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THE PETWORTH SOCIETY
Magazine



Silver jubilee year 1974-99



Contents

- 2 Constitution and Officers
- 3 Chairman's Notes
- 3 Magazine 95 and various
- 7 Book Review
- 7 On the Beeton track
- 8 25th Anniversary evening
- 9 Nigel's Snowdrop Walk. February 14th
- 10 Some mischievous elf? Peggy's Harwoods Green Walk. March 14th
- 13 Ian and Pearl's Walk. April 11th
- 13 Ravens in Petworth Park
- 16 The Caretaker reflects
- 21 A busy week
- 23 To dig out the end of the rainbow
- 27 "I'll see if you can come home with us"
- 30 A housekeepers lore
- 35 Memoirs by Hugh Whitcomb
- 40 New Members

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THE PETWORTH SOCIETY SUPPORTS THE
LECONFIELD HALL
AND PETWORTH COTTAGE MUSEUM!

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 object of the society.

The annual subscription is £8.00. Single or double one Magazine delivered. Postal £9.00 overseas £10.00. Further information may be obtained from any of the following:

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Mrs Williams (Graffham), Mr Derek Gourd (Tillington and River),
Mrs Goodyer, Mrs Williams (Fittleworth)

Society Scrapbook

Mrs Pearl Godsmark

Society Town Crier

Mr J. Crocombe, 19 Station Road (343329)

Note: The crier may be prepared to publicise local community events and public notices for you, even snippets of personal news such as births, engagements or lost pets. It is suggested that such personal and business cries be made for a small donation to a charity to be nominated by the crier himself.

Chairman's Notes

Internal renovation of the Leconfield Hall is at last under way. Hopefully we'll have some "hard news" for you by September, meanwhile we have some good walks and visits for you this summer.

The Society's Silver Jubilee celebrations went off very well as you'll see in the Magazine. Otherwise just the usual plea to pay if you have a reminder with this issue or let Philip know if you don't wish to continue. In September there will only be a reminder, no Magazine, so that if you pay then it makes a double delivery. The Society is so large that we must try to cut administrative work if at all possible.

We've so much to go in this issue that the usual extract from Gwenda's diary has had to be held over.

Peter

29th April

Magazine 95 and various queries

Kath Vigar writes:

Dear Peter,

How interesting I find the Magazine, the articles take me back years. I remember so many of the names mentioned. Mr Sutton had the house built at the beginning of Station Road, he moved in with his daughter, in the meantime the Woottons had bought the house next door. I often went to tea with "my" Miss Wootton Headmistress of the old Infants School joined by her sister Miss Mary Wootton, we usually ended our tea party by going to the cinema which was built next door, this would be in the early 1920's. Miss Sutton sometimes joined us.

The article 'Dry as Dust', interested me too. I remember J.B. Watson mentioned in this article, I believe Mr and Mrs Watson first lived in the house opposite the grand entrance, Mrs Watson seemed a very frail lady, they later moved to Littlecote House, correct me if I'm wrong. During the First World War and after I spent many happy hours at Tillington House, my Sunday School teacher lived there, I can't remember her name, we used to go in the gate which was at the beginning of Boxalls Lane, and we used to fetch our milk from Coxalls Farm at the end of the lane, there were two farm cottages down there. The old farm house was lovely, if I remember rightly it was surrounded by big old fir trees, no doubt a thing of the past now. We always called Coxland Lane Boxalls Lane.

A.E.W. Mason is also mentioned, we knew him as Major Mason, was he an army man? He used to wear a monocle, and walked about with a bulldog. Mrs Ford I remember very well, my mother and Mrs Ford were founder members of Petworth Women's Institute. Mr Ford worked with Mr Ballard in the electric light station as we called it. I believe I am right in saying that this was the third most powerful electricity building in England on a private estate. One of the fly wheels generating the electricity was enormous, I was always

frightened it would take off and burst through my bedroom which was opposite.

I've often wondered what happened to the old Petworth 'Fire Engine' it was housed in the cow yard opposite the garage where Mr and Mrs Mayes lived, Mrs Mayes was Mr Ford's sister. Mr Mayes was Lord Leconfield's chauffeur during the 1920's and Mrs Mayes kept a lovely photograph on the top of their piano showing Mr Mayes driving the then Lord Leconfield with the late Prince of Wales.

I'm sending a school photograph taken 1923 - 1924, our Headmistress Miss Cossins lived in the house next door. It really doesn't seem true that when I look back all these pupils are over eighty.

For the photograph see the illustrations. [Ed.]

Mr R. Packham writes re Magazine 95:

I recognise the photograph on page 7 - It is not a Petworth scene. It relates to Hurstpierpoint and was used in David Robinson's *Historic Hurstpierpoint in Picture Postcards* (1986) p.68 where the caption reads:- "..... This card shows a hot air balloon that came down on 17 September 1907 in a field nearly opposite Geer's Nursery in Brighton Road. There is a spicy rumour associated with this one : the ladies present were said to have used the balloon material to make themselves silk knickers."

The church spire is that of Holy Trinity, Hurst - not far from the present address of your valued contributor, Kath Vigar.

Re the article on Tillington Cottage in the last Magazine. This extract from a letter by A.A. Knight, managing clerk to Mr Pitfield the Petworth solicitor throws a vivid light on the atmosphere in Petworth in August 1914: He writes to hope Mr Pitfield has had a reasonable journey to the west country and continues, "we have had rain most days but I think it has not been sufficient to do much harm to the corn. Today has been very mild with plenty of rain.

The excitement of the war is very great here and does not tend to assist the getting on with the usual everyday work. Special constables, to the number of 24, were sworn in at the Town Hall today for **this** Petty Sessional Division. The railway and other bridges are being guarded by persons volunteering for the purpose".

Re Petworth House electricity supply the following Garland caption may be of interest.

"POWER STATION IS CLOSED.

A long and interesting chapter in the history of electricity supply has been closed with the breaking up of the private power station which for 50 years has generated power for the Leconfield Estate. To the people of Petworth it brought the first electricity and it was the first private generating station of any size to be installed in England. It supplied current within a mile radius and among other things it provided a second source of supply to the local cinema in the event of a mains breakdown or cut.

The first engines were gas operated and in 1923 two Diesel engines of 100 HP each and weighing 14-16 tones were installed, the flywheels 9ft. 6ins in diameter weighing 8 tons, and in later years another Diesel motor was installed. The dynamos have been in constant use since 1906. The 200 batteries weighing over two cwt. each were all made of lead and have been sold for several thousands of pounds. The dynamos, control gear and cables have also been sold for scrap for about £1,000. The diesel motors have been dismantled to be sent to

Australia. 5,000 gallons of acid had to be removed from the batteries and it was dumped on the local Council dump.

The dismantling, which has taken several weeks has been a colossal job.

The picture shows one of the 2cwt. lead batteries being loaded on the contractor's lorry."

[The picture is reproduced elsewhere in the Magazine. Ed.]

The Pioneers

We have two issues of a (probably short-lived) Magazine of the St Mary's Pioneers Communicants' Group - they come from 1946. How many issues were there and has anyone else any copies? What happened to the Group?

Please ring Miles Costello on 01798 - 343227 or contact the Editor.

Another question:

Where was "Holme" Street, Petworth. I find this address on a document from 1918.

Ed.

Mrs Caroline Stoneman writes:

Edgehill Farmhouse
Byworth
Petworth
W Sussex GU28 0BL

Dear Mr Jerome

I have just returned from a holiday in South Africa where one of the most enjoyable trips I took was to the Grahamstown area. This is where the 1820 settlers group made their homes.

Between Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown is a place called Petworth. I understand that when the settlers set down roots they tended to call their new home after the place they had left, and I assume that, as there is only one Petworth, they were local West Sussex people. I was not able to visit Petworth but I was told by a woman who runs a hotel in Grahamstown (and who incidentally comes from Haslemere!) that now it is only a small farmstead.

I wondered if the Petworth Society had any information about local people who settled in South Africa under the 1820 settlers scheme. Our historical guide is always interested in personal stories and I have undertaken to find out this information for him.

I look forward to hearing from you

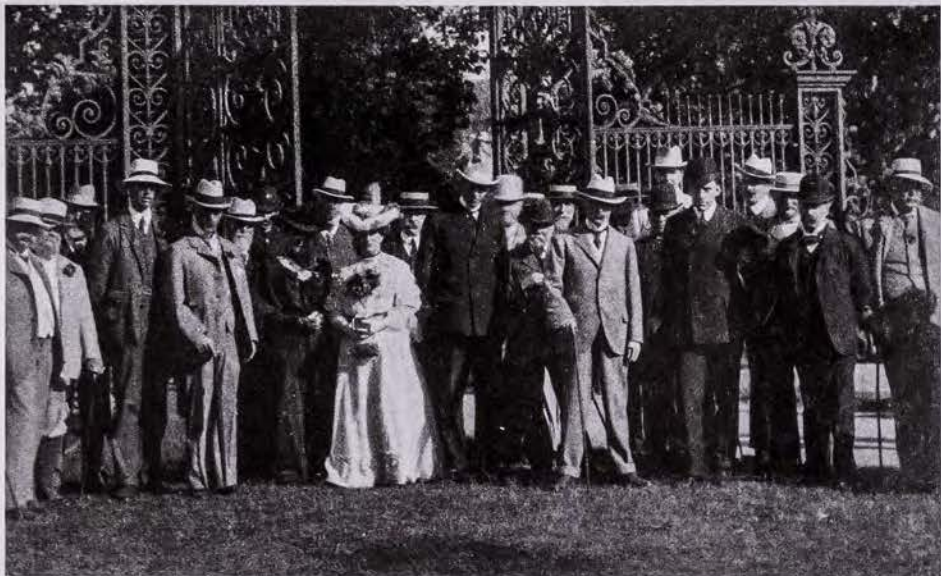
With many thanks

Yours sincerely

Caroline Stoneman (Mrs)

Can anyone help? Mrs Stoneman tells me that enquiries in South Africa have elicited no trace of a Petworth (Sussex) connection but

[Ed.]



POST CARD.

For Postage, in the United Kingdom only,
this space may be used for correspondence.

(For Address only).

Dear Annie
 What about this
 Ethel may be able to tell
 you who is next to me. This
 was taken at Petworth Thursday.

This card belonging to Christopher and Rosemary Knox is certainly Petworth, but who are the people? The postcard reads: "Dear Annie, what about this Ethel may be able to tell you who is next to me. It was taken at Petworth Thursday." Note the policeman (back left).

Book Review:

Michael Royall : The Petworth House of Correction.

As a fairly obvious subject for research the *Petworth House of Correction* has attracted a certain amount of attention over the years. It's a topic of general interest but very much specific to Petworth at the same time. References to the old gaol are not infrequent in the issues of this Magazine. In many ways, not least in its use of material from the Goodwood archives, this study supersedes anything that has been written before. Michael Royall has a background in prison administration and an interest in the history of penal thinking, expertise vital to place developments at Petworth in the context of what was happening elsewhere; without this background, the discussion tends to make the Petworth House an isolated phenomenon. It wasn't of course. In effect Michael Royall has produced a monograph on prison thinking and discipline in the early nineteenth century with particular reference to Petworth and this is as it should be. In doing this he has produced at the same time one of the classical source books for Petworth history, to be ranked with Kenyon's *Town and Trades* and Lord Leconfield's *Petworth Manor*.

I cannot summarise the book here. Inevitably it focuses on John Mance, governor for some thirty years from the 1820s. There is a well-documented discussion of silent as opposed to separate prisons - a discussion taking in contemporary parallels in the United States. Mance's combination of treadmill and solitary confinement seems very harsh now, but it was a harsh age.

The rediscovery of Mance's book *The Solider Spiritualised* (Magazine 90) probably came too late to be considered but the light it throws on Mance's upbringing and particularly on the religious convictions underpinning his thinking might have contributed to making this extraordinary man more comprehensible, while the first hand account by William Jacob (Magazines 49, 50 and 53) would have fleshed out the account of William Linton's later tenure as governor.

