profit, non-union organization.

Its purpose is to promote the interests of the fire insurance industry and to act as a clearing house for information and statistics. It also acts as a liaison between the industry and the public.

President - Mr. J. B. ...  
Vice-President - Mr. ...

Secretary - Mr. ...  
Treasurer - Mr. ...

Executive Director - Mr. ...  
General Counsel - Mr. ...

Mr. J. B. ...  
Mr. ...  
Mr. ...  
Mr. ...