

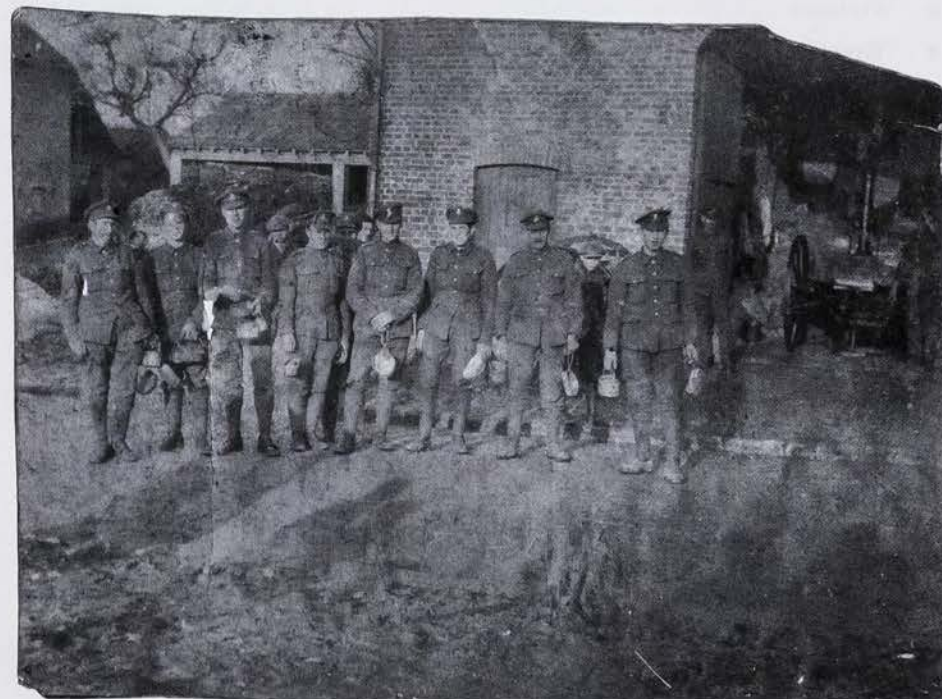
THE PETWORTH SOCIETY
magazine

No. 156, June 2014



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With the Royal Sussex in Belgium.

The printer will do his best with this faded survival but the poverty of the reproduction symbolises lost memories of a war which is now beyond direct recall and experience. The field kitchen on the right will be that portrayed in our main pictures.

Courtesy Mr John Hall.

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CONSTITUTION AND OFFICERS

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

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

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

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WEBSITE

www.petworthsociety.co.uk

FRONT COVER designed by Jonathan Newdick.

Cover illustration: "Overtones of war".

Coldstream Guards NCOs using the tiny yard of Ernest Streeter's Church Street shop premises as an improvised mess while on manoeuvres 1912-1913. Ernest Streeter seated right.

Cover photograph by J. H. Keen.



PETWORTH SOCIETY ACTIVITIES SHEET

Summer Programme – please keep for reference

Please consult separate sheets for details of Society Dinner and Alfriston visit.
These events can be over-booked.

WALKS – with Linda and Ian.

Cars leave Petworth main car park at 2.15pm.

Sunday 22nd June

Sunday 20th July

Sunday 24th August

MONTHLY MEETINGS – will resume in October.

Wednesday 16th July

Visit to Alfriston – see Booking Form.

There will be another excursion in September.

Wednesday 10th September

Society Annual Dinner at Petworth House – see Booking Form.

Announcement:

PETWORTH PARK PLAYERS “REUNITED”

Petworth Park Joint Sports Association are planning a reunion in the Park for all those who have played, or are playing, sport in the Park. This includes members and past members of the Football, Cricket and Stoolball Clubs. The event is to take place on **Saturday 28th June** from **4pm** onwards, with BBQ and light bites available. The Association hopes there will be a good response from past members to come along and reminisce. Can the footballers remember the journeys to matches by Ken Scammell and his coach, it took a while, but they got there. To help jog fading memories people may like to bring along old photos – “who is that in the photo?” – and “where are they now?”

We are trying to contact as many past players as possible, and in turn we hope they will mention it to others. What could be better on a summer’s evening than to meet in the Park for a drink and a chat? Whatever your age, or sport, if you have played or been connected with sport in the Park we would be delighted to see you. Please contact **Vincent Phillips** on **01903 207436** if any further information is required.

A number of our members now subscribe to the **Joint Sports 100 Club**, to join them please contact Vincent Phillips at the number above. For every member the Society receives an annual donation of £10.

The Petworth Society Book Sale Calendar 2014

SECOND SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

10am – 3pm

FREE ADMISSION

June 14th

July 12th

August 9th

September 13th

October 11th

November 8th

December 13th

Books to donate?

Telephone:

Miles on **01798 343227**

Peter on **01798 342562**

OUTING TO ALFRISTON CLERGY HOUSE AND EASTBOURNE MUSEUM OF SHOPS

There will be a Petworth Society outing on Wednesday 16th July to Alfriston and its Clergy House and the "How We Lived Then" Museum of Shops in Eastbourne.

Alfriston Clergy House was the first building to be acquired by the National Trust for £10 in 1896. It is a 14th century Wealden hall-house with a fascinating history. It has a beautiful garden with a Judas tree and rare apple trees and is situated next to the River Cuckmere. Room stewards will be available to answer questions and provide extra information if needed. There will also be time to explore the picturesque village of Alfriston, which has some unusual and interesting shops and historic buildings. Eleanor Farjeon was inspired to write the words of the hymn "Morning Has Broken" while living there. The large church has been called "The Cathedral of the South Downs". Crossing the river, a short walk takes you to Lullington Church, which is next to the South Downs Way and has magnificent views across the Cuckmere Valley. It was partly destroyed by fire in Cromwell's time and rebuilt, making it possibly the smallest church in England. Only open in the summer, as there is no heating, it seats 20 people and at Harvest Festival extra seats are placed in the churchyard.

Richardson's Coaches will leave Petworth from the Sylvia Beaufoy car park at 8.45 a.m., arriving in Alfriston at around 10.15. The coach park is a short walk from the village. There will be time for a coffee break before we divide into groups to visit the Clergy House. As it is a small property, we will spread our visit by going in three groups of about twelve people at a time. **Entry is free to National Trust members and £4.10 for non-members.** The Clergy House has a shop but no facilities. However, there are a number of tea rooms, cafes and inns nearby offering refreshments and meals to suit all tastes, and a number of perfect picnic spots if you prefer to take a packed lunch.

After lunch we will leave Alfriston at 2.15 p.m. and continue into nearby Eastbourne to visit "How We Lived Then", a museum of shops, room settings and displays including a grocer's shop, toy and sweet shops, an Edwardian kitchen and Post Office. There is also a gift shop with a wide range of traditional toys, gifts and postcards. The coach will drop us off at the door. **Entry is £4.50 (group rate).** We will leave Eastbourne at 4.00 p.m. and should be back in Petworth by 5.30 p.m.

The cost of the coach travel is £13.50 (which includes the driver's gratuity). The total cost of the trip will be £18.00 for National Trust members and £22.50 for non-members. The National Trust need to know in advance how many members are coming, so please indicate below.

Please complete and return the form to Debby Stevenson, 3 South Grove, Petworth, GU28 0ED (Tel: 01798 343496), by **20th June.**

Name/s

Address.....
.....

Phone number

I/we enclose a cheque for £..... (payable to The Petworth Society) which includes entry to Alfriston Clergy House, (where applicable), The Museum of Shops and the cost of coach travel.

Number of National Trust members

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY

Annual Dinner – 10th September 2014

The Annual Dinner will take place in the Audit Room of Petworth House on **Wednesday 10th September**. As you know there will again be considerable archaeological activity in Petworth Park during the summer. The senior archaeologist Tom Dommett has agreed to return to outline his findings for this second year of excavation. Those wishing to hear the talk should be at Church Lodge by **6.15pm**. Otherwise one glass of wine or elderflower pressé will be served for everyone at **7.15pm**. The meal is timed for **7.45pm**.

The total cost will be **£21.00**, inclusive of gratuities, pre-dinner wine and elderflower pressé, remaining the same as in 2013.

As on previous occasions wine may be purchased at the meal.

The menu is as follows:

Main Course		
Game Pie		[A]
Light Summer Chicken Casserole		[B]
Minted Lamb Meatballs		[C]
Mushroom Stroganoff		[D]
* * *		
Dessert		
Meringue Roulade with Fresh Fruit		[E]
Blackberry and Apple Crumble		[F]
Lemon Posset		[G]
* * *		
Tea/Coffee		

As indicated above, the total cost will be **£21.00**.

Please complete the form below if you wish to attend the dinner. A maximum of 88 can be accommodated and acceptances will be on a 'first come' basis.

I should like to attend the **Annual Dinner** on **10th September 2014**.

My/our Main Course selection is **A** **B** **C** **D**

My/our Dessert selection is **E** **F** **G**

(PLEASE) I should like to bring a guest (maximum 1) and enclose £

Cheques made payable to **The Petworth Society**.

Name(s) (BLOCK LETTERS)

Address

Telephone Number:

Please send this slip and cheque payable to **The Petworth Society** to:
P. Jerrome, Trowels, Pound Street, Petworth, West Sussex, GU28 0DX

No telephone orders, please.

Chairman's notes

The lifetime of this Issue of the Magazine will take in the centenary of the outbreak of war in 1914. While I have used contemporary photographs for the central illustrations, I have to say that Petworth does not have any great wealth of such material, 1914 falling within the interregnum that followed the departure of Walter Kevis in 1908 and George Garland's first pictures in 1922.

While it is appropriate that the iconic date of 1914 should receive particular recognition, commemoration needs to be a continuing process. Within the 156 issues of this Magazine are enshrined just a fraction of the memories of those who returned from the war, those who remained at home, but particularly those who were children at the time. In the nature of the case there is nothing from those who did not come back. For everyone the war was a shattering experience: if those who came back were changed men; those who remained at home were changed too.

George Baxter¹ joining the Town Band in 1921 saw those who had served almost as a race apart. If some spoke of the war, there were others who did not. At home many would live out long years of aching loss, while survivors of the conflict might carry not simply the spiritual but also the physical legacy of the war. It was still common in the 1970s to hear the agonised coughing of lungs which had inhaled toxic gas over fifty years earlier. In 2000 Winnie Searle² recalled excitedly shouting to her mother, "Here comes a telegram boy." It was 1918 and the feeling of childhood betrayed still lay heavy on her eighty years and more on. In commemorating we need to step carefully: even perhaps keep a respectful distance: we are dealing with events and emotions to which we cannot easily do justice. We overstep at our peril.

Peter

1. PSM 47 March 1987.
2. PSM 100 June 2000.

Deborah's crossword will be back for the September issue.

1914–1918 in PSM

Clearly there is a great deal in the 156 issues of this Magazine that relates to the years 1914–1918. It is often allusive and has a bias toward the Home Front. I tried to offer a perspective in "Petworth from 1660" chapter 26 (Window Press 2006), but this is no substitute for the memories themselves.

Among larger articles I might mention:

"Yea though I walk through the valley ..."

A conscientious objector's view of the war. Frederick Charles Greenfield was a member of the religious sect of Dependants or "Cokelers". (PSM 82)

"Close your eyes and eat them with jam"

1915 as mirrored in the West Sussex Gazette. (PSM 88)

"The world and his wife are sure to be there ..."

