

*Mrs. Morgan & Miss G. Morgan
Ridgely House*

**The
Petworth
Society**



BULLETIN NO. 11

NOVEMBER 1977

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Chairman - Mr. H.C. Oakes, Woodpeckers, Sheepdown Close.
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Rix, Lady Shakerley, Mrs. C.M. Sheridan, Mr.
D.S. Sneller, Mr. P.M. Synge, Mr. K.C.
Thompson.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Member,

The Natural History Section, announced in the last Bulletin, is proving an undoubted success.

Reports of its activities appear on other pages, but it is helping to create genuine friendships among members who are motivated by the same interests.

In this connection it is pleasant to learn that a party of senior girls from St. Michael's, Burton Park, escorted by mistresses, are having a day's outing at the Pagham Harbour Nature Reserve organised and led by Mr. David Sneller. This is in addition to the expedition for Members which will take place on November 13th under the same leadership.

Your Committee has now appointed a Standing Committee to deal with urgent affairs; a Sub-Committee in connection with plans for an extension to the Public Library to provide a meeting and exhibition room, and another to examine details and formulate an opinion relative to the new proposed "Town Relief Road" for submission to the County Council.

Lady Fry, who at the outset of the Society created a group of willing helpers who work hard in connection with various functions which are held, has retired as Chairman of the "Group", but has promised her continued support and assistance. We are very grateful for all the help which she has given us. Mrs. Janet Davidson has consented to take over the running of the Group; we are very fortunate.

The Society is blossoming and increasing in strength. Please tell your friends that if they have a desire to preserve the character and amenities of the Town and Parish of Petworth and to foster a community spirit - THEY SHOULD JOIN US!

Yours sincerely,

HILTON C. OAKES

THE TOWN RELIEF ROAD PLAN

A "consultative document" on "the Problem of Traffic in Petworth" has been issued from County Hall, Chichester. It describes, with plans and some illustrations and in more detail than has hitherto been made public, the suggested scheme for a relief road skirting the western border of the town. This would run mostly just inside the Park wall, but through the Churchyard in a tunnel.

It is emphasised that the County Council is not in any way committed to this proposed new route, and could not advocate it unless it was clear that it could command a wide measure of acceptance, especially from local inhabitants.

It is proposed to stage a public exhibition of plans etc. in Petworth early in the New Year, before any decision is taken. Meanwhile the Parish Councils of Petworth and Tillington and the Petworth Society have been asked to study the document and to sound local opinion on the general idea.

The new scheme, it is stated, "would separate through traffic from local traffic by providing what is called the Town Relief Road. A certain amount of property would inevitably be affected, but the traffic flowing along the Relief Road, which would be contained for the most part between high walls or in tunnel, should have minimal effect on both town and House."

Pros. and Cons.

The document, after setting out arguments for and against the plan, summarises them as follows:-

1. No outer bypass can be provided within the foreseeable future, but a Town relief road could because of its lower cost. (Estimated at £2.0m.)
2. Such a route would alter the character of parts of Petworth, and some buildings would have to be demolished.
3. Traffic would be removed from the narrow streets and squares (but would remain within the town).

While the scheme seems worthy of serious consideration, it must be two or three years at least before it could be completed. The damage already done to the former Red Cross Centre in East Street and other buildings makes one wonder if Petworth will last even that long unless the "Juggernauts" can be diverted from our narrow and tortuous streets.

A.H.M.

"TRAVELS IN AFGHANISTAN"

Lady Egremont will give an illustrated lecture on her travels in Afghanistan in the Carved Room at Petworth House on Friday, November 25th, 1977, at 8 p.m.

Refreshments will be served in the Marble Hall. Admittance by the Church Lodge Entrance.

Tickets (Members of the Petworth Society £1.50; Non-Members £2.50) are obtainable from "Davids", Market Square, Petworth.

PETWORTH CERAMIC CIRCLE

There will be a meeting in Petworth on Monday, 14th November, 1977, at 7.30 p.m. Mrs. Sandell will be getting in touch with members and those people who have expressed an interest in joining, to give more detailed information.