These are mere quibbles. Local history is often poorly researched and produced. This isn't. It's a substantial piece of research which will be much in demand when all copies have been sold. It would be sensible to get hold of one while you can. Michael who was at the Jubilee exhibition, has printed 250 copies. They can be obtained at £10.99 from Michael Royall at Hoe Cottage, Hoe Lane, Flansham, Bognor Regis PO22 8NW. Please add £1.25 for postage. Cheques should be made payable to St Wilfred's Hospice to whose benefit income received from the book will be directed. Snap this book up while you can, as so often, when it's gone, it's gone.

P.

On the Beeton track

It is with some trepidation that the Society looks to the professionals for occasional 'special' shows, for the fees charged are considerable and a sparse audience would cause our Hon

Treasurer some anxiety. So far, we have not been disappointed, either by the standard of performance, or by the support from members, and Alison Neil's one-woman play in which she became Mrs Isabella Beeton - Bella, was no exception.

The Victorian set, meticulously constructed in a corner of the Leconfield Hall, together with a sensitive lighting plot, immediately induced an atmosphere into which the young Isabella Beeton stepped to instruct her listeners on matters of etiquette and to confide to them her inmost thoughts and emotions from her letters and diaries, as well as the story of her extraordinary childhood as the eldest girl in a family of twenty-one children - "four of mine, four of yours and the rest of ours" as her mother told her second husband, Clerk of the Epsom Race Course. They lived in the Grand Stand.

It became clear that the chaos of the teenager's early life and the triumphs and disasters of her short marriage - she died in childbirth at 28 - taught her how the ideal situation should be managed.

Bella's father, a linen draper, died when she was four. Her mother, even after she remarried, more or less left the welfare of the ever-growing family to her and grannie until, at 16, she was sent to boarding school, where she was not happy, and then to finishing school in Heidelberg, where she was. On her return, having maintained links with family friends of her infancy, she fell in love with the son of a Mr Beeton, publisher (of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, amongst others). The young Mrs Beeton was soon writing articles for her husband's *The English Women's Domestic Magazine*, out of which her *Book of Household Management* was born. It met with immediate success.

There was charity work for cotton workers in Lancashire, whose livelihood was affected by the loss of crops during the American Civil War. But there was also tragedy - two sons died in infancy and she herself died of 'child-bed fever' at 28, following the birth of her third son.

Thus ended a remarkable life and a blissful marriage, which inspired her husband to publicise and encourage research into the causes of puerperal fever, leading eventually to its elimination. He, not a healthy man, died at the early age of 48.

A first-class professional performance which left the audience in anticipation of a return visit, as Miss Neil has two more one-woman shows in her repertoire.

KCT

We've been together now for 25 years - and

After visiting Petworth House on the National Trust's special open evening for local residents, many Petworth Society members crowded into the Leconfield Hall to mark the Silver Jubilee of the organisation's foundation.

The Chairman, Mr Peter Jerrome, outlined the Society's origins, the brainchild of the late Col. Alan Maude, reading a transcript of part of the founder's speech at the inaugural meeting in 1974. Mr Jerrome went on to recall the variety of activities organised over the years, not only lectures, walks and entertainment, but campaigns, trips and events such as hosting the visits of the Toronto-Scottish Regt. Association and an associated return to Canada by 40 Society members, the revival of Petworth's annual street fair, apple-identification days, litter drives and the initiative to ensure the safety of migrating toads, leading to the construction of a permanent tunnel under the London road.

Memories were further stimulated by the one hundred slides selected from the 3500 from 1980 onwards, recording the Society's associations with the Town Band, the Petworth Edwardians, the Kirdford Players, the Cottage Museum, the National Trust, the Leconfield Hall and the memorable day when Mr Jerrome became a Member of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of his work with the Petworth Society.

But he was quick to acknowledge the various contributions of a strong committee and individuals such as Col. Maude, Lord Egremont, Mr David Sneller, Mrs Anne Simmons, Mr and Mrs John Patten, Mr Raymond Harris, Mrs Ann Bradley and Mr Ian Godsmark.

With the interval came the cutting of the cake, specially iced by Mrs Audrey Grimwood, and the opportunity to see a display of some 125 posters which had advertised Society events during the past 15 years or so. Concluding, the Chairman hoped that it would be acknowledged that the town of Petworth was at least no worse off and perhaps considerably benefited by the existence of the Society over the past 25 years. On behalf of the members, Mr Keith Thompson (Vice-Chairman) expressed appreciation of Mr Jerrome's dedication and leadership.

Two days later, both floors of the Leconfield Hall were packed with displays of local and Society memorabilia - photographs, scrapbooks, posters, documents, postcards, items rescued from rubbish dumps and shop closures, together with books for sale and stands publicising the Society and the newly-formed Friends of the Cottage Museum. Both organisations reported a steady flow of interested visitors through out the day, with an encouraging number of new members recruited.

KCT

Nigel's Snowdrop Walk. February 14th

A decidedly unpromising day and the first walk of a new season. Walkers might be forgiven if they're not thinking of the great outdoors on a cheerless mid-February day such as this. The last walk seems an age ago, the big caterpillar on the tarmac in the autumn sunshine, the changing leaves, holly berries scarlet against a clear sky. Today it's wet and, on the fact of it, no merest hint of spring.

More people in the Car Park than I might have thought; along the A283 to Northchapel, left at the garage to park alongside a triangle of green where the road forks, Hill Grove or Diddlesfold. For the latter it's more of a track than a formal roadway. Looking at the

farmhouse and inevitably thinking back to Alfred Goodwin returning on a visit after sixty years and more, and himself remembering staying there as a lad just after the 1914-1918 war. The farm, then, was effectively part of a Dependant commune, supplying the large Dependant or "Cokeler" store at Northchapel. The evening ritual of the milk, boiling up on a cauldron over the fire, then being poured on a roll from the Stores. A studied frugality that would issue in generosity to those less fortunate. Private memories at second hand.

We pass on: the black weatherboarding of converted barns, deep rain-filled ruts and a February afternoon closing in early. The very day when you'd expect a poor turnout, there must be thirty or forty of us straggling untidily across a wet field. There were snowdrops by the roadside at the beginning but there will be far more in the woods. Over a stile and there's a path through the woods. The snowdrops are full on; they've been out a week or two already. Even on such a dismal day as this, the white gleams. A stream cuts a silver ribbon between the white.

We move on through the wood and out on to the Lickfold Road, opposite the ruined corrugated chapel across the road. A short spell on a tarmac surface then left and back into the skeletal February woods. No snowdrops here, just a winter brown. There are equally skeletal brassica stalks in the field at the side. To think and talk of summer walks. Halnaker Mill perhaps or Burpham in high summer, travelling on the train from Amberley Station.

A piece of rotten wood torn by some animals: deer tearing off the moss to use as a medicine someone suggests. Could be. We walk on. Eventually we come to Hill Grove, for me Hill Grove is permanently fixed in George Garland's photographs of the 1930s. The almost legendary domain of Master Bicknell, making his cider and plying his besoms. Again the Dependant connection, singing hymns and making cider. An odd combination by Dependant standards. Time however has moved on at Hill Grove if it is static in my imagination. There are cars in garages. You'd need a car here in the late 1990s. Victory Cottage. What victory? 1945?

Walking on to a T-junction. The green leaves of ramsons promise a host of starry white flowers later on. Breaking one of the pale coarse leaves. The strong smell of garlic pervades the air. Yes, that's ramsons alright. We've come back by the other fork. Thanks very much Nigel, just right to start the season off.

P.

Some mischievous elf? Peggy's Harwoods Green Walk. March 14th

"Not a good year for them at all," said Peggy as we travelled in the sunshine past Haslingbourne. It was almost as if Peggy thought it was all her fault. Illogical, but no more perhaps than to think as the unaccustomed March sunlight poured into the car that this was

all the work of some mischievous elf. Rupert Bear would soon solve that. Not so easy. Rupert did not, on reflection, seem likely to materialise and the wild daffodils would remain obstinately sparse, some without shoots at all, some simply blind. Flowers we would find, certainly, but nothing like the usual carpet.

Left at Stopham Church and on to Harwoods Green. We were here last year at this time. Fewer cars in the lane then. It looked as if another party had the same ideas as we had. Harwoods Green farmhouse in front of us: we turn left through the farmyard and into the woods. Yes, the daffodils made a far greater show last year. Peggy took a short detour to show them in something like their usual splendour where a slope had been coppiced, then back to the main track.

Other walkers were as puzzled as we were. If only the omniscient Rupert were on hand. Here, if anywhere, was his province. A conference in the middle of the track. "Tulips don't bloom in the south of France because there are no frosts." Certainly there have been no severe frosts this winter. Another theory is of a dry spell at some crucial period in the bulb's season. The blind shoots had nothing to say.

Moving on up the hill. Bricks in the track testify to a once thriving woodland community. The cottage with the blue-painted window frames. Today's quiet is not primeval but artificial: these woods once resounded with the sound of working men and the outlet for their labour would have been the canal. Inches deep incisions where horseshoes have bitten into the wet ground.

Yes, there is another party in the woods: Fittleworth Evangelical Free Church straggling along the side of a field. A biplane goes over, the chug of the engine seems perhaps to suggest that earlier time before the workmen left Harwoods Green. Gallops of coconut fibre mixed with rubber pieces and new since we were here last year, or rather the material is new: the gallops we have seen before. Someone says the rubber stops the mixture freezing and perhaps helps drainage.

Down to Pallingham Quay and the river. We look down at the swift-flowing stream without venturing across the deep ruts to the canal bridge. The boat outside the farmhouse is apparently no mere affectation; if the river floods it will be needed. Even in today's sunlight there are deep pools in the lane. We turn to complete the circuit. Small men ride sedately on immaculately groomed horses. This is racing territory.

Wild anemones already in the woods and butcher's broom by a gate. Safe enough from predatory butchers, one would think, in this age of packaged meat and anti-bacterial washes. Ferna the dog has just been given "Reserve" at Crufts. Jean's understandably delighted, so, in her own way, it seems, is Ferna.

Looking across the valley from the high ground outside the house with the blue window frames. Church spires in the distance. Billingshurst, Wisborough Green, Pulborough, faraway Henfield. The sun shines on the spires of dog's mercury in the woods. Just right, thank you very much, Peggy.

P.



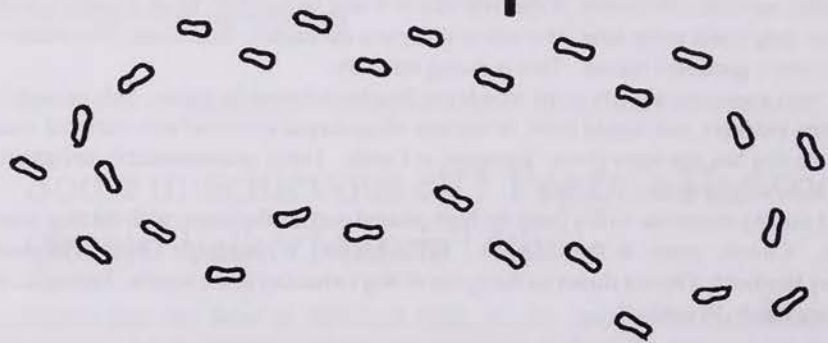
still walking after 25 years!

Sunday, April 11th.

Ian and Pearl's Spring Walk

Cars leave the main car park

2.15 p.m.



Keith's Jubilee walk poster.



*Audrey Grimwood with her Jubilee Cake.
[Photograph by Ian Godsmark.]*



*Jumbo takes a tea-break on his downstairs stall at the Jubilee Exhibition.
[Photograph by Douglas Price.]*

Ian and Pearl's Spring walk. 11th April

Parking in the woods at Cowdray, then the public footpath over the golf course. All seems quiet enough and there is mistletoe in the high, bare, spring branches. At first sight it looks like rook's nests. Why is it so high up? The effect of some predator? Human perhaps? Bluebells in the hedgerow, this looks an early season. A glance away towards the Queen Elizabeth oak on the left but we don't pass near enough to have a good look. It would certainly shelter a fugitive (or two, or three) but as a hiding-place it would be a little obvious. Douglas says the tree features on the front cover of a new book about Sussex trees.