Lady Leconfield's 1918 fete in aid of war charities. (PSM 97)

"We shall need no flypapers in August ..."

1915 as seen through St Mary's Parish Magazine and its monthly insert. (PSM 98)

"Lean aisy on the peas, Miss Mary ..."

John Trevenen Penrose rector of Petworth during the war. (PSM 99)

The war diary of Captain Penrose

Penrose was killed on the Western Front in 1915. (PSM 114, 115, 116)

Dora takes a hand ..."

A curious Lodsworth sidelight on the war. (PSM 126)

"Guilty with qualifications or rats in the rick ..."

Shortages at home in the last year of the war. (PSM 144)

Readers will remember too Dora Older's reflections of these years recently published in the Magazine.

There is so much more.

P.

David Wort

The Society has suffered a great loss with the passing of David Wort. Never, like Linda, a formal member of the committee, David was a constant presence behind the scenes. Readers of this Magazine will perhaps associate him most readily with the Society walks in which he collaborated with his great friend Ian Godsmark. David's particular territory was Stag Park, unusually open to us through David's position with the Leconfield Estate and with Lord Egremont's kind permission. Always willing, always cheerful, but with his own decided views, David made his own contribution to virtually every Society event. He suffered a fearsome heart attack some fifteen years ago, but recovered and went on as if nothing had happened. A dedicated gardener, David was, in Canon Bidell's words at the packed funeral service in St Mary's, "a true countryman." It is hardly too much to say that I feel I am rowing a boat which has suddenly sprung a number of disconcerting leaks. Unobtrusive, perhaps, but David will be sorely missed.

P.
Easter 2014

The April walk will be in Stag Park and in David's memory, and is to come as I write. There will be a report in the September Magazine.

"No passing trade" (1)

We were privileged to play hosts to Miles Costello on the launch of his book, *No Passing Trade – a view of Petworth's Historic Inns and Alehouses*. The fruit of a decade's research inspired by an earlier work by Miss G.M.A. Beck, the Petworth House Archivist in the 1950s.

Miles lists the locations of some 37 inns and alehouses existing in Petworth between the late Medieval period and the present day from such information as can be gleaned from Vestry minutes, Census records, drawings, photographs, postcards and personal memories. Of course, by no means all existed at the same times and names were changed.

For much of the time, Petworth was a lawless place, very overcrowded, dirty by modern standards, with drunkenness prevalent. With the advent of the motor car in the 20th century and no car parks, public houses faced challenges – hence, 'No passing trade', which led to the demise of many.

Miles takes his readers on a perambulation along Petworth's streets, providing a

valuable insight into how the sites and, where possible, the buildings, appear today. Even now, after publication, an intriguing reference to the hitherto unknown Eight Bells, in North Street, has come to light. More to come?

A fascinating and, for many, a nostalgic evening, when even the raffle provided entertainment for some and embarrassment for the caller!

KCT

"No passing trade" (2)

Miles Costello: *No passing trade – a view of Petworth's Historic Inns and Alehouses*. Window Press £15.

This book takes the form of a progress – pilgrimage might be the better word – from the town's old northern gate to Pound Street, paying tribute to Petworth's various hostelries, old, less old, surviving and departed, sometimes mere names or echoes, sometimes still with us. Some, like the Blue Lion, are forgotten, others mere names, some, like Doug Dean's Red Lion (now the Leconfield) or "Jinx" Humphries' Queens Head, are no more but still part of a living tradition, some, like the Angel and the Star remain with us.

This is a book that happily mingles the scholarly with the readable, never an easy mix. The feeling of freshness and space is a sure sign of Jonathan Newdick's hand. The presentation, in short, is superb; the innovative notes in the wide margins a joy. Replete with photographs in colour, sepia and black and white, here is proof, if any were needed, that Petworth's archive of unattributed postcards and photographs can rival the official Garland-Kevis "canon", itself not neglected here. Jonathan's own drawings supplement the photographs. A feature is the judicious use of oral tradition, largely taken from earlier issues of this Magazine.

100 individually numbered copies. Why only 100? Simple. This type of publishing takes no prisoners and makes no profit. It can, however, lose money. Fail to sell out and you're looking at mounting loss. Try Miles on 343227 just in case he's any left, but don't hold your breath.

P.

Wetlands

Our Chairman was obviously in weather-forecasting mode when he booked Paul Stevens, Grounds Manager at the Arundel Wetlands Trust to speak at the January meeting. The rain of the past two months continued of course, as the loyal and clearly interested audience gathered.

Illustrated with his own outstanding close-up photographs, Paul's easy and vastly informative approach soon established him among our top quality speakers as well as being the tallest – 6 foot 7 inches! He described how the reserve has evolved from an area of rough pasture to the present 65 acres of reedbeds, ponds, water channels and small patches of woodland, providing an inviting environment for wildlife of all kinds. As well as a collection of rare and endangered wildfowl from all over the world, it is a haven for bird, mammal, reptile, amphibian and insect species, both native and migratory.

It has been a constant battle against the invading willow, formerly kept down by the grazing cattle, which if left, restricts flight lines for the ducks, geese and swans. The reedbeds are divided into nine areas, each cut back in rotation annually over the nine year period, so that habitats for the residents are maintained.

There have been surprises – a large population of dormice, rarely seen in the day and not at all in their 7 month hibernation; and successes – a huge increase in water voles, resulting from the exclusion of foxes and mink.

Walkways, hides and boat trips give visitors close views of nesting waterfowl and wildlife activity. On the screen we saw a huge variety of animals and plants to be found on the reserve: ducks, swans and geese, including the Hawaiian goose, rescued from extinction by Sir Peter Scott at Slimbridge and now thriving, except, perhaps, in its native surroundings. Floating rafts with gravel are providing for nesting terns, protecting them from the aggressive black-headed gulls. There are nesting boxes for barn owls; roof spaces (heated in summer) for bats; a specially constructed sandy bank for sand martins, which, although of interest to arriving migrants, have yet to play host to nesting pairs.

There were fascinating shots of the development of a cuckoo in a warbler's nest – the oversized egg, the ejection of the warbler chicks and the feeding by the foster-parent bird – and the question, unanswered, of how the young know where to go on migration, long after the adults have left.

Of the other residents, we saw frogs and toads, grass snakes – which can be identified by their 'bar code' markings, butterflies, such as the orange tip, and moths, like the small elephant hawk moth, the red underwing and the hummingbird hawk moth, dragonflies and damselflies, solitary bees and mason wasps (one having taken up residence in a vacant Rawlplug to raise its brood), harvest mice

and dormice, a weasel and water voles.

There are plants, important for protection, pollen and nectar, such as the bog bean, small teasel, yellow loosestrife and coltsfoot – such variety, colour and interest. And by the time we left, it had stopped raining, almost.

KCT

“Everyone knows that!”

Well, not everyone, actually, but that's what Mary Anning, as portrayed by our friend, the actress, historical writer and researcher, Alison Neil, said. But how much did anyone know about Mary Anning, born 1799, before our monthly meeting and Alison's seventh one-woman play?

An expectant audience came, confident of seeing Alison 'become' the character, the Fossil Lady of Lyme, on the stage transformed in authentic detail into the 'curios' shop, with technician Jonathan's subtle lighting and sound effects. They were not disappointed.

How does Alison keep seven one-and-a-half hour performances of such diverse characters as Mrs. Beeton, Richmal Crompton, Katherine Parr, Hildegard of Bingen and Charlotte Bronte stored in her memory? She arrives at 2pm to unload and set up. The performance ended at 9.45 and Peter, Ian and I saw her packed up and off just before midnight. Quite an evening!

So what should everyone know about Mary Anning of Lyme Regis? Born in extreme poverty, which was never far away, struck by lightning as a sickly baby and brought back to life, bright-eyed, to grow into an extremely astute child. Her sister burned to death when her clothing caught alight, the home was destroyed by a rock fall, her father, who had introduced her to fossil collecting, died in debt following a fall on the cliffs. Meanwhile, her mother would try to sell fossils Mary found – 'curies'.

When only twelve, Mary made her first big discovery. With the help of her brother, Joe, she dug out a 4 foot long fossilised head of a reptile, eventually revealing the whole 17 foot long body. It was the first complete fossil reptile to be found anywhere. In collaboration with Dr. Buckland, it was named *Ichtheosaurus*.

Penniless and on the breadline, eviction was threatened, only avoided by the sale of the fossil.

Famous and respected geologists came to consult her. Her discoveries convinced her that creation could not have occurred during a week in 4004 BC and

that a process of evolution had taken place. This led her into controversy with eminent theologians. Nevertheless, she was a devout Christian, being brought up in the Congregational Chapel and later, worshipping at the Lyme Parish Church. Her grave is in the churchyard. But it was a male-dominated world and she was excluded from the learned societies of the day. Another first was the discovery of Plesiosaurus, of which she was accused of faking the fossil, later accepted as genuine. Pterodactylus was also discovered.

Characters along the way included Miss Philpott, a keen amateur geologist, who collaborated in the finds and provided financial support in difficult times, the Revd. Conybeare and Henry de la Beche, with whom she shared concerns about slavery in Jamaica – and there was also a hint of a ‘love interest’.

If Mary Anning could not be called a feminist, she was certainly an advocate of equality between the sexes as well as in general, for she wrote “What is a woman? Was she not made of the same flesh and blood as lordly man? Yes, and was destined doubtless to become his friend, his helpmate, but surely not his slave, for is not reason hers? Shall women sink beneath the scorn of haughty man? No, let her claim the hand of fellowship . . .”

She died at the early age of 47 of breast cancer.

The audience was in silent and rapt attention, with the occasional gasp, sigh or burst of laughter, for yet another masterly performance by Alison. She says it will be another three years before she has another portrayal to bring to us, such is the research and design involved.

We can't wait.