DIARY DATES TO NOTE

(Details will be found on other pages)

- Sunday, November 13 Visit to Pagham Nature Reserve.
Saturday, November 19 Petworth Fair.
Friday, November 25 Lecture by Lady Egremont on "Travels in
Afghanistan", Petworth House, 8 p.m.
Friday, January 6 Petworth Society Annual Party, Leconfield
Hall, 7.30 p.m.
Tuesday, January 10 "Petworth Fifty Years Ago" Exhibition in
Public Library.

PETWORTH FAIR DAY

Saturday, 19th November

As usual the Petworth Society is holding a "Coffee Shop" in the Leconfield Hall during the evening of Fair Day. It will be open from 6 o'clock until 9 o'clock.

This year we are providing a snackbar, selling hot jacket potatoes, soup, coffee and soft drinks etc., rather than the stalls we have had in the past. There will be a raffle of children's toys and books.

In the past we have enjoyed very pleasant occasions and we hope that this year as many members as possible will visit the Coffee Shop and make it widely known among their friends, especially the young people and those with children. We should like to feel that everyone visiting the fairground will also come into the hall for a hot drink or something to eat. Anyone who would like to volunteer to cook jacket potatoes (supplied by us) should contact Mrs. Davidson (Tel. 42145) or Mrs. Rix (42259). Your help will be much appreciated.

Prizes of toys, children's books and games for the Raffle should be handed in to Mrs. Johnson at the Bookshop, Lombard Street.

ANNUAL PARTY

This year the Society's Annual Party will be held after Christmas, on Twelfth Night, Friday, January 6. Last year's cold buffet

supper was such a success that we shall provide a similar meal, the only important difference being that it will be "non-Christmas" fare! Tickets for the Supper will be on sale from the beginning of December at a cost of £1-00. Details of where to buy them later. Admission for Members to the party will be free. Non-members will be asked to pay 25p. admission, which will include coffee.

Anyone who would like to be involved in the preparation of food or the decoration of the hall, or to help plan the party in any way is asked to contact Mrs. Davidson (Petworth 42145). We have a small Working Party and would welcome new members.

J.D.

NEW MEMBERS

The following members have joined the Society since publication of our last bulletin:-

- Mr. and Mrs. J. Goldstein, The Hermitage, East Street.
Miss P. Oliver, 3 New Street, Petworth.
Mrs. F. Thomas, Glebelands, Duncton.
Mr. and Mrs. A. Tuck, Daintrey Court, East Street.
Mrs. A. Watkins, Westbury, High Street.
Mr. and Mrs. B.C. Wilsher, Two Trees, Carters Way, Wisborough Green.

Horace A. Probin

Members will have been saddened by the news of the sudden death of "Horry" Probin who died on October 29 at his home in Petworth.

He was the first Treasurer of the Society being well equipped for this position as a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He had held high position in the Southern Area Gas Board. Our deepest sympathy goes out to his widow, son and daughters.

H.C.O.

The "Cottage Hospital"

The half-yearly News Letter of the Friends of the Petworth Cottage Nursing and Convalescent Home records the appointment of a new

Matron, Mrs. Janet Cumming, who is now, with her husband, in residence at the Nursing Home.

The Home will be open at Christmas, and early application by those wishing to book patients for the holiday period is advised.

A Wine and Paté Party is being held at Petworth House on December 2, 6.30-8 p.m. (Tickets £2 each from Mrs. Mant, Heath End House or Lady Shakerley, Rotherdown).

Volunteers are needed for work in the Home. Fund raising events have been organized in several outlying villages.

COUNTRYSIDE GROUP

Leaders: Mr. Patrick M. Synge, M.A., V.M.H., Byworth Edge. (Tel. 42471)
Mr. David Sneller, Flat 1, Lombard Street. (Tel. 42811)

NATURE WALK - ROTHERBRIDGE, JULY 27 1977.

This was a very pleasant and quite rewarding walk along the banks of the River Rother. We started in the late afternoon from the Rother bridge about a mile from Petworth and walked westwards following the South bank of the river for about 2 miles returning along the far bank. It was a lovely flowery walk through typical West Sussex scenery and we were able to see many of the waterside plants which were flowering freely.