This is completely new territory for us, even after so many walks over the years. Going to and fro to school at Midhurst I never asked what lay beyond the immediate view from the road. A stop to catch up, we're straggling almost before we've started. It's a good turn-out, certainly thirty, perhaps more. White dead nettle in profusion in the hedgerow; it's that fragile time of year when a single plant can briefly dominate a whole bank, like the wild anchusa on the left as you walk down from the Bartons.

We pick up a sunken path, we might even be in Hungers Lane. Again the white nettle and the ubiquitous dog's mercury, "the spring's superb adventure" calls again and celandine shines in the sun. Lords and ladies, "jack-in-the-pulpit" if you like. Does anyone call it that any more? I read somewhere that this plant with its glistening treacherous scarlet berries has more country names than any other. Campion is still to flower - just the pale green leaves as yet. The path, parched by the drying April winds leads gradually uphill, eventually we have to leave it, turning sharp left on to a farm track. Upper Vinings is a farmhouse tucked away in the corner. Scuffing the dust of the track, the view to the Downs is set against clouds scurrying in the clear wind-blown light. Loves Farm lies slightly below us with its metallic outbuildings.

We gradually descend from the high ground to find Easebourne asleep on a Sunday afternoon, clear water flowing swiftly, beside the road, glinting in the sun. Venerable sandbags belie the water's apparent innocence. The occasional house with heavy yellow paint. Cowdray territory.

Sharp left again, a path through long field grass. Away across the chestnut avenue and back to the golf course. The bell is not apparently to warn of stray golf balls but to tell those who are behind you that you've teed off. Golf remains an inscrutable mystery to me. Drinks at the car, Ian's careful not to shake the lemonade. Everyone's had an excellent afternoon.

P.

Ravens in Petworth Park

No! Sorry, not in 1999 but 1849. A.E. Knox wrote in his *Ornithological Rambles in Sussex* of his encounters with this "King of the Corvids".

The raven had not been seen much in the area for many years partly because of loss of habitat; "partly due to the absence of superstitious veneration with which this bird was still regarded in some districts; but more especially to the hostility of the gamekeeper".

They were expelled from this neighbourhood many years before.

One of the keepers shot a pair of ravens when their eggs were "sot hard". (sic.) Mr Knox does, however, acknowledge that the head-keeper at Burton Park had discovered that ravens could be allies, as a pair on his patch kept the wood free of "hawks, weasels and all four-footed vermin", but at the same time pheasants and hares were never molested by the ravens. It was not until 1843 that A.E. Knox sighted ravens in Petworth Park near a clump of tall old beech trees. They were nesting in a fork on the summit of one of the highest trees with a colony of jackdaws inhabiting the hollow trunk below. The following year, 1844, the beech grove was deserted for the clump of Scotch firs near the tower hill (now known as the Monument). He wrote, "back at their old quarters in the valley, loud and merry were the notes of the republicans (jackdaws) as they demolished piecemeal the stronghold of their tyrants (ravens), like the attack of a mob on the royal residence and the erection of a village of cabins from the debris of a palace."

After rearing their young, the ravens would take them into open country to "inculcate in their offspring early habits of independence, and appear to superintend their education in the art of flying." The parents would then return to the fir clump in the park. They are by nature scavengers, not poachers. Unprovided with hooked beak or prehensile claws, they do not attack any living creature while there is still a dead animal to be found. But if, during continued frost, he should still linger in this neighbourhood, he looks "the picture of despair, as in pensive attitude, with muffled plumage, his dusky figure may be noticed perched on some withered bough. In his hour of need he may occasionally be convicted of crimes which are foreign to his nature. But they are more likely to migrate to the coast to subsist on dead fish and mollusca such as in the muddy creeks of Chichester harbour."

Their new quarters near the summit of one of the tallest trees were well concealed from the gaze of way-farers traversing Upperton Common.

Although well-hidden by the evergreen boughs, the short, angry barks of the male betrayed them as he and the female emerged and soared round the heads of any strangers, who came too near.

Sadly a youth discovered their presence, scaled the Park wall and robbed the nest of the four "squabs". The lining of the nest, composed of the hair of fallow deer, lay around. The parents deserted.

The young birds were discovered, half-starved, in possession of their captor. It was proposed to rear them in captivity, and three of them had had their wings clipped. But at the suggestion of Knox, it was agreed he should try restoring the unclipped chick to the nest in the hopes of attracting the parents. This he did late one evening. Next morning both parents issued forth from the trees.

The young bird was safely reared and the ravens reared several more families in that nest.

A.E. Know wrote, "I trust that in future any visitor to the raven's clump never finds it untenanted."



The Ravens' clump in Petworth Park (from W.L. Knox: Ornithological Rambles in Sussex 1848 opposite page 155).

Biographical Note:

Arthur Edward Knox M.A., F.L.S., F.Z.S., was one of the early pioneers of the study and recording of the Sussex Avifauna. He carried his gun on his forays on horseback and built up a large collection of stuffed birds. He resided for much of his life in and around Petworth. E.V. Lucas considered the book to be one of the few worthy to stand beside White's *Natural History of Selborne*. The *Birds of Sussex*, 1996, states, "As a historical record, Knox's book is invaluable....."

Footnote: Ravens ceased breeding in inland Sussex by 1880 and along the coast by 1895. However, an odd pair bred between 1938 and 1945 at Seaford Head and then Beachy Head, at least one of this pair having escaped from captivity.

Janet Gourd

The Caretaker reflects ...

After Lord Leconfield died, Lord Winterton started a fund in his memory. As Lord Leconfield had been Lord Lieutenant of the whole county for many years, funds were solicited from all over Sussex, east and west. Some £6,000 was collected, a fair sum for the mid-1950s and the idea was mooted that the money should go toward providing a hall for Petworth, to be named after his late lordship. There was already a kind of steering committee for the project, headed by Sir Cyril Shakerley. It included, among others, Lady Shakerley, John Wyndham and Major Mant. Mr Bennett, formerly Lord Leconfield's private secretary, became secretary to the committee. There was a public meeting, chaired by John Wyndham, with Lord Winterton present.

At the time the present Leconfield Hall was universally known as the Town Hall and was used relatively infrequently. Such occasions as it hosted might best be described as "prestigious". Events at the hall included the Police Ball, the Hunt Ball, the occasional Scout Dance. The Magistrates had once held their sessions there. More workaday events took place in the Iron Room, to the rear of the present National Westminster Bank. The Iron Room as it was affectionately known to generations of Petworth people, had been built as a temporary construction at the beginning of the century to house the congregation of St. Mary's during extensive renovation. It was constructed basically of corrugated sheets hence the name "Iron Room". It had a bigger capacity than the Town Hall and day to day events were invariably held here. Like the Town Hall it was run by the Leconfield Estate. Heating was by two coal-burning stoves. Whatever its short-comings, everyone agreed that it had a lovely floor, despite the fact that events like the Police Ball were invariably held in the Town Hall. Initially, as I have said, a temporary building, the Iron Room was beginning to look, and, no doubt, feel its age. The corrugated in fact was still in reasonable condition, but the matchwood interior had, by the 1950s, become very dusty and dirty. Whatever you touched was likely to shower you with dust. I had worked on the Iron Room before the war, fixing special lighting for Ben Wareham's noted boxing tournaments. For events like this the best seats were always on the

stage itself. The electrics weren't very special even before the war, while there was only a single toilet. It was the custom not to use this but to go across to the public toilets where the Red Cross Rooms are now. A very dilapidated old gas stove would be used for warming up food.

I was a member of the Hampers Green Drama Group which had its first show in April 1957. This was in the Iron Room and we put on five shows there altogether. I did the electrics and Ron Pidgley was stage manager. By this time the Iron Room really was a dusty, dirty, old place. There had once been changing rooms at the back of the stage but these were now effectively closed. It was obvious that the Iron Room was coming to the end of its useful life and that any renovation work would be throwing good money after bad. Petworth needed a new public hall and, given Lord Winterton's appeal, there seemed every prospect that it would have it. People were certainly not at that time thinking in terms of a revitalised Town Hall. The Town Hall had never been used as a public hall; it had a rather "upmarket" reputation and it belonged to Lord Leconfield, permission (or otherwise) for its use, as for the Iron Room, came from the Leconfield Estate.

The initial idea was for a new hall to be built in the field that is now the lower car park at the rear of the allotments that lay behind the Pound Garage. Another public meeting was called, to include representatives from the town's main organisations. Hampers Green with its own Sports and Social Club was a lively and progressive force in what was then a fairly unadventurous town and Sir Cyril Shakerley had a lot of time for the "Green". The Drama Group was, effectively, an off shoot of the Sports and Social Club which was quite capable of giving parties at Christmas and other times for the Green's some 150 children. We also had our own Centre, and we worked closely with Mr Gwillim on the town's annual firework show. I was on the Sports and Social committee as well as being in the Drama Group, so that when Sir Cyril asked the meeting if the committee could have someone from Hampers Green, before I knew what was happening, Jack Clifford who was sitting next to me, said, "I propose Owen Bridger" and I was on the committee. I can't remember all the other members now, Sir Cyril, of course, Major and Mrs Mant, Mr Mickelburgh for the Horticultural Society, while Lady Shakerley represented the W.I. as she would continue to do for many years. Everything was focused on the proposed new hall; the Town Hall did not really come into it: John Wyndham retained an architect to design the new building. It was to be a fitting memorial to Lord Leconfield and would cost some £15,500. There was a problem however; the memorial fund remained obstinately stuck at or around the £6,000 mark. A reasonable sum, as I have said, in those pre-inflationary times but a long way short of what was actually needed. A big carnival was organised by Claude Muncaster, with a carnival queen and all sorts of floats, but even that only pushed the total up by a few hundred. Appeals to local businesses found little response, £15,500 seemed a very distant objective. The proposed new hall for Petworth was struggling.

With the new hall looking impractical and the Iron Room clearly having no future, John Wyndham offered the Town Hall to the town as a gift. Two public meetings were held to decide whether the town should accept it. People often murmured afterwards that the town should not have accepted the Town Hall - even as a gift! I always replied that if they felt like

that they should have come to the public meetings and voiced their opinion. They didn't. There's little point in complaining when you've been given every chance to have your say, Petworth opinion was always ambivalent about the Town Hall, less so of late years, but you still get the odd person saying, "Knock it down" as if you can do what you like with a Grade II listed building in the centre of the town.

It was finally agreed that the architect should produce a survey as to the feasibility of using the Town Hall. In due course he reported that he could make the Hall a good meeting-place for Petworth for the next twenty-one years. He did not elaborate on what might happen afterwards! It seemed a long time and I don't really think that anyone looked beyond this period: there were problems enough in the present. Petworth then had to decide not simply whether to accept the Town Hall, but also to use the Winterton fund to effect the changes the architect had specified. In truth the town had little choice.

The Town Hall was not set up for any kind of catering. All that was traditionally done at the Swan Hotel and carried across to the Hall. At particular events a temporary awning would be erected to make a passage across from the hotel. Whether this happened after the war I am not sure. The Hall had no kitchen and had never needed one: that's why the present one is so small. The present proscenium stage, too, dates from this period; before 1960 there was simply a low stage under the present balcony. The various societies involved, the W.I., the Mothers' Union, the Drama Group, the Horticultural Society and Mrs Mant's Darby and Joan discussed what would be best in the light of the architect's report. As a representative of the Drama Group, I had my say too as to how the restored hall was to be set out. Different demands from different organisations could be mutually exclusive. I remember that the Badminton Club, a potential refugee from the Iron Room, argued that if the stage were left where it was, under the balcony, they would have room to move to the Town Hall. The Drama Group argued that if this happened they couldn't put on plays. We carried the day and the stage was put in where it is now. Perhaps we marshalled more members when the matter was discussed. By that time the proposed new hall was well on the way to being a memory.