KCT

Petworth House and the Dunlington Hippodrome. The March book sale

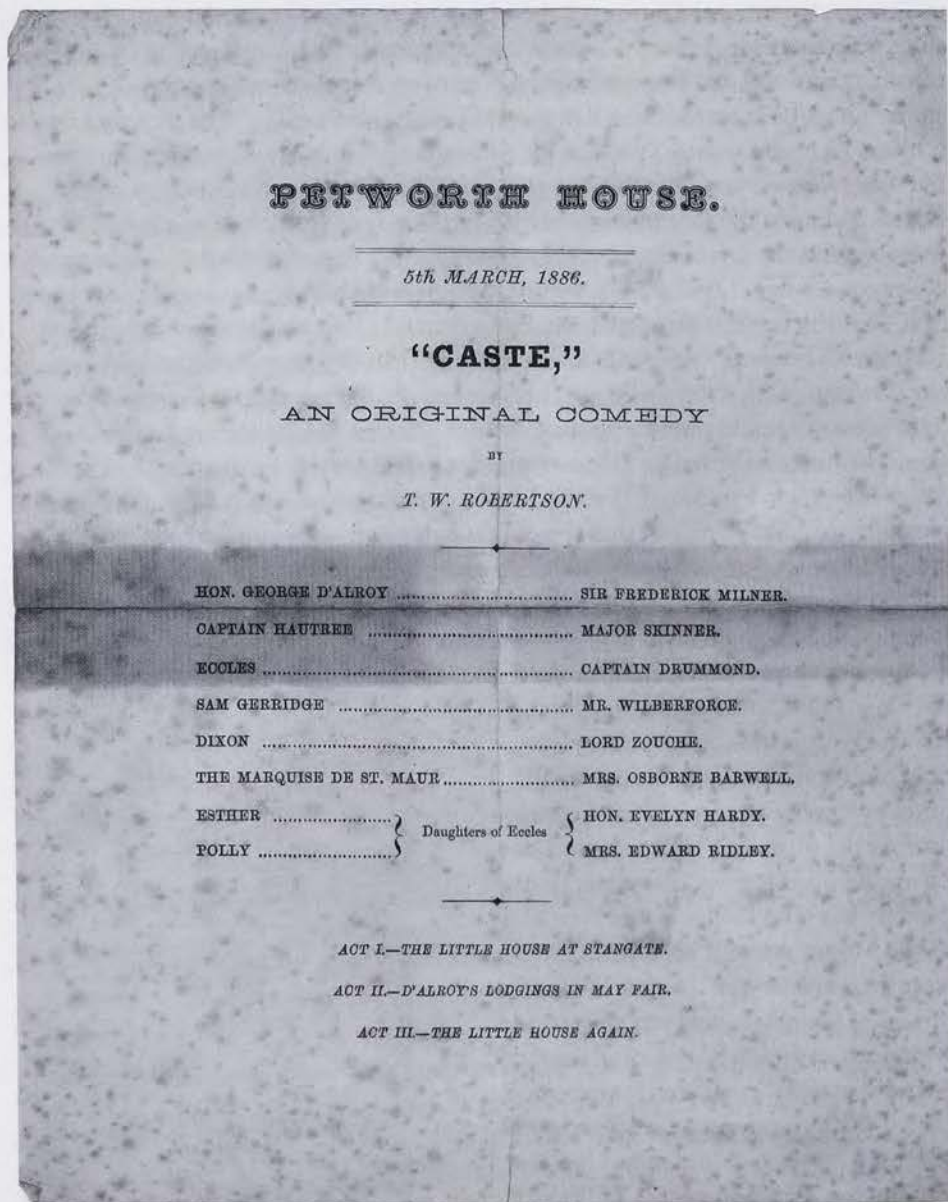
Incoming Book Sale material can surprise, provoke thought, even inspire. Often of course it simply dispirits: a high proportion of dross “goes with the territory”. Once in a while something will strike an obscure chord. Here's an acting version of T. W. Robertson's “Caste – A Comedy in Three Acts.” At first sight simply another item for the 30p boxes. Premiered in London in 1867, in its time the play was seen as breaking new ground. It aimed for greater realism both in content and in scene-setting. It would be revived occasionally over the years, made into a film in 1930¹ and a television play in the early 1950s. So what?

For years I've had a single page programme sheet for a production of Caste at Petworth House in 1886. It may be a survivor of the great 1951 Festival exhibition of Petworth memorabilia, the other items long since dispersed. The cast list suggests a very select ensemble indeed and an audience corresponding. If a century and a half on, Robertson's characterisation sometimes appears stereotyped, he seems to have had a definite social awareness. The plot turns on Captain George D'Alroy's passion for Esther Eccles, a dancer, humble in origins but otherwise very much the Captain's equal. D'Alroy is determined to marry Esther and fly in the face of his snobbish mother, now remarried to a French marquis, and the forebodings of his rather dim, but essentially kindly, regimental colleague Captain Hawtree. Posted to India, leaving his pregnant new wife behind him, D'Alroy is given up as missing, but somewhat improbably returns home to surprise his grieving “widow”. Robertson's sympathies seem to lie with Esther, her down-to-earth sister Polly, another dancer, and Polly's equally down-to-earth fiancé, gas-fitter and plumber, Sam Gerridge. Eccles, the girls' exaggeratedly spendthrift alcoholic father seems to present a deliberately contrasting image of Sam. Robertson's message, if such there is, seems to be that the future lies with working men like Sam, but that the old class divisions are, for the moment, set in stone. How the Petworth ensemble coped with the proletarian accents of Sam and Eccles and whether they took heed of Robertson's rather mixed social message must remain obscure.

Another chance survival, this time from the early 1920s, gives a fleeting glimpse of the working world of the Eccles sisters, only hinted at in the play. It is a small notebook kept by members of a company touring the provinces with various George Edwardes productions, formulaic musical comedy like *The Dollar Princess* or *Maid of the Mountains* and very much in vogue after the 1914-18 war. Here is life lived out of suitcases, an eighteen week season with one northern theatre after another². Digs are marked excellent (5) very good (7) fair (2) and rotten (4). A harsh world glimpsed through a mirror darkly. The Dunlington Hippodrome? Middlesbrough apparently. A tentative computer enquiry yielded no results.

"The Dollar Princess."
Geo Edwardes. Prod. 1921-22.

Dec 26.	Emp. Jh.	South Shields.
Jan. 2	Eden Jh.	Bp. Quaker Lane
9	Alhambra Jh.	Barnsley
16	Hippodrome	Dunlington
23	Th. Roy.	Blackburn.
30	" "	Rochdale.
Feb. 6	" "	Halifax.
13	" "	Bury.
20	" "	Dewsbury.
27	Covent Jh.	Wigan.
Mar. 6	Th. Roy.	St. Helens.
13	" "	Stockport
20	" "	Leigh J. L.
27	Opera Ho.	Coventry.
Apr. 3	New Jh.	Cambridge.
10	Opera Ho.	Newhampton.
17	" "	Leicester.
24	Grand Jh.	Wolverhampton



But you'll say: what about the March sale? I was coming to that. "Officially" it was the 150th – in fact the 151st as we'd come back in February rather against expectation. People were certainly pleased to see our "official" return. We had the second highest total ever and that takes some doing!

P.

1. The time being changed to 1914.
2. The autumn tour would be southern-based.

“The day of small things”

With Sale number 154 in prospect and 14 years on, members may be interested in the first account of a Book Sale that I can find. It comes from Magazine 102. I would think that, while this is very early, it doesn't reflect our first venture. 20p? I remember donors complaining that if that was our standard price they didn't see much point in donating at all! Only one room in the Hall in those far-off days, evening and Sunday morning opening, moving the boxes in private cars and sorting on the Friday afternoon beforehand. Unimaginable now!

The Petworth Society Book Sale November 4th (2000)

Books have been coming in steadily, mostly paperback but not entirely so. Book sale? It's really rather more: with Anne's shop no more, the Society really needs an occasional physical presence. Sorting roughly at home on the Friday afternoon, then setting up on the Saturday morning. The usual plethora of soft-back fiction, a few of the classic old-fashioned Penguins and Pelicans in their plain orange and dark blue livery. A lot of cookery books – not very sanguine about these, cookery's changed so much in the last ten years, let alone the last twenty. Celebrity chefs are like pop-stars, all the rage and then forgotten. Turkish cooking, books of salads, books of curries, vegetarian cooking of various kinds, ways with lentils. Gardening too has changed and D.I.Y. Several "Arden" Shakespeare – they must be worth 50p, a rare departure from the regulation 20p. What we have must run well into four figures, laid out on the east and north sides of the Garland Room in an elongated L shape. Some are no doubt veterans of other sales, some old library stock. Some, I expect, we'll see again.

Getting people in off the quiet Square is difficult but there's a steady stream. We learn that it's a rare book that's of no interest to anyone. At 20p most visitors are prepared to have a crack at something. Even the cookbooks begin to move, the philosophy being apparently to throw out your old greasy ones and try something else. Some German visitors on a flying visit. One picks up a book about German women's experience of the war another a book about greenhouse gardening. The sun pouring into the morning hall – a brief respite from the recent storms. Anne has coffee for those who want it. D.H. Lawrence *The Rainbow*, someone looking for Dick Francis novels ... a chance for newcomers to look at *Petworth Society Magazines*.

For the evening the books are replenished a little and the long lines on the east side moved up. There's been a big clearance. A chance for those who have come to the talk to look over the books. It's been a success. The next one is on January 20th. Please let me know (or Miles 343227) if you've any for us or if you've a dry place where we can keep our stock, we're in temporary lodgings at the moment.

P.

No wallflowers this year!

April at the Museum can be problematic. Visitors to the town are sparse and an unduly quiet afternoon will impinge on morale. New stewards, particularly, cannot foresee busy summer afternoons to come. It's the second Wednesday of a new season and Easter is still ten days away. Soon there's a familiar glow in the range and a tap at the door. Two ladies on a coach trip. They've been up a little earlier and returned: not everyone does. Whatever their original expectation, they clearly enjoy what they find at 346.

If 1910 seems, as it has always done, more than simply yesterday, eighteen years of Museum existence have created their own tradition. That original impetus may seem a distant memory but 346 has always to look forward. Our next visitors look back to a grandparents' time, the 1950s, even the 1960s, still etched in living memory. It was a time when life remained much as it is reflected at 346. Eventually even this will fade from communal consciousness. – the bricked-up arch to the "thunder box", the copper, the "pimps" beside the fire, the clothes line, strung so improbably high that Mary Cummings would have needed a step-ladder.

And the annual adventure of the garden. Overwintering clary and love-in-a-mist in the side border – at least until June. The bigger clary are gaunt survivors, the small plants stocky and much more promising. There are no wallflowers in

the central plot this year: by the time they're in flower it's so late for summer planting. I've lined the edges with helenium this year. Last year's blaze of annuals came at a price – an early August dip and a hurried and not overly successful replanting.

It's been a leisurely sunlit afternoon. No real lulls. The fire is beginning to fade. Time to lock up, walk down High Street and into the somnolent April town.

P.

Old Petworth traders (12). Collins the carrier

The carrier was a crucial link with the outside world for an older Petworth which, by today's standards, appears now unimaginably insular. The coming of the railways would clearly influence the long-distance trade but the local carrier would be a feature of town and village until well into the twentieth century. Harriet Palmer at Averings, wealthy widow of Robert Rice Palmer, a prosperous local rentier, made considerable use of the carrier to pick up "exotics" from London. Mention may be made of Lavender water from Fisher Toller and Co. of Hanover Square, perfume from John Gosnell and Co. of Lombard Street in the City, bread and biscuits from Lemanns the French Bread and Fancy Biscuit maker in Threadneedle Street, tea and spices from Davison and Newman of 44 Fenchurch Street and a barrel of oysters from Messrs. Wise the fishmongers of Ludgate Hill.

Clearly the carrier's job entailed long hours and often miserable weather but he could make good money as the following report in the *Times* (September 14th 1841) indicates:

"At Petworth fair an old trick was played by two London thieves on a carrier named Collins. Collins had a horse and gig for sale which one of the sharpers pretended to bargain for: the other suggested that it was stolen, and recommended his companion not to purchase. Collins talked of his respectability, when one of the party bet him that he could not produce fifty sovereigns. The carrier went home for the money and joined the two fellows at an inn, where they agreed to complete the purchase. After partaking freely of wine, one of the thieves offered to put Collins' bag into his pocket for safety; in doing so, they changed the contents for a quantity of new farthings, and immediately left the room. The bag contained between fifty and sixty sovereigns with which they got clear off."

P.