As usual the use of vernacular names attributed in different areas to different plants caused some confusion, but some interesting Sussex legends about the plants emerged. The various willow herbs, the purple loosestrife and the Indian balsam were abundant and conspicuous. It is surprising how widely the balsam has spread in the hundred years or so since it was introduced and we were able to see the explosive mechanism which shoots out the seed so effectively when anything touches the ripe seed pod. In the river itself the deep yellow globes of Nuphar lutea, the yellow waterlily, stood up a few inches above the water, distinguishing it from the white waterlily, Nymphaea alba, where the flowers are larger and lie flat on the water. The blue water forget-me-not, Myosotis scorpioides, was common along the banks and still in full flower, since it has a very long season. Comfrey made a large patch near the bridge and was growing very lushly with masses of creamy, tubular flowers.

Riverside Trees

The main trees by the river bank were alders, Alnus glutinosa, and after crossing the river by a small, somewhat rickety bridge, we came back through a wood of it mixed with oaks and hazels. The floor of the wood was almost bare at this season apart from dog's mercury, although earlier it had been full of bluebells. The water figwort, Scrophularia aquatica, was common beside the river and stood up clearly with its curious little dark brown flowers shaped like a helmet upside down. Umbellifers were abundant with their panicles of little white flowers and fern-like leaves and we saw several different species, including masses of the conspicuous hog weed, Heracleum spondylium, and there was also the lovely Angelica sylvestris, the wild Angelica, easily recognised by its large leaves. The ordinary cow parsley was over but had been plentiful.

Rushes of varying kinds were also plentiful including the magnificent floating Bur-reed whose long narrow leaves floated along the edge of the river, throwing up clusters of knobbly fruits above the water. There was also the Floating Pondweed, Aponogeton natans, right in the water. Unfortunately we were not able to find the beautiful and conspicuous flowering rush, Butomus umbellatus, which is not really a rush but has large panicles of bright pink flowers standing well up above the water; however I saw it a few days later further downstream nearer to Shopham bridge, but it did not seem as plentiful as usual. It is one of the most conspicuous and beautiful of our native wild flowers and should not be picked. The arrow head, Sagittaria sagittifolia, with its conspicuous white flowers was clearly visible and easily recognised from its arrow-shaped leaves, and so was the water plantain, Alisma plantago-aquatica, with pale pink flowers.

A wealth of wildflowers

This is only a small number of the forty or more riverside flowers we saw and shows what a wealth of wild flowers can be seen within a short distance of Petworth. We are fortunate in having so many different kinds of habitat easily visible from the Downs, the woodlands and the riverside and a walk at different seasons in any of these areas will always be rewarding. It is hoped that members of the Petworth Society will always co-operate in their conservation.

Books with coloured plates recommended for identification include the Rev. W. Keeble Martin's "Concise British Flora in Colour"

and "The Wild Flowers of Britain and Northern Europe" by Richard and Alastair Fitter, illustrated by Richard Fitter.

Patrick M. Synge.

ORNITHOLOGICAL OUTINGS

On Wednesday, 27th July, a party of about 26 members enjoyed a pleasant walk along the River bank from Rotherbridge on a lovely evening. A number of bird species were seen, including turtledoves, reed buntings, moorhens mute swans, a barn owl, at least 25-30 mistle thrushes, and about 100 sand martins.

A ragwort was found with a large number of caterpillars of the Cinnabar moth, and a small tortoise-shell butterfly was seen.

This our first outing was judged to be a great success.

Sunday, 4th September, was also a fine day and our trip to Arundel Wildfowl Reserve was attended by 18 members. Although this Reserve has been open for less than a year and is not yet completed, the number of species is high and some have produced offspring already.

The view from the hides produced a heron and a blue phase snow goose (an American bird) which has been there for some weeks. Chiff Chaffs were heard calling in the trees, and kingfishers have bred within the grounds this year, but were not seen.

David Smeller.