Boxalls of Tillington did the restoration work and all went off smoothly enough. The W.I. gave the green tables, Darby and Joan some of the chairs, everyone was allotted their cupboard space. Three dances were organised to pay for some other items. The new hall was opened in the spring of 1960. The Drama Group put on a special show with Mrs Montford Bebb helping. She'd been a leading light in the old P.A.D.S. Petworth Amateur Dramatic Society who had stored their scenery at Petworth House when they gave up. Ron Pidgley had worked with P.A.D.S. and we took over their scenery and a certain amount of stage lighting. There are two of these old lamps still under the Hall stage. Some societies perhaps, like the Horticultural, would regret the old Iron Room for its spaciousness.

Mrs Beaufoy's Sunday School was growing larger and larger, too big to accommodate at St. Mary's, children were even coming in buses. Mrs Beaufoy had a permanent Sunday booking on the two downstairs committee rooms. Saturday nights, as often as not, were dance nights and the bar was always downstairs in those days. After a dance there would be a fair amount of cleaning up to do but Mrs Beaufoy needed everything ready for ten o'clock. She didn't like the smell of beer either! The question of caretaking came into sharp focus: there

appeared to be three possibilities:

- 1) A caretaker who would open and shut the hall for functions. An expensive option.
- 2) A caretaker who would do **some** opening and shutting of the hall. Much less satisfactory but of course less expensive.
- 3) A caretaker operating a 'let yourself in', 'let yourself out' system. Leave the hall as you found it. Least expensive of all and the one adopted.

In fact, different people were doing the job at different times but it was very difficult indeed to induce anyone to do the Sunday morning cleaning up for the Sunday School. It was November 1960 and Mr Bennett came to me and said, 'You're the only working member of the committee', (it seems a rather broad statement but I think he meant 'manual' work). 'Would you and your wife look after the hall until we can work something out?' It was the early Sunday mornings that were the problem, but it didn't trouble us and so we started. It did mean ceasing to be a full member of the management committee, as I was now an employee.

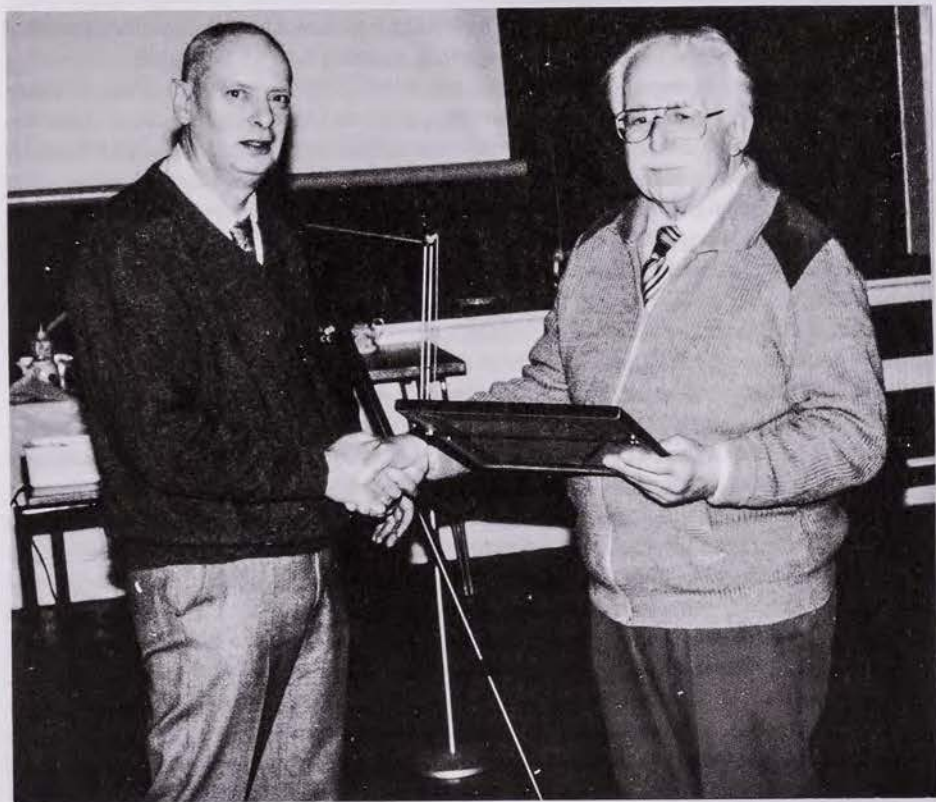
Sunday mornings demanded a plentiful use of Jeyes' Fluid: as I've said Mrs Beaufoy didn't like the smell of beer and stale beer isn't the right smell for a Sunday School. I did this for years. Later the bar tended to be operated upstairs, hence the triangular piece of linoleum in the south-west corner of the upper hall. The dumb waiter was Mrs Morgan's pet project. It's not as old as you might think. Mrs Morgan was a tremendous supporter of the Town Hall. She went round the town with National Savings and collected for the Hall at the same time. She particularly asked if the money she raised could go toward the dumb waiter.

At this period there was very little public sympathy for the Town Hall and the Hall committee felt themselves somewhat beleaguered, arguing a case that no one seemed prepared to accept. By this time Lady Shakerley had taken over from Sir Cyril, her late husband, in the Chair, and her determination in the face of a general lack of enthusiasm, played a great part, I would almost say, in the Hall's very survival. I can remember when we set the prices with Mr Howes, the treasurer and Leconfield Estate accountant. We had to work out probable electricity consumption per hour of hiring. This was where my working knowledge came in, and combined with Mr Howes' skill with figures, we worked out an hourly rate. In fact, for all our efforts this was only a sub-committee and when our recommendation came to the main committee itself they decided our figure of seven shillings and sixpence an hour for a committee room was too much and brought it down to five shillings. Upstairs was fifteen shillings an hour. Preparation time was free, but you weren't allowed to use heating during preparation. It did leave rather a lot to people's discretion.

The old Petworth Rural District Council did the booking at their offices at Newlands. Once a week my wife went in to look at the bookings and make up a caretaking diary for us to work to. This went on, certainly until the reorganisation of local government in 1974, possibly beyond that. Mr Webber was treasurer for a time. At that time commercial bookings were virtually unknown, it was the shake-up of the business rating system that brought these to the fore. I do remember however that very early on the Kirdford Growers booked the Hall for about a week for an exhibition with purpose-built stands. Except for the Sunday School there were no regular bookings in those days. I always called in on the way to work, and when

I changed jobs and had to start earlier, I still looked in, but that much earlier, just to see the furniture was as it should be.

Prices for hiring remained low, and although the Hall wasn't actually losing money, it never made a surplus to put by for maintenance. I think the committee, representing their various organisations, had a tendency to hold prices as low as they could. Decoration and repair inevitably had to be kept to a minimum and the architect's twenty-one years came and went largely unremarked. A new chairman, John Tidy, ran several discos and film-shows in the 1980s to raise money to make repairs and redecorate. He had been a parish councillor and found it extremely difficult to get them to take the Hall at all seriously. In the end he left the council and became chairman of the Hall. The building of the new Fittleworth Hall drew attention to the Hall's poor condition, exterior and interior. People still criticised the Hall



*Owen Bridger receives a cheque and a framed photograph of the Leconfield Hall in recognition of his long and valued service as caretaker.
[Photograph by Ian Godsmark]*



*Part of the upstairs exhibition set up ready to open.
The Canadian flag was given to the Petworth Society when members visited Canada.
It flew originally on Parliament Building in Ottawa.
[Photograph by David Wort.]*



Two Iron Room pictures:

1) Petworth A.D.S. "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep." Iron Room October 1946.

[Photograph by George Garland.]



2) Petworth V.P.A. Dinner 1956.

[Photograph by George Garland.]



*Dismantling the Battery House 1953.
[Photograph by George Garland.]*

without offering any constructive alternative. There had, earlier, been some talk of putting another hall on the Old Bakery complex but this never came to anything. The old hiring system was being abused: preparation time now had to be booked and heating became a surcharge. Hiring was still comparatively cheap: it still is. Special rates were set for commercial bookings. The stock answer when people are challenged about some misuse is, "We're a charity". As if the Hall were anything else! At this time no one ever really thought of serious grant money for the Hall.

As I leave the Hall this Easter after well over forty years I feel the Hall is stronger than it has ever been. The importance of its central position is now widely recognised. The outside is in excellent repair, the fire bells are back, and interior renovation is already under way. The new lift will give access to the Upper Hall to those who up to now have effectively been denied it. Public funds have given the Hall a new impetus, and the Parish Council's attitude has been transformed. They have helped the Hall enormously, as have the Leconfield Estate. I've fought for the Hall through some bad times but I think, at last, we're winning.

Owen Bridger was talking to the Editor.

A Busy Week

Late March is a season on its own: a gradually unrolling winter allows boys to practise football in the Park on weekday afternoons but the ball still seems lumpy and awkward, either trickling laboriously toward the goal or flying high over the bar. The wind blows across the stud-scarred turf. The hour will go on at the weekend. The Leconfield Hall too runs quietly toward the end of its unrestored days. It's the end of an era and an end of term feeling transmits itself to the tired interior, the March sun suggesting late summer days and beams glinting on empty desks. This "holiday" however will be a long one; late October at least before a refurbished Hall rises again. A Millennium project if ever there was one. I am constantly surprised that people seem to assume it's all done and look toward something else for the Millennium.

The various societies have already effectively moved out. The Masons, the W.I. with their familiar blue willow-pattern crockery; the Petworth Society screen, tombola box, projector stand and the revered "house full" notice will go out on Sunday. The huge downstairs table is going to the auctioneer's. It's a valuable item, unsuitable for the rough and tumble of a public hall. We agree a reserve with the auctioneer. How often the table has been unceremoniously rolled in and out of the North Committee Room. The auctioneer shakes his head and fears that a buyer will simply take off the magnificent top and leave the rest to its own devices. "It happens all the time." The hallway looks decidedly empty with the familiar table gone.

Talking of auctions, there was one at the Hall this week. When was there last a property auction at the Hall? Not in my time as chairman and that's a good seven years. Stone House Cottage and a cottage in High Street. The electric feeling of an auction and, at the same time,

of Petworth as a place people want to come to live in. But it needs money to do this. Bob the retired baker. Occasionally he would make cakes for some local function and what cakes they were! A craftsman, an artist if you like. Sometimes you'd see him in Gateway early morning, particularly when they opened at seven. Always cheerful. A long family sojourn in one house coming to an end. The cottage, as they say, is "unimproved".

The Society's 25th anniversary evening is to follow. It's another full house. Once again we just about get away with the numbers. Phil counts at the door but you know when the balcony starts to fill. The three or four seats remaining at the front in the main hall always indicate. If they're taken, that's it. They remain.

By Friday it's time to think seriously about the Jubilee Exhibition, getting the boxes, gradually filled over the last week or so, up to the Hall. Jonathan needs a couple of trips in the car, then it's a matter of lugging it all upstairs. A lift in the autumn? We'll wonder how we ever managed without it. Upstairs we'll set up as far as possible tonight. Scouts' Bingo downstairs in the evening so that will have to wait for the morning.

It's quiet in the Friday afternoon Hall. The W.I. Market have long gone and the afternoon sun points up the absence of the familiar table. With all these boxes it would have been useful. Yesterday (or perhaps it was the day before?) a water carrier had pumped out the reservoir on the north and west sides of the Hall. Six full loads I think. Time if it doesn't rain for an inspection, essential with the current alterations. It's good news. The reservoir is very well-built, early eighteenth-century perhaps, barrel-arches made to last. Jumbo disappears down a manhole and into the depths. There had been some half-serious talk of a canoe but all that can be forgotten, if it had ever been a real option. Even emptied, however, the reservoir is boiler-suit and Wellington territory - there's an inch and a half of sludge still left. Raymond and the engineer will have a good look round tomorrow. Eddie stands guard with a couple of cones over the open manhole. Eventually Jumbo reappears, a great smear of thick mud across his jersey. Wellingtons are no problem for Jumbo but he's no great one for boiler-suits.