Mr. Palmer
 184 h
 Bought of **W. WEBB,**
OIL and ITALIAN WAREHOUSE,
 98, BISHOPSGATE STREET, WITHIN.
 Aug 28
 2 Bbls Mustard on Saw 3/0
 Rec^d for W. Webb
 W. Colling
 Chili Vinegar 3/0
 Cayenne Peppes 1/0
 Carriage of do 1/0
 Paid 8/0

Mr. Palmer,
 to
 1843.
 June 2nd
 John Collins £ 5 00
 1 Hamper from London - 3 -
 Paid at Webb's as per Bill - 6 -
 Do at Burgess's as per Do - 5 6
 Carriage of Do and paying the
 Bill - 2 -
 £ 16 6
 1843 June 19 Settled with Collins

Master Collins in London.

Stopham Bridge

James Roffey, one of our members, edits the very successful magazine *The Evacuee* launched in 1996 and now nearing its 190th issue. *The Evacuee* is a lively, colourful forum for evacuees to share their recollections of a life-changing experience. In his January/February issue James writes:

"As I was working on this issue of *The Evacuee* the postman arrived with a bundle of mail as usual. Included was a copy of *The Petworth Society Magazine* and on the front cover was a picture taken in 1932. It is of the very ancient Stopham Bridge, which used to carry all the traffic on the busy A283 Petworth to Pulborough road in West Sussex. I used to visit it many times while I was an evacuee billeted in Pulborough.

As you can see, it is very narrow, with insets that you could squeeze into when traffic was crossing the bridge; during the war years heavy tanks used to scrape their way over, in fact you can still find the marks in the stone walls, although you may have to pull the moss away that now covers them. There also used to be the letters SR and JR scratched in the ancient stone wall of one of the insets. Yes, the letters were short for Sidney (which I was called in those days) and John (my late brother) Roffey.

The bridge crosses over the River Arun which during the years before railways were built, was part of the Wey/Arun Canal that barges carrying goods from Chichester to London used to pass under. The canal became derelict and impassable, but is now being restored.

In recent years the road has been diverted over a new bridge, leaving the old one to slumber quietly. However a few people can recall the tragedy which occurred there during the war, but in the river, not on the bridge. The army was testing a new tank that, in theory, could go under water. However it got stuck while it was submerged and its crew members were drowned.

It was all kept very secret, but the local belief was that it had dropped into the deep trench in the middle of the river that had been dug many years ago to enable the barges to pass under the bridge. John and I were there at the time, but the soldiers soon hustled us away.

Near to the bridge is the ancient White Hart public house, now a popular place for the tourists who can sit at the tables in the riverside garden enjoying the beauty of the bridge and the surrounding countryside. Of course none of them are aware of the tragedy that occurred there."

James can be contacted at the Evacuees Association, The Mill Business Centre, Mill Hill, Gringley-on-the-Hill, Doncaster, DN10 4RA.

Selham days (5)

John Slade retired in the mid-1980s and Ronnie in 1988. From that time I ceased to grow 60 acres of winter barley as the economics of small acres of corn had gone out of the window. Richard had given up the farm at Dumpford and moved into Manor Farm, Heyshott. John Hounscome worked for the family for 43 years. He was born at Manor Farm, Selham. He worked for the family from the age of fifteen, went with Richard to Dumpford in 1964 and then came back to work for me at Selham.

My son, Angus, went to Reading University where he achieved a 2:1 degree in Agriculture. He spent his middle year at Leconfield Farms under John Giffin. Following Reading he was accepted on a Master's degree course in Marketing and Management at Cranfield Institute at Silsoe, where he met his future wife on the same course.

Angus suffered badly from hay fever in his teens and eventually we all agreed farming was not for him. Now aged 48, he has spent his whole working life working in IT, living in London. His wife is a dietician for a leading hospital in London and they have three children.

I was still milking on my own in 1995 with John and another local chap, feeding the cows, heifers and calves, doing all the chores that go with them along with all of the field work. My daughter, Elizabeth, came home from London one weekend where she was working on HIV research and asked, "Do girls milk cows?" She started a month later after working her notice in London.

Soon after, Elizabeth did an Artificial Insemination (AI) course and we began using sexed semen. Although conception rates were lower than with normal semen, we achieved one bull calf per ten heifers. At this time, after BSE, Holstein Friesian bull calves were only being shot anyway. We had been summer calving for twenty years because at that time a premium was being offered for July, August and September milk. We found that this system suited the farm. We would bring our forty or so heifers (av. 15 months old) down close to the farm buildings in early September for AI each year. Results from AI with the young heifers achieved a 60% conception rate. Elizabeth or I would look at the heifers at least three times a day to spot oestrus in the heifers, an absolute necessity if you are to inseminate them at the correct time. After a month of AI we would put the bull in with the heifers and move them into the kale field where they would be overwintered.

We had been overwintering Brook Johnson's 40 polo ponies on our 55 acres of reclaimed heathland successfully. After 10 years of successful polo, Brook had decided to move to a smaller estate in Gloucestershire. The first summer in his absence we made hay on the polo grounds and then the Cowdray Estate withdrew

our licence to sub-let the land. Brook's head Argentinian groom sourced 40 polo ponies for overwintering. The patrons of these ponies, all Argentinians, returned every year until I retired.

The dairy business was in the doldrums suffering from oversupply in Europe. My previous herdsman and relief milker had retired and moved to Wales. Only Elizabeth, John and I were left on the farm. Peter South, a former herdsman, who had been made redundant from another local farm in the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 1998, supported us with some valuable relief milking.

We had been supplying Milk Link, the biggest of the three milk buying co-operatives. I had been frustrated that they were investing too much money in the West Country creameries. Producers operating close to London were receiving the same price per litre of milk, despite being closer to the London market. With milk being a fresh product, obviously the transport costs are huge, especially from the remote farms across the West Country.

Another co-op, Dairy Farmers of Britain (DFOB), was offering an extra one pence per litre than Milk Link and so we gave a year's notice and joined them. Several other dairy farmers in the area were selling their milk to Southern Co-op, the Portsmouth dairy but DFOB took them over.

Most producers were satisfied with DFOB and in 2004 they secured a contract with Tesco. Depending on individual farm milk quality DFOB were paying 27p or 28p per litre of milk, which was a very good price at the time. There were rumours that the Drayton Dairy badly needed re-investment in processing machinery. One thing led to another and DFOB called in the receivers on 3rd June 2009. Many suppliers lost heavily in the fiasco, but fortunately Milk Link picked up our supply the following morning.

In 2005, I engaged my first Polish worker, aged 20, to help with the milking as I was 66. Elizabeth continued to carry out the AI and deal with all of the ever increasing paperwork involving such matters as the cattle passports.

Four years later and I was on my fourth Polish lad, a 36 year old who turned out to be absolutely brilliant. Like all Poles, he liked to go home for two weeks at Christmas and ours liked another fortnight in March. Elizabeth would help with milking while Kazim was away and Peter South came in for a day a week to help while I slipped off for a day's fishing. Good old John, reliable as ever worked every day feeding the cattle and doing the outside work.

The introduction of new Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) regulations coming into force in January 2012 and the proximity of the dairy unit to the river Rother meant a huge investment would be required to comply with the regulations to continue dairy farming. The returns from the poor milk price meant this investment was simply not viable.

In the spring of 2010 an Australian polo team were keen to take over 200 acres of the farm, the Cowdray Estate made an offer to my immediate family to surrender the tenancy. My wife and I retired to a Cowdray cottage one mile south of the farm. I was able to find Kazim a job at a large dairy farm at Ockley and John, now 67, is still working for the new Manor Farm tenants.

Roger Comber – concluded.

River Park Pond – a suggestion

I have often wondered what River Park Farm's large pond was for. It has a high thick dam at its south end, with an outflow from it to the River Lod nearby. Normally such a pond in Sussex would be for a mill (such as at Lurgashall Mill nearby to the north or a hammer forge; but there is no sign here of any building for either purpose. There is only the ancient farmhouse at the dam's south end, aloof in its garden.

Recently reading Brian Fagan's book *The Little Ice Age 1300-1850*¹, its use occurred to me. In 1460-65 the Chancellor of France made a large pond of some 110 acres and some 20 feet deep with a 120 feet dam near Lassay and stocked it with thousands of fish. Every three or four years he drained the pond by the three outlets in the dam and scooped up and sold all the fish, for which there was a ready market in that Catholic nation, for use every Friday and throughout Lent.

Jeremy Godwin

[River Park was in the possession of the Roman Catholic Browne family from 1554 to the close of the eighteenth century. See *Deer Poachers in Petworth Park* PSM 16 June 1979. Ed.]

1. New York 2000.



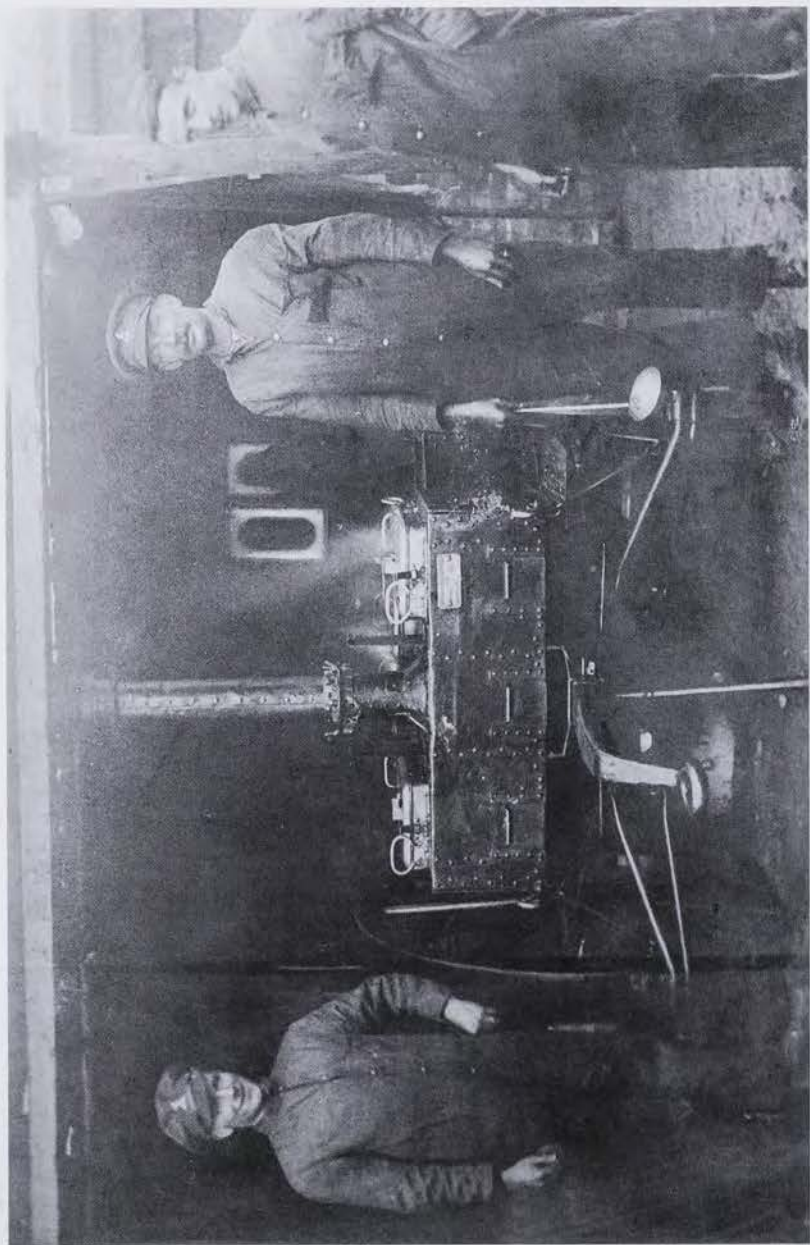
Marching in support of Belgium refugees. North Street 1915.
All photographs unattributed unless indicated otherwise.