LOCAL HISTORY AND RECORDS GROUP

(Leader: Mr. P.A. Jerrome, M.A., Trowels, Pound Street (Tel. 42562))

Since I last wrote in Bulletin No.10 we have had an opportunity to consider our programme for the coming year. We propose a Spring series of four open meetings at monthly intervals from February to May. These would include a programme of slides of old Petworth - a different collection from any previously shown; two talks on Petworth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, giving an account of recent work, and the meeting to discuss tape-recordings postponed from October 20th. A detailed timetable of these meetings will be circulated to all members early in the new year.

At the same time we intend to mount our next Exhibition "Petworth Fifty Years Ago" in the Public Library. This will give us the chance to show material not available for the Jubilee Exhibition. The opening date will be Tuesday, January 10th.

The handwriting group continues to make vigorous progress and texts have varied widely both in period and in content. We have read more of the Duke of Somerset's correspondence with Mr. Taylor concerning estate affairs (PHA 6322). Slightly earlier are PHA 5254 Henry Barnard's domestic accounts for 1680-1. He lived in "Durance" a house roughly on the site of Bowyers the chemists and before New Street had been built. Seasonal fare for Christmas week 1680 included currants, raisins, prunes, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves and sugar. An entry for 25th February 1680 reads 2 shillings "for a pound of tobacco at the Swann" - a very early reference to that Inn. Reference is made to the "muster marter" and hence indirectly to the existence of some kind of local militia, but we know very little about this. John Shotcher of Byworth was paid 5 shillings for 5 days work spreading dung and molehills in the field at the lyth i.e. below the present withy copse.

From PHA 5451 comes a difficult and technical document of some importance. It appears to be a note of grievances by the reeve or head of the homage, or manorial court, over the infringement by servants of the Earl of Northumberland of the reeve's immemorial privileges and prerogatives. As with the other material in this file this document comes from the 1590's. We have read too extracts from PHA 5449 and 5450 long books of depositions taken during the lawsuit between the Earl of Northumberland and his tenants over enclosure in the 1590's. Another interesting file of documents comes from a generation later and reflects the enclosure by the 10th Earl of Colhook Common (PHA 6371). Readers of this Bulletin will be pleased to know that Mrs. McCann of the West Sussex Record Office has a second volume of the catalogue of Petworth House Archives ready for the press.

We append a note on PHA 6314 concerning hooliganism in North Street at the beginning of the nineteenth century - a document in which visitors to the Jubilee Exhibition in June evinced a great deal of interest.

P.A.J.

Hooliganism in the North Street, 1804.

Vandalism seems a peculiarly modern problem but PHA 6314 shows that it has a more ancient lineage. "Petworth", it complains, "a small country town without any watchmen, has been for some years materially annoyed by several young persons of the lower class who leaving the publick houses when the more regular inhabitants were in bed have carried away gates and broken windows." Information, it appears, was very difficult to obtain because of the reluctance of the gang to testify against one another.

Lord Egremont, concerned at this situation, is backing William Stoner, one of his tenants, in seeking counsel's advice concerning a possible prosecution for malicious damage, i.e. the breaking of windows in North Street just below the old houses that stood on the site of the present Glebe Villas. His lordship hopes that the consequences of such an action "will prevent a repetition and increase of these practices which prevent the peaceable inhabitants of the town from remaining quiet in their beds". A plan shows the descent of the ground and the posts and rails precisely as they are at present although the buildings themselves have of course changed.

Cricket on Hampers Common.

John Easton, 14 years old, is prepared to testify that he was at Hampers Common on the day that the windows were broken and that Thomas Edwards asked him if he could borrow one James Green's cricket bat. James Osborn, 17 years old, is prepared to testify to being at cricket on Hampers Common and afterwards at Vinsons (The Mason's Arms) on the evening in question and to say that he saw Green's cricket bat in Edward's possession. Also that he left the Mason's with the last party between 11 and 12 o'clock - Garland and Edwards being among them. Samuel Garland, a currier, and Thomas Edwards, a woolcomber, are the prime suspects. He saw them push up the North Street towards the town, proceeding only slowly up North Street because they were quarreling among themselves. Although Osborn lived lower down in the North Street, he followed the main party in expectation of a battle, but the leaders of the company were by now out of sight. He then heard a noise like that of a gate being struck hard by a stick or a bat i.e. the breaking open of an intervening door, then a sound like the breaking of glass. The two ringleaders then appeared laughing together. Osborn himself had not actually seen anything nor could anyone else, in the party ("tho' less mischievously inclined) be induced to say anything.