Saturday's a glorious day. A slight difficulty to start with. The tool sale man has come a day early, but he claims to have booked the Hall for today. Checking with John Mason. He hasn't. That's a relief. The situation becomes more complicated when it turns out he's not the Sunday tool man come a day early, he's another one altogether! Eventually we manage to find him the Red Cross Rooms. It's a comedy of errors with serious overtones, a trade apparently loosely based on a circuit of different halls that is yet someone's living. The various negotiations put the downstairs exhibition behind. There's a need to bustle about. The sun streams into the committee rooms. We haven't put on an exhibition on this scale since, I think, 1981, and then it was almost entirely photographs. George Garland had only died a year or two before. It's more varied this time but people still go for the photographs even if the 1920s and 1930s are more difficult to relate to than they were nearly twenty years ago. This time, too, there's a Cottage Museum stall with a raffle and free admission for patrons of the raffle. Anne and her helpers are on hand with tea and coffee.

It's one of those funny Saturday mornings when there's a shortage of people in the Square. Easy to blame the water works but I knew those kind of Saturdays when I had the

shop. Difficult to explain except to say that you know you'll have to work very hard for whatever you can get. A steady flow of people but we're not rushed of our feet. Several new members, then the funereal quiet of lunchtime. During the afternoon it's busy and people stay, as it seems, for hours. "There's too much to take in." "Couldn't you do it for a couple of days?" People seem surprised to find we have back Magazine copies, We sell some.

Sunday is the last day of the South East Arts Exhibition. "Bed and Breakfast" - photographs by Sue Slipper. It seems an attempt to capture the inconsequential without overbalancing and falling into the twee. It's not easy. In fact in writing this I'm doing much the same thing if in a different medium. You don't usually know whether you're still on the tightrope. It's someone else who has to tell you you've fallen off. It's two o'clock. Looking round the familiar hall, the tired wooden upstairs floor, the non-smoking notice on the front of the stage, the red curtains, the massive old proscenium stage. All this will soon be a fading memory, as, too, will be the squeaking dumb-waiter.

There's a noise outside, down in the Square. A hay cart is being set up, slanting across the north-east corner of the Hall. The tool sale's going on downstairs. It's the "other" tool man. People drift in and out of the committee rooms. It's Palm Sunday. A yellow and brown carpet is being placed on the hay cart. Someone's putting the finishing touch to some wooden steps. The Cut will be open from three to four o'clock to allow for the procession. Bandsmen with their black and scarlet uniforms walk up the east side of the Square past Austens, instruments gleaming in the sun. All falls quiet once more.

Voices again. Looking out of the high window into the Square. The window doesn't seem to open except at the top. A Roman soldier and women of Palestine are talking in English about flesh-coloured tights. The Roman soldier seems representative rather than realistic. In such an explosive situation a military man on his own would be very much at risk. A Roman soldier and a tool sale. An incongruity? But after all Joseph had been a carpenter, Jesus too it seems. That is if the Greek word hasn't a more general sense, a small builder perhaps. Scholars quibble and the world goes on. Perhaps a tool sale isn't quite so inappropriate after all, although one suspects Joseph would find the contents of the committee rooms a little on the sophisticated side.

Suddenly here's the band and the procession. The Square is a staging point on a journey round the town. A blur of action in the hay cart, a hint perhaps of the old Miracle Plays. One-dimensional Jews and Romans. The donkey waits patiently for the next move. The sun over the Hall casts a heavy shadow. Eventually the procession moves off down to Golden Square and I go back into the Hall. Yes, it's been a varied week. At Easter we close.

P.

To dig out the end of the rainbow

I was born at Horsham in 1917 where my father was a policeman. It wasn't long before we moved to Chichester, and when I was eight or nine, on to Petworth. By this time my father

had been promoted sergeant, probably while he was at Chichester. We lived at the Police Station and my first recollection is of us children being given sixpence a week between us to weed the enormous back yard at the Police Station. Father would finish his police career at Petworth and retire. Superintendent Gibbons was in charge at Petworth and I remember him and Mrs Gibbons very well. A big event was the installing of a bathroom at the police house and the chance of having a real bath.

As I was eight or nine before I came to Petworth, I never went to the Infants School, just across the road from the Police Station, but went straight to the East Street Girls School, where Miss Wootton was in charge with Miss Carver as her assistant. I can remember having my face slapped by Miss Carver; but as far as I was concerned I had done nothing to deserve it. My father came to the school and complained sharply about it. The school had the usual round "tortoise" stove and a big pot which could be filled with milk and set on the stove top. The children who lived in the town tended to go home for dinner but the "country" children had a hot drink at school. Miss Wootton used to go round the town shops and beg sugar and cocoa for this. There was considerable poverty even then and clothes would be collected and then distributed to those who needed them. Even in the late 1920s it was by no means unusual for children to walk into school barefoot, often from a fair distance. At Christmas time there was a party: during the year Miss Wootton would have collected free samples of things like needle threaders which firms gave out for promotion purposes, and made sure that everyone went home with something. Sweets too would be collected for the party; my mother used to send in a big bag to be shared out as did other parents. On the day we'd break up, we would have a story read to us and we'd go home with our "presents". And very pleased with them we were too. East Street was a Girls School and except for brothers at home "boys" didn't really come on the horizon. Certainly there were no links with the North Street Boys School. My sister and I had private piano lessons from Miss Austin but we didn't like this very much. We weren't allowed to practise because our "front room" which housed the piano, was next to the Police Station office!

My father was very interested in boxing and organised boxing tournaments in the Iron Room. These became extremely popular and well-known locally. Proceeds went to the Cottage Hospital. He had himself been in the Grenadier Guards and most of the boxers came from one Guards regiment or another. I remember my mother making piles of sandwiches for these tournaments, which attracted large audiences. The Iron Room had a pretty fair capacity. Jack Doyle was then in the Irish Guards and I remember sitting on his knees while he sang. He had a lovely voice but was quite unknown then. When he became a public figure we watched his career with great interest.

Lord Leconfield presented the prizes at the boxing promotions: he was a great supporter as was Sir Harry Preston of the Ship Hotel at Brighton, and the reserved seats were always fully taken. I remember when my father was first turning the project over in his mind he wrote to Lord Leconfield. When his lordship's reply came saying, "I will do anything you want," my father, as you may imagine, was highly delighted. Lady Leconfield I hardly ever saw but I do recall the enormous pram the Leconfield's two adopted children had in the 1920s.

After a while my father retired from the police and the family moved to live in the large

house over what is now Threshers in Lombard Street. Our living room took in much of the present shop. At that time the business was owned by Mr Scragg, the farmer from Battlehurst. It so happened that only a month or so after we had moved in, the manager of the wine shop, who lived at Brighton, left suddenly. He just had a room there. I don't know whether he travelled up daily; more probably he went home at weekends. Anyway, at Mr Scragg's request my father took over as manager. As I grew older I helped behind the scenes.

In younger days we spent a lot of time round the Sheepdowns and the Hills. No houses there then. We'd make our own houses in the bracken, go down to the Virgin Mary spring or pick marguerites. Our mothers would give us sandwiches and a bottle of lemonade. No one worried. There were probably unpleasant people about then as much as now but there was such a crowd of us that we felt quite safe. I remember the fields of daffodils at Flexham Park - or picking primroses. We never picked bluebells as they flagged almost as soon as we picked them. We took great pride in bringing our flowers home. Our mothers must have sighed inwardly when they saw yet another lot, but they never said anything. The farmer at Shimmings would let us play in his hay fields building houses but only as long as we kept to one corner. We observed this scrupulously. We knew where the white violets grew and where you could find the harebells. Harebells grew in what is called the Sugar Knob at the top of the Gog. I can't quite locate this memory precisely in time, but I know that a tree was being planted there to celebrate something. Would it be the Silver Jubilee of 1935? If so, this would be long after East Street days but it seems to go with the Girl's School. Anyway there was a patch of harebells the size of a saucer. Every year we'd go up especially to see them and we were very upset to think that they would be removed for the tree to be planted. We thought seriously of writing to Lady Leconfield about it. It was very bold to write to so august a personage and in the end we didn't. It's strange how memory functions, I connect this with my time at the East Street school but to think of writing to Lady Leconfield I must have been older and by the time of the Silver Jubilee I would be eighteen or so.

The East Street Girl's School would go down to the Rectory for Maypole dancing at the Rectory Fête or events like that. I remember the different coloured ribbons forming a pattern as the dance proceeded. Usually it was boy, girl, boy, girl. There might be twenty different ribbons: music at this time was by piano or gramophone. The rector, Mr Powell, was a tall, handsome man but I don't really have any vivid recollection of him. From East Street I won a Taylor Scholarship which enabled me to go to Chichester High School and with some other local girls I caught a taxi from Petworth Market Square to the Station and then went on by train, through to Midhurst and then on through Cocking, Singleton and Lavant. There were often boys from Christ's Hospital on the train. I can't even remember which way they were travelling but young ladies in those days had very strict codes of behaviour and we didn't do more than mentally note their presence, although I think the odd note might have been passed.

In later years I joined the IMPS but it was a long time before I even realised that it was a branch of the Young Conservatives! You'll realise that the political reference was not particularly strident! What did they do? Well, dancing was a prime activity; people like Jack Bartlett were great dancers and dances might be held either at the Angel or at the Iron Room. There was late night sausage cooking, too, at the Gog. Dancing might also be at the Club Room

in High Street (now Chalcrafts). A band? Not that I recall. I think we danced to a gramophone. Stoolball was another outlet and a good social thing because it involved going out to the outlying villages. I wasn't a terribly good player but if I were lucky could just about get into the team.

Petworth between the wars Does anyone remember Tilly? She was an old lady the children used to think a little odd. Once she gave me a smile and handed me a bag from Knights the bakers in Lombard Street with a cake in it. I threw it away. Children don't respect other people's feelings and the old lady would have meant it kindly enough. I often think of it now with some regret. For us children Mr and Mrs Palmer's sweet shop at the bottom of High Street was important. It was probably the place to spend your Saturday half-penny - but not necessarily. One person in there stuck rigidly to the weight: the other put in an extra sweet to tip the balance. We'd come down first to see who was on before deciding. One sweet shop we didn't patronise was Mrs Tyrell's little one in North Street, it didn't appeal to us - although no doubt it did to many others. Children have their own prejudices.

The slaughter house was opposite our house in Lombard Street and the butcher's men were continually cleaning the street with buckets of water. Curiously it didn't make a great deal of impression on me, even though it was right outside our house. There was a library in East Street - in the Institute I think - and open two hours a week. The ladies who looked after it seemed to me quite old, and banned virtually every book I wanted to read, Thomas Hardy included. "No, dear, your father wouldn't approve." Perhaps my father's links with the police had something to do with this. I think I was allowed to read Ethel M. Dell; I can't think where else I could have got these books, perhaps the old ladies didn't realise what was in these bodice-ripping tales. Dr Druitt's wife lived in Grove Street then and used to lend me books (not Ethel M. Dell I imagine!) and was very kind. I remember her saying that when their new home was built in Grove Street they shortened the length by one brick width and saved £80!

Milk was still delivered by cart, when we were at the Police Station, two or three times a day, the householder taking a jug out to the churn. I have had a life-long aversion to milk and cream and I think it goes back to the warm milk that always came from the churn! The herring man was a welcome figure (up from Shoreham I think). One of us would be sent out with sixpence to buy from him. They were a great treat for tea.

If we were given a penny we might well use it to get the bus to the Welldiggers, then walk back. Or we might perhaps do it the other way, walking there and bussing back. We loved coming down the hill with the view of Sheepdown. One Good Friday a gang of us went to the top of Duncton Hill and walked to Whiteways. I remember the springiness of the turf still. I am sure we did this only once.