Mr and Mrs J. Cooper and daughter with troops billeted with them. February 1915.
Percy Terrace.



Field ambulance?
Hospital in Bignor Park 1915.



Mobile canteen in Belgium c 1915. Jim Pullen second right.
None of the "cooks" had any previous experience. Courtesy of Mr John Hall.
Right: Jim Pullen in 1963. Photograph by George Garland

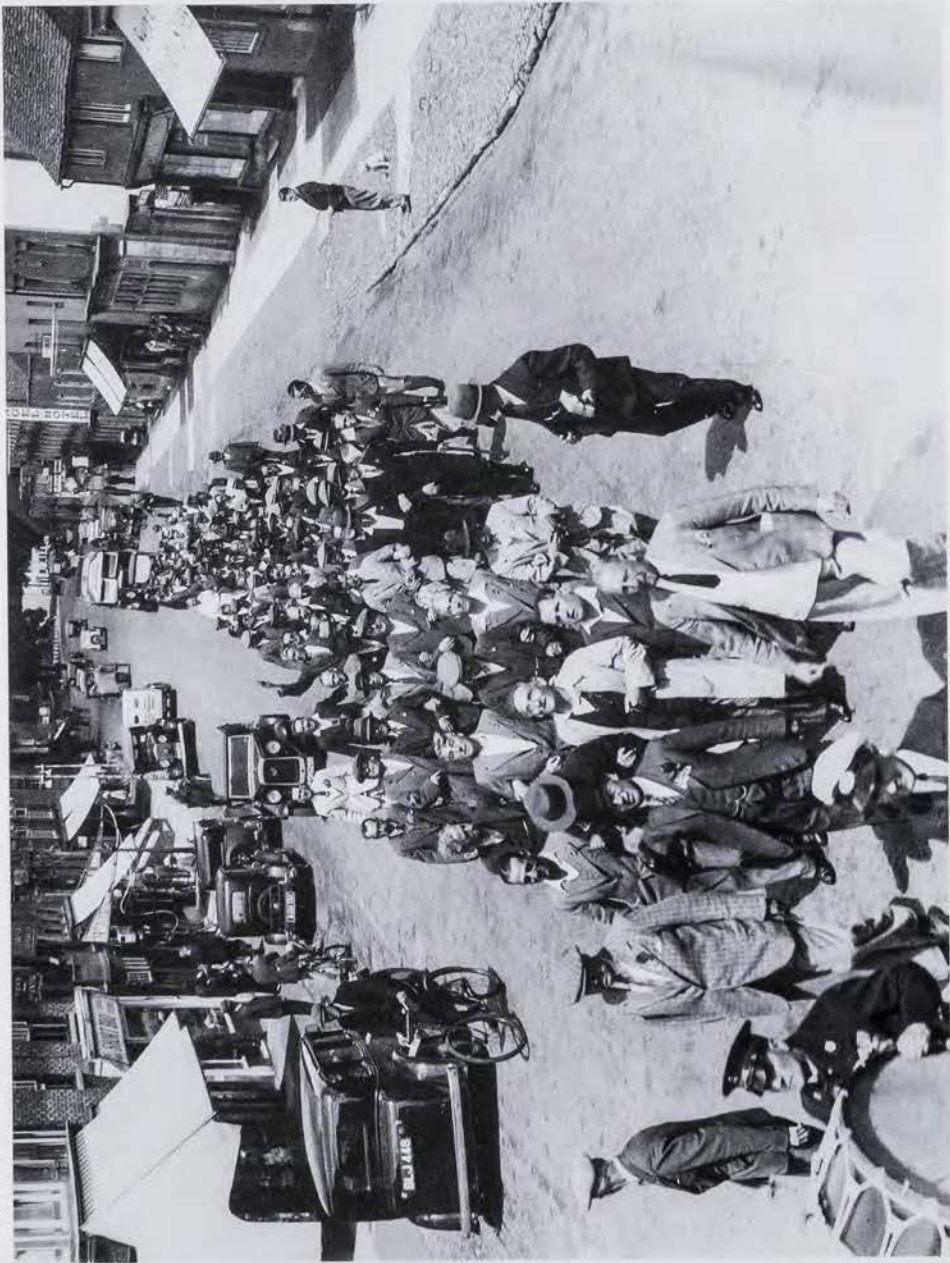




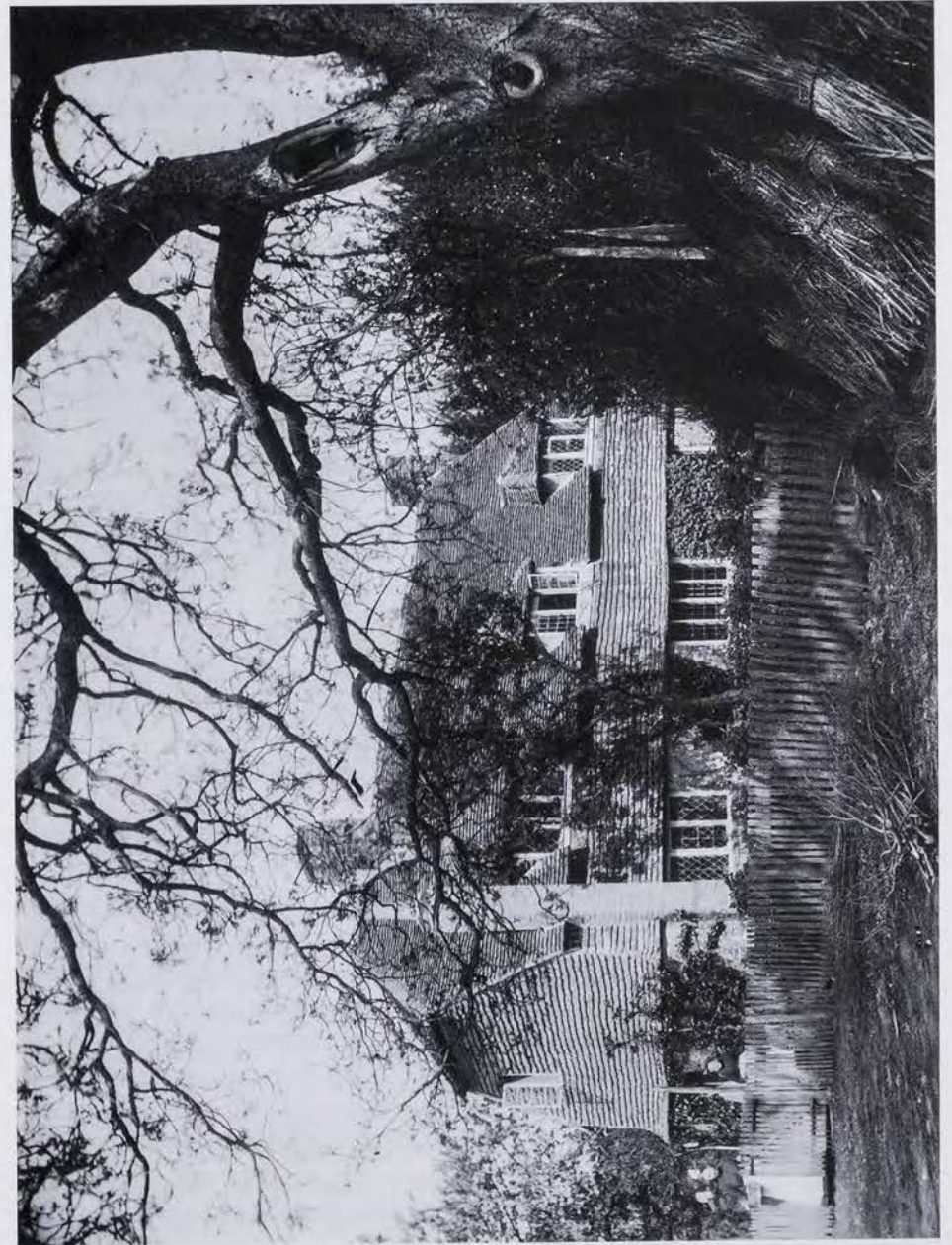
Remount Department in Petworth Park.
Horses were prepared here for service on the Western Front – 1915-16.



Arthur Vincent relaxes. Petworth c 1917.



The lasting legacy of war:
St Dunstons in Midhurst 1936. Photograph by George Garland.



Can anyone place the location of this unidentified Walter Kevis negative?
The date will be, perhaps, 1900.

The following comes from a typescript which was given to Frances Abraham when the history of Ebernoe School was published in 2005. We have not so far been able to trace the owner of the copyright but feel the typescript of considerable interest to readers of this Magazine. We will make appropriate acknowledgement as and when we are able to do so.

P.

An Ebernoe childhood (1)

There were 13 of us in the family. I was number eight and the younger of four girls in a row. In one respect it was similar to being the youngest, though of course I was nearer the middle. As the years between the eldest and youngest was roughly thirty, it meant that we were never all at home living in the farmhouse.

My father was a tenant farmer on Lord Leconfield's Estate. It was a large farm, with a lot of farm buildings, and the house was adequate but only just. It consisted of four bedrooms, a parlour, kitchen, scullery, a dairy, cloakroom and a pantry. There was also an attic where apples were stored and cellars. These were very dark and damp and seldom used. There were two staircases, the back one gave access to one bedroom, but there was a door leading on to the passage and other bedrooms. I slept in this room with my younger sister for a few years. It was the only bedroom which faced south. At the time the house was built it was considered unhealthy for bedrooms to face south. There was some connection with the plague though this was a good many years before the house was built and was just a superstition.

We had three miles to walk to school. I hated it at first and still recall sitting down by the side of the road crying with my elder sister. She was responsible for getting me there and it worried her when she couldn't get me going, as she got the blame when we were late. After a couple of years we went to another school, this one was a little nearer. It was also smaller. There were only two classrooms. The school was situated in the middle of a common. It was surrounded by bracken and trees which made lovely places for playing in. There were no fences but natural boundaries all round, inside of which we had to keep. I have many fond memories of this school. As it was C of E and the church only a few yards away, we were fairly involved with religion. We went to church services at Christmas, Easter, Harvest Festival and also on some Saints days. We helped with the church decorations at the different festival times, often collecting sprays of twigs and berries from the common, and we enjoyed doing this. Behind the church and

down some steps trodden in the mud was a lake called Furnace Pond, it was the remains of what had been an iron smelting industry. This was out of bounds during school hours, but at weekends I would often meet my friend who lived nearby and we spent many happy hours playing on the banks and fishing for eels. At one end of the pond the water fell away to a lower level which formed a large shallow pond and this was ideal for paddling in and this is where we caught the eels. We used to catch them in our hands and put them in jars. Of course they were very difficult to catch because they were so slippery. Anyway I remember catching one and taking it home to Father and he enjoyed it for his tea.