The document further reports the substance of a conversation

at Vinsons a fortnight later, when in discussing the incident someone observed that Stoner's wife and children might well have been hurt and Edwards is alleged to have said that "It was no pity at all" and no bad thing if they had suffered serious injury. James Joyes, Stoner's tenant will testify to being awakened by the breaking of his bedchamber window and will say that on feeling he found glass on his bed. When he got up about six o'clock he found a cricket bat by the window. The bat had since been identified by Green as his and returned to him.

Stoner asks for counsel's opinion on a possible action for trespass and asks what other action can be taken against Garland "who is older than Edwards and of a democratic and bad disposition". It closes with counsel's notes on possible charges to be brought. Another document exists which appears to reflect a later court case and also a more severe assault on Stoner apparently involving malicious wounding, on which the former document gives no information. We do not know at present what the outcome was although there may perhaps be some information in the Quarter Sessions records.

P.A.J.

A WITCH IN LOMBARD STREET

During renovations at the former premises of Mr. and Mrs. Dale in Lombard Street the charcoal figure of a witch has been uncovered drawn on the wattle plaster of a wall in an upper room. It is a fair-sized figure approximately 2 feet high. Preservation is a little uneven, but the conical hat can still be made out, as also a large broomstick passing diagonally through the figure. Especially clear are the long and fearsome talons, a distinctive feature of the drawing. By the side is a name not certainly decipherable and the date 13 June, 1764.

Opinions differ as to the significance of the figure; some see it merely as a builder's or even a child's doodling. It seems to the present writer however that it has too much flair and power for that, but it is not easy to say what purpose the figure might originally have had - if any. It is good to know that Mr. and Mrs. Waldy, the present owners, have taken steps to preserve the figure when they reopen the shop premises shortly as Flora Dora Antiques, specialising in small silver, porcelain and glass.

P.A.J.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q11/1 In PHA 5450 the 8th Earl is said at various times in the 1570's to have met the tenants about their grievances over enclosure

- (a) in the Culver Garden
- (b) at Holm Hill
- (c) by the fountain in the Conyger Park.

None of these places appear to be mentioned in the great map of Treswill a generation later. Do we have any information about them?

Q11/2 In the same document William Bullaker, a man of some standing, describes himself as having been to school at Petworth. The town clearly had at that time a school of some distinction. Do we know anything about it?

Q11/3 Do we know anything of the militia in Petworth during the seventeenth century? As we have seen, Henry Barnard mentions the muster master and his men during the 1680's.

Q11/4 The hamlet of Shimmings is believed to have derived its name from an implement known as a "shim". What was a shim?

Q11/5 Who was the J.J.M. whose initials appear with the date 1653 over the door of Somerset Lodge? Was he a member of the Mose family?

ANSWERS

(Answer No. A10/1 refers to Question No.1 in Bulletin 10)

A10/1 Ashlands is difficult to trace. Possibly it lay on Colhook Common - there was a smallholding there named Ashfold and a farmstead known as Sweetlands. In 1615 John Stent sold a birch coppice on the site to the 9th Earl. (cf Lord Leconfield, Petworth Manor: pp 75 and Map VI).

A10/2 The name Gunter's Bridge seems much older than the civil war and thus cannot be connected with the Royalist general George Gunter (cf. Leconfield, Petworth Manor, Map VIII). The origin of the name remains unknown.

A10/3 It is suggested that the bowl may be one of a series originally in the rose garden.

A10/4 Some likely candidates as survivors from Mr. Lancelot Brown's plantings of the 1750's may be the gnarled ornamental thorn trees on the park slopes near the Monument. There must be other survivors in the Pleasure Gardens. - 12 -