For a time there was a rather informal Sunday School in Nurse Moorman's house in New Street with Miss Whitcomb in charge. I don't know how this related to the "official" Sunday School and it didn't seem to go on very long. Miss Whitcomb rather startled us with a comic song which involved doing a comic jig. We enjoyed it as being rather different from what we expected. Nurse Moorman had the agency for Typhoo Tea, I imagine she weighed it out from bulk - I don't know.

Mothering Sunday we went to church to be given a little bouquet of primroses or violets

to take home to Mother. Our parents were quite strict: we weren't allowed to go off down to the November fair, it was considered dangerous although in later years we might get half an hour in the company of brothers. Nor were we allowed to pick up the money thrown out by the Goodwood traffic: this went to the Red Cross (I think). Other children made a practice of getting people to "throw out your rusty coppers". The British Legion fete in the Park was Petworth's equivalent of a Village Day and much liked. The Park was very much a part of our world. Once we saw the end of the rainbow, and felt that if we had spades we might dig it up, even if we really knew that the end of the rainbow was something like Father Christmas, not quite as accessible as sometimes appeared. We were often in the Park and never felt it to be alien territory. We had a vague feeling that we were not to go too near the front of the House, but for all that the Park was a welcoming place for those who respected it. Once we stole toward a sweet chestnut tree within sight of the House, picked up the chestnuts and ran for our lives.

Iris Shew (née Wareham) was talking to the Editor.

"I'll see if you can come home with us"

As I remember, September 3rd 1939 was a Sunday. We assembled at Stonhouse Street School in Clapham. It's still there. While we were in the playground the air-raid sirens sounded and a policeman cycled past the school shouting that war had been declared. It was about eleven o'clock in the morning. I didn't know then, but we were to leave London that very day, to be 'evacuated'. In fact I didn't go with my school to Reading because my mother insisted on coming with my younger brother and me, the other children apparently weren't accompanied by their parents. My mother wasn't having any of that: if her children were going she was going too, hence I became separated from my schoolmates and went by train to Victoria. Pulborough our destination? I've always assumed so, but it seems from Garland photographs of the time that we left the train at Billingshurst and continued on to Lodsworth by coach.

As I have said, my mother remained with us, my younger brother Derick and me, so perhaps it was a little less traumatic for us than for other children packed off suddenly into a darkening countryside, for most of them totally unfamiliar. I can remember scrunching with my feet on the gravel outside the station.

In fact we were taken, with other children, to Lodsworth, my brother, my mother and I. My father, of course, would stay at home in Clapham. As a carpenter by trade he was employed working on bailey bridges. Local people were gathered in a hall at Lodsworth, waiting to allot evacuees to families. Mrs Killian König from Hurlands seemed a leading figure and when I found that she had a farm, I simply followed her everywhere she went. I didn't want to lose the chance of living on a farm. My efforts were wasted for it eventually turned out that Mrs König already had evacuees and had not room for anyone else. She did, however, fix us up with someone. I was in my element, not missing London at all, and intoxicated by the smells of the country. I didn't know much about farms; but I certainly liked

the idea of living on one. Holidays had always been by the seaside at Ramsgate.

Our first experience was hardly a happy one. The couple with whom we were placed were well-meaning enough but very elderly and somewhat old-fashioned. Everything was on a very formal basis. They sat at one end of the kitchen table and our family at the other. Even our food was kept separate. Eventually there was some kind of disagreement and my mother decided to take us back to London. Off we went to sit by the Three Moles to catch the train from Selham station. We were early and sitting on the steps outside the pub with all our belongings when Mr King, the Mitford Estate gamekeeper, rode by on his bicycle to get some tobacco. My mother was crying and he asked her what was the matter. My mother explained and he told us to wait. "I'll see if you can come home with us". In no time at all he was back with the news that we could stay with him and his wife. Mrs König came and collected us and our belongings in her car. I can still see Mrs King coming down the garden path to greet us.

My brother and I were, curiously enough, the first evacuees the Kings had, although they would finish up with four. My mother went as live-in cook for Mrs König at Hurlands, so we were effectively Mrs King's responsibility. In a roundabout way I now got my initial wish, to work on a farm! Saturdays and school holidays I helped with the poultry at Hurlands: even teaching the Land Girls how to grade eggs. Mrs König looked after the poultry, her husband the cattle. I think the family was of Dutch extraction and they moved from Hurlands after the war. They had getting on for a couple of hundred hens. The period up to Christmas was always a very busy one, feeding up the cockerels, then the plucking.

When we first arrived, I went to Lodsworth school. I was eleven. A girls school had been evacuated to Lodsworth and I think the evacuees and the local children were taught separately. I seemed to fall somewhere in between the two! At Graffham, however, evacuees and locals mixed together. The evacuees were from the Elephant and Castle area in London, while Miss Beevor was headmistress, assisted by Mrs Robbins who also looked after the school dinners. We walked into school from Barnetts, and to save my little brother, eight years my junior, staying at Barnetts all day, Miss Beevor let him come along with me. Mr and Mrs King had a son, Ron, five years younger than I was.

Mr King liked to involve us in what he was doing as a gamekeeper. He was strict but very fair. As this time pheasant shoots were still going on, in fact pheasant was a useful source of meat. Charlie Howard would come in from Petworth in the lorry to pick up the birds. I am not sure whether the pheasants were actually reared during the war, but Mr King would certainly go out and feed them with corn.

Mrs King only burned wood in her stove and I used to help Mr King cut up logs, sitting at the other end of a cross-cut saw. At this time Barnetts Cottages had no electricity, gas, or running water, water had to be brought from a natural spring in the woods. Unfortunately it was at the bottom of a steep slope, downhill with the empty bucket, uphill with the full one! I'd have to do this two or three times a day, particularly at weekends or in the evening. The water tumbled over a wooden box put there for the purpose and I'd collect it as it ran over the box. There was actually a rotary pump to bring the water up the hill but we found this harder work than lugging it up manually in the bucket. Very often it didn't work at all.



"Scrunching with my feet on the gravel outside the station..."
Evacuees at Billingshurst station in September 1939.
See "I'll see if you can come home with us."
[Photograph by George Garland.]

order, which followed at the end of the week. Meat was delivered, I think, by Speeds from Petworth. The Kings didn't seem to go into Petworth, a long way from Graffham in those relatively car-less days. Mr King's travel horizons lay within the daily cycle ride he made in connection with his work. He still made his own cider, while early autumn blackberrying was very important: Mrs King made prodigious quantities of blackberry and apple jam.

As I grew older I had a 4-10 small bore shotgun for rabbits. We were never bored - if nothing else, there was always something to be done in the garden. In the summer we would play for hours in the small river at the bottom of the garden - six inches deep but still a river to us.

At Selham there was a searchlight crew at Teddy Hills's farm and another at Hurlands. Mrs King took in washing for the people at Teddy Hills' and would sometimes put up their wives for the weekend if they came to see their husbands. They were uniformed men. I remember, too, seeing Canadians and that there were Italian prisoners of war working in the fields at Graffham. In the summer we might work at Courts' Fruit Farm, picking soft fruit.

I finished school at Graffham and left in 1943. The blitz was not over yet but it was time for me to return to London. I never forgot my days at Graffham and still go and see Mrs King and Ron.

Ron Probert was talking to the Editor.

A Housekeeper's Lore

Alison Neil's engaging presentation of Mrs Beeton's life story no doubt provoked thoughts in many minds about cooking and household management as they have changed in the period since Mrs Beeton in some ways revolutionised domestic routine. It is extraordinary to think that Isabella Beeton was but in her twenty-ninth year when she died. Such thoughts can only be further focused by a handwritten book of several hundred recipes owned by Sheila Savill, grand-niece of Mrs Leversuch, housekeeper at Petworth House from 1933 to 1938 and formerly the property of her great-aunt. Many of the recipes are instantly recognisable today but this should not disguise how much has changed. It is what the book does **not** contain that is the indicator for change. Here is no "ethnic" cookery, pasta or curry, and recipes are tailored to seasonal availability. Aubergines, peppers, garlic and tomatoes find no place here and vegetables are cooked longer than is customary today. Freezing would not be in a modern refrigerator but using actual ice, mixing would be by hand, kneading hard physical work, bottling standard practice, sealed with a "bladder". The latest dated recipe in the book is from 1940 but the bulk will reflect the situation between the wars. Some clearly predate the 1914-1918 war. This is the cooking of the great houses, or part of it, that shadowy range between the stillroom and the chef's empire. Often enough May Leversuch would be part of a small household with direct responsibility for cooking: at a larger establishment, like Petworth, her duties would be administrative and the chef in charge of formal meals.

Mrs Leversuch's career has been briefly sketched in magazine 92. It will be recalled

that, while Sheila Savill gave us a fair background, her great-aunt had offered her virtually no specific recollection of her days at Petworth. Mrs Leversuch had the, on the face of it, unenviable task of taking over from the almost legendary Mrs Cownley who had held, and virtually redefined, the position of housekeeper at Petworth since before the 1914-1918 war and was still living in the town. Whereas all those to whom we have spoken about life below stairs at Petworth were young and at, or near, the very bottom of the servants' ladder of seniority, indeed often in their early teens when they came to Petworth, Sheila's memories of her great-aunt gave access, if indirect and vicarious, to a previous generation, already senior when those with whom we had spoken were very young. What Sheila could not do of course, was to give direct access to Mrs Leversuch who died in 1979, she could only show us what survived among her great-aunt's possessions and hint at a background, carefully preserved no doubt from the prying eyes of a younger, perhaps less respectful generation. Sheila had one anecdote from Petworth, a story told by her great-aunt against herself. A junior housemaid had gone to Worthing for the day and noticed a shop sign reading "Leversuch, Fishmonger". When the housemaid came back to Petworth, she was bold enough to ask Mrs Leversuch if this was a relation. "Certainly not," replied the housekeeper. In fact the fishmonger was her brother, but it wasn't for lower servants to penetrate such mysteries.

May Leversuch came originally from Netherhampton on the outskirts of Salisbury and, from humble beginnings in a large family, fashioned a very successful career in service. The "Mrs" of course was a courtesy title, for May never married. As a quick-witted girl, never afraid of hard work, she progressed up the servants' scale with a succession of prestigious and responsible posts like Petworth or, later, Mentmore. Prestigious posts but certainly no sinecures. May's life in service had been broken by a period working as a conductress on the London trams during the 1914-1918 war; not surprisingly she ended up with a job in the office. She does not seem particularly to have felt the release of "ringing the bell instead of answering it", for she returned to service after the war, making way for the men returning to a world of meagre employment prospects. She confided to Sheila however that the need to make way for the returning men was the main factor in her leaving the trams.

Mrs Leversuch's recipe book (still used by Sheila Savill) is sufficiently battered to suggest it followed her on her travels, a kind of culinary vade-mecum. May was often in Scotland, the front and back papers make mention of Eglinton Castle in Ayrshire (the Countess of Eglinton), Drummond Castle in Perthshire (the Countess of Ancaster), and the Marchioness of Tweedsdale, as well as, south of the border, the Earl of Durham and Mrs Vyner a wealthy lady who spent her winters in the South of France. May had three and a half years each with the Countess of Ancaster and Mrs Vyner and was presumably happy with them. Other stays averaged eighteen months. A desire to move up the ladder of service would require frequent moves; as a gardener Fred Streeter moved virtually every year in his early days. Mrs Vyner clearly had a somewhat peripatetic lifestyle and a number of alternative London addresses for May's titled employers in Belgravia and Berkeley Square testify to her acquaintance with the London "season".

As to how the 148 pages were put together it is difficult to be definite; the grouping of recipes by subject does not suggest that they have been added one by one during a career

moving from one aristocratic household to another. Perhaps the rather desultory ordering by subject suggests one or more later rewritings. Certainly different positions would require different concentration: an employer like Mrs Vyner would probably need a good deal of cooking in a small household, while at Petworth the kitchen was a separate autonomous department with a chef and several kitchenmaids. We can only say that May Leversuch was clearly a very competent cook if she needed to be.