On our way home from school we had much fun at the postman's expense. My brother threw stones at him and the rest of us called him names. I don't remember him actually being hit though. Our homeward way passed by the side of an apple field, so naturally we had to take the opportunity it offered. One of us stayed on the road as look out, while the rest of us scrambled through the hedge and filled our pockets and bags with the tempting fruit. In my haste on one occasion to get away, as the look out had warned us someone was coming, my glasses got caught up in a branch and for a time I was petrified, not knowing whether to run home without them and face the consequences or stay behind to look for them and possibly get caught. As it happened, luck was on my side and I found them in time to get away.

We had plenty of our own apples. Father used to count some of his special ones. There was also a pear tree and we loved them as they were delicious and the windfalls were not on the ground for long when we were around. It took us much longer to return home than getting to school, especially in the summer and plenty of reasons for loitering. I do not recall my mother being bothered about this, in fact it was a good idea to keep out of the way as much as possible, for one reason she was so busy with such a large family it meant not being under her feet and she could get on with her work better. Also (and I feel ashamed of myself now) it meant that we dodged some of the everlasting work such as chopping up wood, drawing up water and all kinds of chores. Our father believed in us working for our living, he was a real slave driver, and besides, it kept us out of mischief. Another point, he sorted us out so as to keep the most troublesome ones apart and always there had to be an older one to "mind" the younger ones. Sometimes this would work the other way round, when the younger ones acted as a sort of deterrent. This happened when the older girls attended Evensong at the village church. There was a pub just opposite the church outside of which would be a group of young men. My sisters would be invited to allow particular boys, one for each of them, to walk home with them. The idea was that the younger ones acted as watchdog in case anything untoward should happen on the way home and spill

the beans if it did. Nothing ever did, my sisters made us younger ones walk well out of earshot and it wasn't any fun for us. They often hung about which meant that we had to make up for lost time when they parted company and they would make a wild dash, dragging us out of breath behind them. Father would be waiting for us with his eyes on the clock and peering at us over his glasses. He knew exactly how long it should take to walk home and there would have to be a good excuse if we were late. One Sunday we arrived home to see Mother nursing the baby who had been taken ill and my sister had to run back and catch the boys to ask them to get the village nurse to come. Either my parents knew about the boys or my sister would have had to let the cat out of the bag. I wish I knew.

A girl who lived on the neighbouring farm to us went to church with us too and later on married one of my brothers. Her mother came from Devon and spoke with a broad Devon accent. We often mimicked her. I sometimes took a message from her mother to one of our teachers. I believe it was to do with the Women's Institute and she used to give me a hunk of delicious fruit cake for taking the message. I can honestly say it was the best cake I have ever tasted. Mother used to make our own bread, but there wasn't time for cake. Her rabbit pies and puddings were very tasty which was a good thing because we almost lived on rabbits. I remember quite often going out with father of a nice summer evening with his gun to get some rabbits for next day's dinner. He was nice to be with then and he used to tell us about the birds and wild animals and all sorts of things about nature. He always seemed to be in a good mood at these times. I daresay he only allowed one of us at a time to go with him as it would frighten the rabbits away. He often said that I should have been a boy because I liked climbing trees and I was by all accounts a tomboy. Father used to keep bees and take the honey, he dressed up with a veil over his hat (one of my mother's) and tied his wrists and ankles with string to keep the bees out should they turn nasty.

One day I had the job of helping him take a swarm. He must have imagined that they would not attack me because there was no protective clothing for me. However, the bees were not very kind and made a bee line for me. I was terrified when they got tangled up in my hair. Father shouted at me to go into a nearby bush, which I did, and thankfully they left me for it (the bush). It was fascinating to see the bees after they had swarmed hanging from the tree or whatever, like a giant pear. I also helped him pick the apples which grew right on top of the trees, he held the ladder while I climbed up. He knew I liked this. He believed in making us useful and we were never allowed to be idle. He would always find us something to do. Sundays were the exception as only the necessary jobs were done then and we girls were not allowed to knit or sew. On Sunday evenings after tea, he would unlock a corner cupboard in the kitchen and take out some

magazines and children's annuals and I know I used to look forward to this; then after an hour or two he would lock them up again. I still remember some of the pictures and short stories which were in one of these books. One was a picture of a tiger chasing a little black boy, called "Sambo and the Tiger". In fact my younger brother was given the nickname of Sambo because his face was often black. The magazines had coloured pictures of different people in their national costumes and fierce looking tribes of men with rings in their noses and ears and all sorts of elaborate head gear. On Sunday mornings in the summer my brothers invited their friends and played cricket in the field in front of the house. We younger ones were allowed to participate but it was only to field, never to bat or to bowl. After the game they would sit on the wall near the house and drink Father's home-made cider or marigold wine. In the winter they would often take the ferrets and hunt for rabbits, or if it was wet, hunt for rats in the barns. This was always a time of great excitement, but I was scared of rats so kept well away from them.

My older brothers were all members of the local village cricket and football teams and there were always lots of supporters for both teams. I liked to watch the cricket, perhaps because it was in the summer and the better weather. The cold muddy football fields were not for me. The cricketers made a pretty picture in their white clothes against the lovely green grass. The cricket ground and the outfield were on opposite sides of the road and players had to cross it during a game. There was very little traffic in those days however, so it did not really interfere with the game.

Once a year at the end of July there was (and still is) an all day cricket match. The visiting team now is the Duke of Norfolk's Eleven. The midday meal was cooked by the Women's Institute and consisted of a ram being turned on a spit (a barbecue really) and vegetables were donated by the villagers. There was also tea served, free for all, and we children were allowed to clear up the remains when the grown ups had had their fill. On the same day a fair was held; it was quite a festive occasion, especially after tea, when the cricketers would have finished playing, then the swings and roundabouts would come into their own, long after daylight had gone, but there were bright lights instead. The man who made most runs on the winning side was presented with the horns from the roasted ram and I was very proud when my brother won them one year. He still has them displayed on the wall in his sitting room. Needless to say this was called Horn Fair day. While the cricket match was on and when we children wearied of watching, we would play in the bracken or watch the gypsies get their amusement stalls etc. in readiness for the fair. There was a well known gypsy who ran the coconut shy stall by the name of Andrew Smith. He was chief of his clan and I still remember his hearty invitation to one and all to come and knock down his coconuts and

shout out that "every one was a good-un". He was always well dressed and wore a bowler hat. He turned up every year and when he died several years later there was an interesting story of his life in the local paper. Father had no time for the gypsies and bemoaned us wasting our precious pennies on such rubbish, though Mother did not agree with him and liked to see us enjoying ourselves.

Sabina Melville – to be continued.

"The Iron Room"

Casual mention of the "Iron Room" can be puzzling for many. Here is a picture taken by George Garland just before its demolition in 1963. On the right is the rear of the present NatWest bank. The Iron Room had been erected to accommodate the congregation of St Mary's during extensive restoration in the early century. It would become for some sixty years a Petworth institution. The following contemporary report reflects the passing of a somewhat improbable Petworth icon.



Demise of the old Iron Room

"BUILDING WITH MANY LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS IS DEMOLISHED
The old iron room is no more

Petworth's old landmark in Market Square, the Iron Room – for so long the centre of local social functions – is no more. Demolition workmen moved in last week and the 59-year old building has now been reduced to a heap of rubble.

Standing on the site of the forgotten Petworth inn, the Black Horse, the Iron Room was formerly the headquarters of Petworth Amateur Dramatic Society, which later became known as the Hampers Green Drama Group.

Said Mr. Harold Huggett, secretary of the group and producer of many past Petworth productions: "It was about four years ago since we last played at the Iron Room.

"After having played there for so long, we were sorry to leave at first, but the building was getting rather dilapidated.

"Although it was not as comfortable as the Leconfield Hall, it had a wider stage, better acoustics, and was generally more suitable for the larger productions which we like to stage from time to time."

Boxing tournaments, too, used to be held there. Organized by the late Mr. Ben Wareham, the tournaments used to attract the best amateur boxers from Bognor, Chichester, and even further afield . . . and were correspondingly popular.

The Iron Room was also the headquarters of Petworth Boxing Club and Petworth Badminton Club, both of which are no longer in existence since the Iron Room closed down.

Horticulturalists, too, used the building. Said Mrs. May Stoner, secretary of the Petworth Produce Association and County V.P.A.: "I'm sorry to see the Iron Room go. Its proportions were ideal for flowers and we've held many a successful show there."

From the outside, the Iron Room's corrugated iron structure bordered on ugliness, but there can be little doubt that it is already being missed."

From *Midhurst Times*, Friday October 18th 1963.

Paradise Lost

Even today River Common seems remote, almost isolated. A tiny hamlet hidden away to the north of Upperton, were it not for the huge electricity pylons which dominate the background, little appears to have changed here in decades. With barely a dozen cottages, linked only by Westlands Copse Lane, this was firmly Wadey and Gumbrell territory. None of the old families live on the common now, but follow the road to its dead-end and Roundabouts Farm still echoes to the voices of its former inhabitants. The cottages have long been gentrified and now fetch prices far beyond the fancy of the original commoners. Once a close knit agricultural community, an old resident reflecting on the war years observed that it had been quite possible to live on the common and not even be aware that a war was on, after all it was only when roundsmen from Tillington or Petworth visited that any news from the outside world intruded upon the routine of River Common. Now even the delivery men no longer call.

I had visited the common some ten years ago when writing about the Wadey family from Upperton but had not been back since then; in fact I hadn't really given the common a thought in years. This was all to change when I stumbled upon a family history web site created by Liz Knight.



The Knight family at River Common in 1953.

Liz, it turns out, is the daughter of Denis and Nora Knight who in the early 1950s had brought their family to live on River Common. Nora an artist and Denis a former soldier had acquired half a cottage with the intention of leading a self-sufficient life away from all of the pressures of post-war Britain. Denis held deep convictions: a Catholic, a socialist and peace campaigner he was a lifelong advocate of the principles promoted by the radical William Cobbett. As a poet Denis was admired by the likes of Seamus Heaney and Bertrand Russell. Much has still to be revealed about Denis's life but it is those few short years at River Common that interest us here.

I have reproduced the following poem written by Denis in 1998 and published in a little book entitled 'River Common'. It is worth reading more than once.

Falling and Getting Up

"I'm a bit broken!"
Says she, at last, fourteen
Days afterwards, when
Nora from the attic ladder
Flew down backwards to the window-sill,
Then headlong halfway down the cottage stairs.

I thought of her in nineteen-fifty-something
With three children in the pony-trap from Upperton
(Baby at home in cot) dashing at a smart trot through
Pheasant Copse from River Common with the sun
Just up, to catch the bus at Petworth for the school
In Midhurst – and all her life not used to falling.

From over forty years ago, I catch again
That dreamday on the Common in October when
I fell with her 'slow motion' to the orchard grass,
The apple-tree around me, its laden branches
Folding me as the whole tree collapsed,
All its ripe apples on it.

Old George Wadey,
Commoner and peasant farmer on Pitts Hill,
Had never in his life on River Common
Witnessed a laden apple-tree fall thus
Grandly to the grass, the apple-picker in it.
How Wadey smiled, amazed, was silent, thoughtful.

Now, after these swiftly tumbling years
Of falling, getting up, crossing the Atlantic
In 'the heaviest seas for thirty years' on the Arkadia
Here is my Nora coming back this April morning
Calmly to her loving, active land of doing,
Painting her clear vision of real things,
Her music of events, sweet years in France, in Occitania
And now in Brent, between the Hill and Ougbeare beacon.

Liz Knight takes up the story before their arrival on River Common.

Shortly after gaining his degree at Christ's College, Cambridge in 1942, Denis enlisted in the 44th Royal Tank Regiment, and as a "Desert Rat" was involved in front-line action continuously until the defeat of Germany in '45. He saw many of his closest comrades killed and injured, an experience of course shared by millions of young soldiers at the time, but nonetheless affecting each individual in different ways deeply for life. He married my mother Nora during the war, while on leave, and my two elder brothers were born before the war ended; I was born in 1947, and also have two younger brothers.

My mother was in the Land Army at the beginning of the war, and, having grown up in cities, then learned a love of the country and farming life. Denis had had a privileged upbringing. He had always been an idealist, but his experiences in the war made him a socialist for life. Returning to the land, living simply, and depending on one's own labour and that of neighbours to produce the necessities of life were ideas that Denis and Nora were not alone in taking up after the horrors of the war.

But Denis was also extremely interested in the ideas of William Cobbett, the 19th century smallholder and radical reformer, and tried to farm in accordance with Cobbett's principles of self-sufficiency, refusal to exploit others' labour for profit, respect for the land and for livestock. Cobbett's books - "Legacy to Labourers", "Cottage Economy", "The English Gardener", "Rural Rides", "Advice to Young Men and to Young Women" and many others - were always on the table or at Denis's side.

The beginning was at Treve Cottage on River Common: a new start, in every sense, for both my parents: leaving the post-war bleakness of London, for an idyllic unspoilt common in Sussex (a county they both loved); hoping to find happiness as a growing family together, in a changed world in unfamiliar peacetime; starting a completely new life, as smallholders.

My brothers and I don't know the dates exactly, but think we were there from early 1951 to 1953 (I remember turning five while we were there).

My parents had half of a cottage, a couple of acres of field, a big garden with a very ancient well in it, from which we took our water up by bucket, and, of course, use of the common for pasturage. We kept goats, pigs, hens, ducks, geese and a pony. All these creatures wandered happily around the common as well as the garden. My mother drove us to school by pony and trap. We grew more or less all our own vegetables, and my father made our bread, my mother butter and cheese. Downstairs I remember in winter the roaring fire in the enormous fireplace, and Denis telling us stories round it at bedtime, before we crept upstairs to the icy bedrooms. There was no electricity at Treve Cottage; our lighting was oil lamps and candles. At birthdays and Christmas time, Nora put on lantern and magic theatre performances; we all created together the puppets and scenery.

Our neighbours next door were the Gumbrells (as far as I remember). There was one house nearby (it seemed big and grand to us) belonging to a family called the O'Rourkes - their youngest daughter Tessa used to play with us. Our other neighbours, further away, were the Wadeys. I remember George Wadey as a gentle, kindly man, quite often talking with my parents and probably giving them good advice, from his long experience, about some farming or livestock problem.



Treve Cottage.

My brother Kevin remembers Roundabouts Farm very well, and both George and Ray Wadey – whom we knew only as Nobby. We remember Nobby being always very friendly with our parents too. Kevin recalls Nobby catching rabbits and often carrying a couple of them on his way home – we also remember his wonderful yodelling, which carried right across the Common to wherever we were. Kevin recalls that before we left River Common our father Denis made a gift to Nobby of his army pistol – we wonder if his family remember this, and if it's still with the family?

Our father Denis often used to work with the Wadeys helping to cut the bracken and keeping the rides and the unmade road clear. After the Wadeys left, unfortunately it seems that no-one else continued to do this. Our family were sorry on re-visiting River Common years later to see how overgrown it has all become with trees and uncontrolled bracken everywhere. And with little or no grazing happening, the grass too is overgrown instead of being nibbled short into the velvety carpet I remember, sprinkled in spring with yellow vetch and daisies. The "most open, sunlit hillside in England" described by Denis in his poem "River Common" is now no longer visible in the same way.

Something else we'd like to mention: the beautiful ancient well in the front garden of Treve Cottage was filled in and the old brick and wood top with its tiled roof destroyed at some point after we left. You can still see the well in one of the photos taken when we were there. Again, we were very sorry to see it gone when we returned to visit much later, and hope that one day somebody may be able to restore it. That was the source of our drinking water, and my brothers and I can still remember the delicious iron-sweet taste and coldness of it.

My father did some English teaching occasionally as well, to supplement their income – we had plenty to eat, but I think there was very little actual money, in spite of all the very hard work.

For us as children it was a paradise. We did help our parents sometimes, and I suppose we went to school, but in memory we seemed to spend all day every day playing hide-and-seek on the common until nightfall and even after, in the dark, climbing trees, getting lost in the woods, riding bareback on the pony and nearly drowning in the ponds once or twice.

I think my parents felt they had come home at last. However hard it was sometimes, they were living the life they had dreamed of – not only working on and living from their smallholding, but my mother, who was an artist, somehow finding time to paint and create, and my father to write poetry. In spite of all the perhaps inevitable difficulties, hardships and conflicts of post-war family and working life, the beauty, sunniness and serenity of River Common seems to have illuminated their lives at that time, and, for a period at least, made everything

seem possible.

We left in 1953 (my parents always said it was only because they could no longer manage with almost no income and lots of debts). But it was like being expelled from the Garden of Eden – both for Denis and Nora, and for us, especially the three elder children, who can still remember it all.

Denis and Nora always spoke nostalgically of the Common, and kept in touch all the rest of their lives with the people who bought the cottage, as if they might be able to go back there one day.

While they were both able to talk about it together just before my mother died in 2008, Denis and Nora told us, their children, that when the time comes, they would like their ashes to be scattered together under the apple trees in the garden at Treve Cottage, River Common.

Liz Knight and Miles Costello in memory of Denis Knight 1921-2014.

A piece of cake and a cup of coffee ...

I was born at Soanes Farmhouse in Grove Lane in August 1924. My maternal grandfather, Jim Carver, worked on the farm and was living in the farmhouse at the time. My father was away at sea for long periods and we lived with my mother's family. My father had joined the Royal Navy in 1916 at the age of sixteen. He would leave in 1932 but he was called back in 1938. To me as a boy it sometimes seemed as if he were away for years on end. Jim Carver was a bell-ringer at St Mary's for years.

I have no real memory of Soanes, where my grandfather had worked for Walter Dawtrey, simply what I have been told as we were soon to move to 393 Haslingbourne, part of Hoes Farm where my grandfather was working. Somewhat remote, 393 was one of a pair of cottages, the other being occupied by the Burse family. There was no electricity and water came from a well. My uncle Roland, my mother's brother, was shepherd on the farm and also a champion hedger and ditcher at local ploughing matches. He lived to the grand age of 97. I suppose that, if 393 was fairly primitive, we lived comparatively well: there was a large vegetable garden, there was milk and eggs and by the time I was eleven I could use a shot gun. Get a brace of rabbits and you'd have a meal. There were field mushrooms in season and a spring with water cress, enough for us to take up to Mr Alf Money in Golden Square to sell on the Saturday evening stall he had outside his shop. In early days the farmer at Hoes was Mr Blake, son-in-law of Sir Edward Elgar, and very much the gentleman farmer with his plus fours, walking

stick and two dogs. He would be succeeded by Mr Drake who was happy enough for us children to help in the fields at haymaking and harvest, leading the horse perhaps, or stoking up the sheaves in batches of eight. There might even be an occasional shilling in it for me, or my two younger brothers.

My mother would take me to the Infants School where the public library is now, the mistress in charge being Miss Clark. It was a fair old walk from Haslingbourne in all weathers and she'd be back again to fetch me after school. After that it was the North Street Boys School, even further, but this time I'd do it myself, walking up Grove Lane and meeting other boys on the way. I particularly remember the Sopp boys from Strood. Mr Stevenson, the headmaster, strict and with a waxed moustache, had a passion for music and we boys were taught to make our own recorders from thick stems of bamboo. Mr Court was deputy head. I think he later became a fighter pilot in the RAF but I may be mistaken. Mention of Mr Stevenson's moustache reminds me that when I was called up in 1942 the RSM told me on a parade to grow a moustache, something I've kept ever since. "If you don't," he said, "they'll think we're sending schoolboys over."

On the evening I left school my father said, "I've got you a job." It was at the Gardens at Petworth House under Fred Streeter the head gardener, Jim Steer being foreman. I would be part of the vegetable team, rather than one of the "bothy" men who lived on site and looked after such things as pollinating the fruit. They used a rabbit's tail for this. The vegetable team were expected to work hard and Fred Streeter and Jim Steer would see that we did. It was nothing for us to hand-dig half an acre with Fred Streeter quite prepared to make us go back on it if it wasn't to his liking. Hours were 7 to 5 and I'd cycle in from Haslingbourne. When another man left I had the job of taking vegetables up to the House. I had a special wheelbarrow which I would push up through the gardens, round the back of the Grand Entrance lodge, through the stable block, and up the long passage to the kitchens. I kept off the public road. There would usually be several trips and I could be about an hour and a half. There was a foreign chef: I always had the impression that he was German but he was more probably French, while the senior kitchen maid would give me a piece of cake and a cup of coffee when I'd finished. She seemed to me a large kindly lady. Her name? You suggest Olive Tomkins. I probably never knew.

Several local men, older than I, worked in the Gardens although the bothy men tended to come from away. I remember Bill Hunt from Tillington and Ron Stanford. Bill Steer, as I have said, was foreman. He always lit up his pipe when he left at night – never before. Fred Streeter had a rooted aversion to smoking and it was strictly forbidden in the Gardens. Jim still wore old-fashioned "Yorks" stringed trouser-leg ties. He was a very fast walker, something I always put down to his time in the Light Infantry during the 1914-1918 war.

Lord Leconfield rarely appeared in the Gardens; if we saw him we'd touch our caps and say "Morning my Lord". Lady Leconfield often walked round. I remember when the new oblong threepenny pieces came out each of us received one in our own envelope at Christmas. It would be enough for a packet of cigarettes and even some change.

I suppose I was in the Gardens for about a couple of years, after which I went to work as assistant to Mr Enoch the House electrician and Mr Ford, an older man who worked with him. His son was a local postman. Mr Enoch and Mr Ford both had Estate cottages in Percy Terrace. For me the great thing was an increase in wages from ten to fifteen shillings a week.

The power house at the top end of the North Street cowyard had three enormous Rushton and Hornby chargers, each with a ten ton flywheel. To start them you had to manoeuvre the wheel into position with a heavy iron bar. The engine would be started when Mr Enoch switched on the air pressure and would then run on diesel. The room upstairs had 114 batteries and supplied the House and various outliers like the laundry and the stables at Flathurst on the Horsham Road. Every Monday I'd go down to Flathurst to read the meter.

The school bombing at Michaelmas 1942 remains for me, as for many, a defining moment. My two brothers were fortunately at home with flu and it was a really miserable wet overcast day. Mr Enoch and I were in the charging room when we heard a lone plane fly over. There was the sound of an impact and the needles on the switchboard shot in all directions. Clearly something had been hit and we set off to check our cables, grabbing our shovels and hurrying down North Street. We found Canadian soldiers already digging with their bare hands at what remained of the school. Our job was to dig out and seal the cables. The bomb had hit the laundry cable.