The book is too comprehensive for more than a few recipes to be give here, and it begins, appropriately enough, with household bread. It was still a time when home breadmaking was the norm, proving for an hour, kneading for ten minutes, baking for about an hour in a "sharp" oven. A note at the end recommends: "Always put $\frac{1}{4}$ lb more salt than yeast." The first recipes are all flour-based, scones of all kinds, buns, girdle cakes, endless permutations on the theme of flour, butter, sugar and eggs, reflecting a time perhaps when afternoon tea was more an institution than it is nowadays. Queen cakes are just one variation among many.

" $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of sugar
10ozs of flour
4 eggs and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of baking powder
Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs one by one, add flour and
bake in various shaped tins in sharp oven."

There follows a veritable army of cakes and buns, madeira, fairy cakes, "lightning" cake, and so many others, drop cakes, Shrewsbury cakes, and all manner of biscuits - the latter would be home-made in the best households. Sometimes May offers just the mix as for ground rice cake; ground rice and lemon peel make the differentia here. With a few extra ingredients the permutations can become almost bewildering. Here is Cupid's cake: " $\frac{1}{4}$ lb of butter, 3 eggs and 1 yolk. Beat until quite light. Add 3 drops essence of almonds, 1 tablespoon of cream, 2ozs flour, 2ozs ground rice. Mix lightly and bake in small buttered tins."

A brief excursion into salt sticks, toffee, potato cake and we are back with another variation on the time-honoured theme - Headingley biscuits: "1oz of sugar, 3ozs of butter, 4ozs of flour, 1 egg. Cream butter and sugar. Add egg and flour." Again cooking instructions are absent. May would know. Quantities are small, another day's tea would call for a different variation perhaps. Again we have a whole legion of cakes; ginger, swiss roll, plum, chocolate, lemon cheese, yeast buns, another madeira recipe. There are often alternative recipes for well-known items like these. Oatcakes and oatmeal biscuits figure prominently, and one thinks of May's extensive sojourns in Scotland. Christmas cake is a larger undertaking both in quantity and variety of ingredients, including a tea cup of brandy and 12 eggs. Instructions are to "bake in a steady oven 8 or 9 hours". Wedding cake needs $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs of currants in brandy, half that quantity of sultanas, 28 eggs and ten hours baking. Clearly May could move from the smaller scale of afternoon tea to the large event with some adroitness.

As we move through the book, some recipes are marked with a particular place or employer. Château St. Anne, Mrs Vyner's home on the French Riviera being prominent. Clearly employers had their own pet recipes which they expected their servants to prepare for

them. Here are Mrs Vyner's scones; there are no cooking instructions, just the mix:

"4 handfuls of flour, 1 spoonful of butter, 1 tea-spoon
and a half of bicarbonate of soda. Mix with sour milk
to a soft dough."

I suppose such scones might be made daily as required. Mrs Vyner's water biscuits are a kindred item. May will no doubt have cooked this recipe many times, hardly needing her book at all:

"1lb of flour, 1oz of butter rubbed in, 1 tea-spoon of
salt. Mix with new milk and bake in steady oven gradually."

Lady Northcote's milk bread for toast is another of these "in house" recipes, no doubt tried at other houses, but basically the particular favourite of a particular employer. We are, with breadmaking, of course back to our initial starting-point, the recipe book is a kind of culinary carousel. " $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs of flour, 1ozs of yeast, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz of butter. Dissolve butter and yeast with warm milk. Mix with flour to a light dough and knead well. Set to rise one hour. Make up into two loaves and set to rise again. Bake in hot oven about three quarters of an hour."

Spices, as we have noted, are used very sparingly and the ethnic condiments, so usual today, hardly appear at all. Some traditional recipes did however call for a determined use of spice. Here is May's recipe for Simnel cake:

"6ozs butter, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb sultanas, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb of peel, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of raisins, $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of currants, 6ozs sugar, 1 tea-spoon mixed spice, 1 tea-spoon cinnamon, 1 tea-spoon ground ginger, 1 tea-spoon baking powder, a little ground nutmeg, 4 eggs, 1 tea-cup of milk.

Beat butter and sugar to a cream. Beat egg well. Add flour and fruit, sprinkle with water and dust with sugar. Bake $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours. To be cut in a month."

Has anyone heard of Sir Charles Forbes' cake? "7ozs cornflour, 7ozs of sugar, 4ozs butter, 3 eggs. Mix like pound cake. Moderate oven". Silver cake and golden cake differ with the use in the mix of white and yolk of eggs. Otherwise flour, milk, butter and baking powder are the staples. Old Maid's cake is another variation: "Beat $\frac{1}{2}$ lb butter with $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of sugar for 15 minutes. Add gradually 5 eggs into $\frac{3}{4}$ lb of flour, mix $\frac{1}{2}$ lb of currants. Add lightly to the mixture. Moderate oven 2 hours."

There follow cakes and biscuits of all kinds; occasionally a date appears, a recipe for short-cake, one of several, comes from 1920. I wonder who makes Turkish Delight now, a mixture of gelatine, loaf sugar and water boiled for twenty minutes, turned into soup plates, then variously flavoured, set and cut, then rolled in icing sugar. "A few almonds greatly improve it." Lady Northcote's soda scones bring us back to the "magnetic north", afternoon tea. "6ozs of flour, 1oz sultanas, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ozs butter, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz sugar, 1 egg, pinch of salt, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of cream of tartar, pinch bicarbonate of soda, a little milk, roll out and brush over with egg. Sharp oven." The small quantities suggest very labour intensive work, scones prepared fresh every day.

Icing was obviously a skill May Leversuch had had to learn and obviously she was as proficient here as elsewhere: royal, almond, chocolate, icing for piping only, vienna (fresh butter flavoured with rum or maraschino) all jostle for attention and there are many more, here too are coconut ice and marzipan potatoes, then another flurry of cakes.

Vanilla ice is a standard recipe, to be varied with coffee, maraschino, or pineapple (the last considerably more complex.) For vanilla: "Boil 1½ pints of milk, remove from fire. Add half a bar of vanilla, cover up. Put into basin ten or twelve yolks of eggs, 10ozs of sugar. Whip slightly. Add slowly the hot milk. Strain it into copper pan which must be tinned on the inside. Put in vanilla, turn to cream with wooden spoon on stove. Stir gradually and quickly to mix thoroughly. Do not boil. Add ½pt of thick cream. Strain again into basin. Allow to cool. Work a little from time to time to prevent it from setting. Put it into freezer and freeze in the usual way from 15 to 20 minutes. Lest the word "freezer" have a modern connotation we should note at the end "For freezing. To 6lbs of ice (broken) mix 2lbs of freezing salt." Here are two household hints, the first so far.

Lavender for linen.

"Gather lavender flowers when full blown. Lay out on paper in dry, sunny room for a day or two. When dry rub flowers off stalks and put flowers into muslin bags to lay among household linen."

Pot Pourri

"First dry in a sunny room rose leaves, lavender, lemon verbena and any other sweet smelling leaf. When dry add ½lb powdered orriss root, ¼lb powdered cloves, 2 sticks of cinnamon, powdered, two ounces allspice, one ounce bergamotte, one dram of musk. Sprinkle all over rose leaves and mix thoroughly."

Instructions on removing sunburn follow after some more cakes and biscuits. This may well be a memento of May's years with Mrs Vyner:

To remove sunburn

"Squeeze juice of 1 lemon into small tea-cup of new milk. Allow it to curdle. Apply it to the face and throat with a piece of cotton wool after having been out in the sun or the last thing at night. Allow it to remain on the skin for a short time then wash it off with tepid soft water. This will remove all heat and tan from the face."

Prune medicine seems a pragmatic recipe!

"1lb of prunes
1lb of dem. sugar
1oz ground ginger. Good weight.
1½oz powdered senna
1½ glasses of brandy

Just cover prunes with water and simmer slow till soft. Pass through sieve and while still hot add other ingredients. Mix brandy and senna well together before adding to the prunes. Dose 1 teaspoon."

From this brief incursion into the medicinal we return to cakes and biscuits. As we have seen, the book is very much slated to afternoon tea. Braco castle chocolate drop biscuits, éclairs de Paris, petit choux pastry, and many more, the Robertsons "golly" badge begins to adorn the pages. Here at last (page 114) is a recipe specifically marked as Petworth. It reads:

Rusks. Very good. Tried at Petworth.

1lb of flour, 10ozs of butter, ½oz of caster sugar, 1oz of yeast, pinch of salt, 1 table-spoon of cream, 2 yolks of eggs, a little warm milk. Bake as for bread. After it's cooled, cut into slices,

dry thoroughly and then brown a golden brown in the oven."

Clearly May Leversuch combined her administrative duties at Petworth with some light cooking, although it would be the chef's task to prepare more formal meals.

Recipes follow for Yorkshire pudding, suet pudding, scrambled eggs, kedgerree, toadin the hole made with pieces of steak. Cooking times for vegetables seem very long by today's standards - half an hour for cabbage with a little soda to retain colour, the same for cauliflower, the same or a little less for sprouts, green peas about twenty minutes. Irish stew calls for "neck of mutton", as does Scotch broth.

A section is devoted to bottling fruit, very much a feature of the period between the wars. These are the standard instructions to bottle gooseberries but repeated with insignificant variations for many other fruits:

"Take some wide necked bottles and choose some perfectly sound gooseberrys. Put them into the bottles (nearly full). Put 2ozs of caster sugar in each and nearly cover with water. Cover the bottles with bladder so as to make them perfectly air tight. Place them in a preserving pan and put cold water up to the necks of bottles. Let it gradually come to the boil and boil about ten minutes after. Leave them in the pan water until next day or until quite cool. Place them in a cool dry place.

It is wise to put some hay or stiff packing paper between each bottle during boiling so as to prevent them from cracking."

There follow, logically enough, the jams and bellies, damson cheese, rowan jelly, gooseberry jelly, quince jelly, a good couple of dozen in all, the marmalades - many of the great houses seem to have had their own particular variation, marrow pickle, apple rum and chutney. The last recipe is for preserving french beans for winter.

"Take some perfectly dry beans and cut them ready for cooking. Then put a layer of salt and beans alternately into an earthenware jar until full. Tie down securely. When required for use take some out of the brine and soak in cold water for a few hours and boil with one lump of sugar. They will be found as fresh as when first gathered."

P. Courtesy of Miss Sheila Savill

Memoirs by Hugh Whitcomb

This is a selection from a larger typescript containing the memoirs of the late Hugh Whitcomb. It will have been written in the 1970s. The memories are very much of a "mixed bag" but there is a good deal here that has no parallel elsewhere. I would be interested in any comments. I do not know a great deal about Hugh Whitcomb other than what can be deduced from the typescript. I have added the title headings myself. I do not think this material has been published elsewhere. (Ed.).

1) *The Whitcomb family*

I was born at Petworth in 1898 when Queen Victoria was still on the throne.

Our little family, two boys and one girl, lived in a row of 6 terraced houses which had been built early in the 19th century and rejoiced in the name of 'Cherry Row'. There was no bathroom and I never knew of the existence of such a thing elsewhere in the town although I imagine there might have been one in a few of the larger houses. It was a fact, of course, that in those days most town and country mansions did not boast of a bathroom. We hadn't even water laid on to the house, all ablutions being done in a little building called a washhouse, about 6 feet from the back door. Here also was the lavatory and a copper for washing clothes. Illumination was by paraffin oil lamps downstairs and candles for the bedrooms. Heating was by coal fires augmented by logs when available.

Coal gas was obtainable from a small gas installation built in 1836 by the Lord of the Manor, mainly I imagine for use in his own residence, Petworth House. It was made available for use by the townsfolk but it was very expensive so that few could afford to have it laid on.

There are, or rather were, two distinct families of Whitcombs in Petworth. I say "were" as only two members of the "other family" are still living in the town, one being my cousin Gladys Morley and the other her Aunt Winifred Whitcomb who is 92. "Aunt" Win never married.

Cousin Gladys has a "foot in both Camps" as it were, her father being my father's brother Bob (landlord of the Wheatsheaf Inn for over 50 years) and her mother the former Lucy Whitcomb, a member of the "other family" who was a sister of "Aunt" Win.