In the early years of the war, I, with a number of friends from school, joined the A.T.C. run by Mr Gwillim at Coultershaw Mill. We'd meet in his office, learn to distinguish not only friendly and hostile planes but different types of enemy aircraft by their outline. We learned to use Morse code, parade in our uniforms at local churches, visit the air field at Selham and once a fortnight go with Mr Gwillim in one of the mill lorries to Tangmere. I remember seeing Douglas Bader there. We'd also have trips in a de Havilland Rapide, my mother having signed a certificate to say she agreed to my flying. I remember Larry Pullen from Grove Lane, Len Lodge, "Jumbo" Taylor and Bert Sopp who played the big drum in the cadet band.

I wanted to learn to fly and went back to school in the evenings where Mr Stevenson gave extra maths classes. I passed the exam but was rejected in the medical. I'd had bronchitis as a child and would have had trouble with oxygen. My wife's brother passed, however, and would later be shot down and killed in a

Lancaster over Hamburg. We had two evacuees at Haslingbourne, cramped as it was. It never really seemed so, in those days you simply "made do." The evacuees had never seen a cow before.

In late 1942 I was called up and did not leave the Army until 1948, I had chosen to do a little extra service. I married in 1948 and initially lived at Crouch in Burton Park, with my wife's mother Henrietta Peacock. My first job was with Seth Holden the Saddlers Row butcher: general butchery and, particularly, the crucial delivery round. Len Playfoot and Ken Page were working there too and senior to me. Like the other Petworth butchers there was an extensive country round, the meat being carefully weighed from the refrigerator before being sent out in individual orders. I remember being stopped somewhere out in the country by a weights and measures inspector who objected to the weights. The point, of course, was that while the weights were correct when I set out, the meat had lost weight during the delivery time. I had to return to Saddlers Row with the inspector to sort it all out. I'd learned to drive during my time in the Army.

From Seth Holden I went to work for Fred Sadler at the Heath End sandpit. Dad was working for the County Council at this time and was friendly with Fred who did a fair bit of Council work. I spent much of my time loading sand for building firms. Nothing mechanical then: a lorry would arrive and have to be loaded by hand using shovels. It was hard work for £5 a week. I remember four of us not counting Fred – Ted Baigent, Reg Peacock from Heath End and Fred's son Eric. I wasn't there very long. One day I wandered up to the Police Station. Fred Everest, the sergeant was sitting behind the desk. "Have you any vacancies?" I asked. "Dozens of 'em", Fred casually replied. I think the smartness I'd learned in the Army rather impressed, I'd almost say unnerved him. After thirteen weeks' training at Sandgate in Kent I was back in Petworth in 1949 under Supt. Dabson and living at 1 Montier Terrace. The police then rented two of the houses for staff. Sgt. Appleton was still there then and I did a six week driving course with Sgt. "Nick" Carter.

We patrolled on foot and before I was posted away from Petworth I had an amusing experience. I remember once being outside the "Blackbirds" corner at the junction of Lombard Street and Church Street when I heard organ music from the church. It was midnight. The church was in pitch darkness and as I came in the music stopped. I could hear the sound of steps and apprehended the phantom. "You frightened the life out of me" said an old schoolmate of mine. "I've got a wedding tomorrow and was getting in a bit of practice." I may have frightened my friend, but the "phantom" organist had given me quite a turn too!

Noah Stansmore was talking to Miles and Peter.

Two Petworth Murders (3). A Murder of Passion

The first murder that we heard about was sad but somehow it was possible to feel rather remote from the sufferings of the infant. The child's death - while somewhat prolonged - was clinical, and apart from those who witnessed the final throes of agony suffered by the victim there would have been little evidence of any external violence.

This second crime occurred less than three years after the first and once again the victim is a child. There the similarity ends for in this case the presence of a violent attack is quite obvious.

As in the first murder a close female relative is responsible for the crime, though not the mother in this case, and while there is a thinly veiled sense of deprivation infusing the evidence, this is a crime of passion, not of the romantic type, but of the bond between a grandmother and her grandchildren.

The date is May 1862 and a young girl of 9 years of age named Jane Hill is living with her maternal grandparents Thomas and Elizabeth Steer in a small cottage in Ayres Yard in Petworth. Ayres Yard was a collection of hovels, small cottages, a slaughter house, a piggery and a butcher's shop, backing onto what had once been the Crown Inn in Church Street. The area is sandwiched neatly between Lombard Street and Back Road now known as Park Road. Not a particularly salubrious area of the town, it compared favourably with the previously mentioned Red Lion Yard and Bowling Green in Angel Street. Access to the yard was through a gate - still there - in Lombard Street and the area was effectively a closed in and tight knit little community.

Thomas Steer the child's grandfather is a shoemaker by trade aged 59. Reports suggest that he was heavily addicted to drink - an affliction not uncommon in Petworth with barely a hundred yards between beer houses - and his wife Elizabeth, a seamstress, is a year younger. They have a daughter named Jane Wells, the mother of three children by a previous marriage. Jane aged 9; George aged 4 and William, just an infant. We don't know anything about the children's father though it would appear that shortly before May 1862 the elder Jane had begun a relationship with George Wells and the couple had married. Wells, some 20 years older than his new wife, was Relieving Officer at Petworth and responsible to the Board of Guardians for assessing applicants for parish relief, a not insignificant employment.

At about 11.30 on the night of Saturday the 10th May 1862 a young barmaid by the name of Richardson is at work at the Swan Inn in the Market Square when in

burst Elizabeth Steer waving her arms in the air like a mad woman and crying, "Look at innocent blood that I have shed". Her hands and arms were as witnessed by the barmaid covered in what appeared to be fresh blood. Steer then in a state of extreme agitation turned and ran out of the inn. P.C. Thomas Puttick was patrolling New Street when at about 10 to midnight he was approached by Mrs Steer. It was a dark night with no moon and no gas lamps burning. Mrs Steer told the constable that she had murdered her child and being asked where she lived she replied, "At Ayres Yard". The constable did not recognise her but went with her to Lombard Street where they entered the yard. Elizabeth explained that her husband was at home in bed and that he had been out and had a pint of ale and was rather beery, suggesting that he was somewhat worse for wear. When they got to the house she opened the door and PC Puttick took a candle that was burning upon the kitchen table. "Come upstairs" said the old lady and Puttick followed her. The bedroom was in darkness but the constable could with the candle-light make out two beds with a small gap between them. Mrs Steer hesitated at the bedroom door and said, "Here lies my child that I've murdered" and pointed to the floor at the foot of one of the beds where the body of a child was lying, she went across the room and picked up a table knife which she passed to the constable saying, "Here is the hand and here is the knife that I did it with. Twelve times I took this knife and went to that baby before I could do it." Meanwhile the child, who Puttick took to be dead, was lying on the floor, face down, and partly concealed by the bedstead. He observed that Mrs Steer's hands and arms were covered in blood and there was blood around the room. In the bed nearest the door lay Thomas Steer, his eyes wide open but clearly not yet fully awake. He had blood on him and as the constable entered the room he got off the bed and demanded to know what his business was while trying to push him back towards the stairs. Mrs Steer prevented her husband from continuing and he gradually began to take in the scene about him. Steer turned to his wife and cried "You have done for yourself now, you have done it now girl". Steer who was only wearing his night shirt got dressed and sat down on the bed that he had been asleep on. The constable noticed that the night shirt as well as the bed had a great deal of blood on it. At that point Superintendent Kemmish of the West Sussex Constabulary entered the room and PC. Puttick told him that he believed that the child was still alive as he had seen it move. Kemmish picked up the young girl and placed her on the bed, she was covered in blood and her throat appeared to have been cut. Dr Turner had her removed to the workhouse in the firm conviction that she would not last the night.

Mrs Steer was taken to the police station where she made a full confession saying "I thought last night when I washed the child's neck that it would be the last time. I meant to do it. I had many reasons. Sooner than I would see my children ill-used. I would

rather take their lives and follow them to the grave." She added that she had meant to kill the two children who were in the room along with her husband but did not elaborate on why she had not completed her action.

The police initially considered that Thomas Steer may have been involved in some way; he was charged with wilful murder and taken before a magistrate who on hearing the evidence of P.C Puttick and considering that Steer had been so drunk as to make it impossible for him to be implicated in any way the case against him was dismissed.

Young Jane survived for almost a fortnight after the attempt on her life. Terribly injured, her throat cut and windpipe divided she finally died from exhaustion having been unable to swallow or take any nutriment at all. On her deathbed she supposedly pleaded with her carers that her grandmother should not be punished in any way for her deed. Dr Turner of Petworth who tended to her during her final days later stated that her suffering had been acute.

An inquest was held at the Angel Inn at Petworth and a jury of 12 local men was sworn in by Richard Blagden the coroner. The jury went on to view the child's body which was later described as "having a placid countenance". On returning to the inquest room the accused Elizabeth Steer was brought in, where upon Mr Blagden asked her if she wished to be legally advised – she replied that she did not. The first witness to be called was Jane Wells, the mother of the dead child and daughter of the accused. With great difficulty she was able to state that she was the mother of Jane Hill who had been her daughter from a previous marriage. She added that the dead child had lived with her mother Elizabeth Steer – the accused - until she was five years old. Jane Wells had then taken the child to live with her in Hampshire before returning to Petworth in 1860 to live with the accused. Jane took the child away again in June 1861, this time to Brighton before returning just before Christmas. This time they did not initially live with the grandmother, however after two or three months the child having visited her grandmother almost every day moved back in permanently.

It would appear that the grandmother Elizabeth Steer had been looking after two of Jane Wells children, the victim and the four year old George, on and off for quite some time. Elizabeth had complained of bad headaches and told her daughter that she could no longer look after the younger of the two children. Jane Wells in what now appears to be a fit of pique told her mother that if she would not look after the younger child then she would not let Jane the older child stay with her either. The grandmother pleaded with her not to take Jane away again, but to no avail and she was told that the child would be collected from her on Monday the 12th May. This may have been the final act in what appears to have been a difficult relationship between mother and daughter extending over a

number of years. Clearly the older woman had been used time and again as a surrogate to the children but repeatedly that would be withdrawn as her daughter's circumstances altered. Would her daughter's marriage to George Wells mean that she would lose all contact with her granddaughter Jane? Quite likely. Something awful was obviously affecting her mind on the night of the attack, but exactly what she was so fearful of has never been revealed.

The inquest jury heard the evidence of PC Puttick and Superintendent Kemmish before returning a verdict of wilful murder against Elizabeth Steer. She was then charged before J.H. Robinson a Justice of the Peace and committed for trial at the next assizes.

Elizabeth Steer was tried on 1 Aug 1862 at the summer assizes at Lewes. The charge was that she did feloniously, wilfully and with malice aforethought murder her granddaughter Jane Hill. The charge was grave and a guilty verdict would certainly result in a capital sentence. However the judge having heard the witness statements and considering the opinion of Mr Linton the governor of the Petworth House of Correction – where Elizabeth had been held since the assault – who considered that she was not in a fit state to plead and that she would not understand the trial if it proceeded, the judge dismissed the grand jury and ordered that the prisoner be confined during her Majesty's pleasure.

Miles Costello

“Pop” Davis writes concerning Dick Lacey, probably a Leconfield Estate gamekeeper, with whom he lost contact in North Italy at the end of the 1939-45 war. Can anyone help?

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