When Uncle Bob and Aunt Lucy married circa 1898 both families got together and the talk naturally turned to discussion as to what relation the bride was to the bridegroom, nobody doubting that they were relatives.

According to "Aunt" Win - the only one of that wedding party still alive - the final consensus of opinion was that they were third cousins.

Next door to our terraced cottage in Cherry Row in Petworth High Street lived a widow, Mrs Susan Whitcomb. Her husband, Felix, had died in early middle age leaving her to look after their seven children. She must have been widowed round about 1892 long before the advent of State pensions or Social Security and her husband having been a carpenter, rather fond of the bottle and often without work must have left her penniless. I know she took in lodgers who apparently were the source of the only income she had. Despite this, Mrs Felix, as she was always called, proved a very good friend to our little family on more than one occasion when our mother had to go to a London hospital, as the greathearted soul took my sister, brother and me into her cottage and looked after us as though we were her own children.

By this time five of her seven children had gone out into the world, leaving the two youngest, Tom and Susan, at home. Accommodation being very limited the five of us slept sideways in a double bed! Nevertheless, despite the lack of most of the good things in life there was always an atmosphere of boisterous good humour.

2) *M.J.'s Insurance Company*

Moving on a dozen year or so to 1919 I was demobilised from the Army just before my 21st birthday and being without qualifications of any kind was at a lost to know what kind

of job to look for. Our dear old friend and relative (Mrs Felix) had, some years before, left the cottage next door and though the generosity of her son Hubert John was now living comfortably in a villa in Thornton Heath (South London). We had heard vaguely that Hubert had obtained a good job, something to do with the AA and MU - two motoring organisations viz. the Automobile Association and Motor Union which had amalgamated, now known, of course, as the AA - and as the two families were still in touch I wrote to Mrs Felix and asked her if she could put me in touch with Hubert.

This she did and within a few days I had a letter from him asking me to call at 10 St. James's Street (off Piccadilly). The letter heading showed that he was the General Manager of the Motor Union Insurance Company. The outcome was that I was taken on the staff and posted to the City of London branch where I remained for 42 years.

I soon learnt the amazing story of how H.J., as all his staff called him, had left the Petworth Boys' School before he was 14, entered domestic service in a country house, frequently studied into the early hours and finally went to London and with no qualifications or introductions talked his way into a job with the Law Accident Insurance Company. He was then 18 and at 21 was made West End branch manager for his company. This was the year 1902 when motoring was in its infancy, and his company was the first to insure a motor car. In fact a few years ago there was a talk on the radio about the early days of motoring when the speaker, Jack de Manio, said that H.J. issued the first car insurance policy. He next moved to the Car & General Insurance Company as Assistant Secretary.

In those days the police were very busy trapping motorists exceeding the speed limit of 12 miles per hour and to counteract this the AA put cycle patrols on the roads to warn their members about a police trap in the vicinity. A simple scheme was devised: if the way was clear the AA scout saluted the member displaying the Association's badge but if he had spotted a trap he omitted to do so. As a result of this practically every motorist in the country became a member of the AA. This fact did not escape the notice of H.J., then aged 25, who went to see the AA committee and suggested that they form an Insurance Company to cover members' cars as they would thus "corner" the car insurance market. This was done, with H.J. as General Manager and so the Motor Union Insurance Company was born (in 1906). It turned out to be a veritable bonanza, making fabulous profits year after year. H.J. kept buying his company shares and by the time he reached his thirties he had become a millionaire! My brother-in-law, Archie Wells, joined the Motor Union in 1911 and my brother and I in 1919.

Soon after I had settled down in my job in the City H.J. decided to resign from the Motor Union in order to start a fresh career. He floated a public company to engage in the manufacture of a light motor car in an endeavour to compete with the Americans who were flooding the British market with the T model Ford car. He chose the "Bean" car made by Harper Bean of Coventry, which was already selling well in Britain. An important part of his plan was not only to make the cars but to sell them as well so he acquired premises in all the big towns which were to be used as showrooms. Unfortunately the vast enterprise had hardly got going when the "moulders" at Coventry decided to strike and held out for a period of nine months so that not a single "Bean" car was made during that period. The result was that the

giant "British Motor Trading Corporation" collapsed and no more "Bean" cars were made. The shareholders lost their money and the car workers their jobs. In 1920/1 no government money was made available to save the company from bankruptcy. It was not until all this happened that it became known that H.J. was somewhat more than a millionaire as he had lost nearly a million of his own money in the collapse.

3) *Early days in Petworth*

There were three Church elementary schools in the town, one for infants up to the age of six, when the girls went on to their own building and the boys to theirs. I remember that the boys school had the date it was founded engraved on the entrance porch and I believe this also was 1836.

I went to the Infant School at the age of 3, taken there daily - a walk of a few hundred yards - by my sister who is 17 months my senior. In those days, believe it or not, small boys were dressed like their sisters, in frocks and petticoats, but before I, and my contemporaries at least, transferred to the Boys' School at the age of six we were promoted to woollen jerseys and short trousers (we called them knickers). It was fortunate that the headmaster and his principal assistant at the boys' school when I arrived were both able and dedicated teachers. The subjects they taught were basically the three R's, viz. reading, writing and arithmetic plus history and geography and I spent eight happy years with them. The headmaster, Alfred Wootton, (otherwise Old Mick) was a lover of the English language and to those among us who were interested - rather less than 100% - he instilled a liking for reading and essay writing.

During my school days England was a vastly different place from what it is to-day. The only motor vehicles that I remember was one owned by his lordship and one by one of three local doctors. All other traffic was horse drawn. One of the doctors used to visit patients living outside the town on horseback as did the Rector when visiting members of his flock in outlying districts.

As soon as my brother and I were old enough we joined the choir at the Parish Church, thus following our father's example. He had a beautiful rich alto voice. There were 6 men and 2 boys, all Whitcombs, members of the choir during my time. We had three practices a week and this put me off Handel's Messiah for ever as it still reminds me of glorious summer evenings being confined to St. Thomas's chapel rehearsing "fling wide the gates" over and over again whilst being able to hear other boys outside playing cricket.

As regards Sundays we choirboys used to attend both morning and evening church services and Sunday school in the afternoons. As if we had not had enough of the irascible choirmaster we had to belong to the Choral Society which meant another practice at least one evening a week. Oh, I nearly forgot to say that, incredible though it may seem, we choirboys were made to wear mortarboards on Sundays. We found them very useful to shy at sweet chestnuts in the autumn.

Then there were outings for the choirboys once a year. I remember three trips to London, one each to Earls Court, Shepherds Bush and the Crystal Palace - all Exhibitions. The Exhibition at Shepherds Bush was the Franco-British and I had a whole 1/- to spend (5p). One half of this (2½p) I spent on the Flip-Flap and the other half on a prayer book for my mother. I have it in front of me now. It is dated 1908. There was also an annual outing for the songsters,

men and boys, who 'entertained' at the farmers' audit feasts. We used to spend a day at Brighton, travelling in a horse-drawn char-a-banc called the 'Favourite'. This was a long journey for the two horses, something like 50/60 miles in a day. They were pretty busy animals as they normally pulled the station bus. This was a heavily built vehicle much like a stage coach. There was straw on the floor and the vehicle was lit inside by candles stuck in lanterns. Another job they did was to draw the manually operated fire-engine. If the fire broke out while the bus had gone to the station, well it just had to burn until it returned.

To get back to Brighton. As soon as we arrived there, the choirmaster told us where to meet for lunch then disappeared with the rest of the men into the nearest pub. There were no licensing hours in those days. In the afternoon we all went on the Palace Pier to listen to Mr Amer's military type band, which seemed to be there year after year. Some 40 years later, whilst staying in a Dartmoor village I was introduced to a very old lady who proved to be Mr Amer's widow.

At the turn of the century the Parish Church was restored and a corrugated iron building was erected behind the Westminster Bank to serve as a temporary church. As it turned out this remained in use as a sort of Village Hall for between 50 and 60 years. It was always known as the Iron Room.

One of the entertainments put on there was by a minstrel troupe. In imitation of the American Christy minstrels a number of the choirmen would black their faces and sing negro spirituals, accompanied by the choirmaster on the piano and at least one of the singers on a banjo. The well-known Mr Dick Blackman of Arundel invariably provided the 'comic' relief whilst Mr Walter Dawtrey acted as 'corner-man' playing the bones.

The Baden Powell Boy Scout movement was very popular, a Patrol being formed within a year or so of its inauguration. The first Scoutmaster was the Curate, the Rev. Mr Berry, who apparently had a private income as he spent his own money quite lavishly on the boys. A favourite pastime of his was to buy a large joint of beef which we took in our 'trek cart' to the chalk pit near 'Bishops Clump', (a ring of trees) at the top of Duncton Hill. We then lit a fire with the proverbial two matches and tried to barbecue the lovely joint which was invariably burnt outside and underdone in the middle. On one memorable occasion we walked to Bognor where we camped for a week or so in bell tents in a small field right on the front nearly opposite the pier. What would boys aged 10 to 12 think to-day of walking 18/20 miles at a stretch?

I suppose I was about 12 years old when we saw our first aeroplane. One June evening as the congregation was leaving the church after Sunday service an extraordinary looking object, something like a huge box kite appeared, heading west. All the young, and some not so young, people chased after it and saw it land in a meadow behind Tillington House. This was the home of Colonel Kennet, then retired but formerly a member of the King's Bodyguard, and the pilot of the plane was one of his 4 sons, all army officers. They were all killed quite early in the 1st Great War (1914/18) and in 1916 I came across the grave of one of them behind the trench line near the village of Festabert, (northern France).

To be continued.

New Members

- Miss J. Gumbrell, The Old Bakery, Byworth, Petworth.
Mrs E. Lee, 21 Viking Place, Burnley, Lancs., BB10 1DA.
Mr & Mrs N.F. Smellie, 4 Churchwood, Limbourne Lane, Fittleworth, Pulborough.
Mr & Mrs G. Stevenson, 3 South Grove, Petworth, GU28 0ED.
Mr A.J. Vinson, Oak Crest, Charing Heath Road, Charing, Kent, TN17 0AT.
Dr & Mrs P. Waugh, Coultershaw Farmhouse, Coultershaw, Petworth.
Mr B. Westlake, 5 Windor Grove, Bodmin, Cornwall, PL31 2BP.
Mrs D. Wilkinson, 4 Prospect Place, Totley Rise, Sheffield, S17 4HZ.
Mrs F. Marsland, 25 Manor Court, Newland, Sherborne, Dorset.
Mr & Mrs Earwicker, 3 Grinstead Place, Lancing, Sussex.
Mr & Mrs R. Oakley, 7 Grove Lane, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs P. Exall, 13 Willett Close, Duncton.
Mr & Mrs Craddock, Rectory Cottage, North Street, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs Ridgway, Paddock House, Gore Hill, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs Sosland, Horseshoe Cottage, Upperton, Petworth.
Mr J.H. Harrison, 46 Elmleigh, Midhurst.
Mr & Mrs Sinker, Hiltonbury Farmhouse Hotel, North Millers Dale, Chandlers Ford,
Eastleigh.
- Miss S. Buckroyd, 2 White Hart Cottages, High Street, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs Gilpin, 19 Greatpin Croft, Fittleworth.
Mr R. Burrows, Apple Tree Cottage, Kirdford, Billingshurst.
Mr B. Peacock, 7 Dawtrey Road, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs R. Bolton, 3 Heathfield Close, Midhurst.
Father D. Pollard, St Mary's Rectory, Petworth.
Mr N. Callingham, c/o Miss R. Callingham, Grove Lane, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs A. Coney, Homefelde, Midhurst Road, Tillington.
Mrs J. Chatwood, 341 Cherry Row, High Street, Petworth.
Mr & Mrs K.M. Bridger, Fitzhall Lodge, Iping, Midhurst.
Mr & Mrs M. Oakland, Mill Farm Cottage, Lurgashall, Nr Petworth.

