THE PETWORTH SOCIETY
magazine

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

Constitution and Officers

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

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

The annual subscription is £7.00. Single or double one Magazine delivered. Postal £8.00 overseas £9.00. Further information may be obtained from any of the following:

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

Chairman's Notes

I like to think that each Magazine has in some ways a character of its own, arising out of the way that quite separate articles work together to make a coherent whole. Such thoughts are probably just imagination but they occur all the same. Different people will no doubt see different lines of connection, some, doubtless, no line of connection at all! I think this issue has its own quite distinctive flavour.

Have you given the millennium any thought? I imagine that there are aspects of the "hype" with which we're already thoroughly weary and that this can only get worse. Nevertheless the Society probably should in some ways bestir itself. I am not convinced that organising a town celebration is our proper function although we might help. Our efforts will be better placed elsewhere. Two initial thoughts - first a video of Petworth as the century changes, or some particular aspect. Such a video would be available for members. Ian and Pearl have some tentative thoughts. Secondly the Magazine issue for June 2000, all being well, will be number 100. Quite a milestone in any case. Perhaps we should try to make it something special. These two suggestions play to our traditional strengths but we're open to others. The year 2000 will be the 100th anniversary of George Garland's birth for instance.

Peter *24th July.*

Help for the Petworth Cottage Museum

we need an enterprising volunteer
to build up and administer
an association of

Friends of the Petworth Cottage Museum

Friends will pay a modest sum annually
preferably under deed of covenant
in support of this interesting local charity

Please write to the chairman
Peter Jerrome
at Trowels, Pound Street, Petworth, GU28 0DX
or telephone him at 01798 342562

John Sirgood's Way - the story of the Loxwood Dependants

The "Cokelers" are an essential part of local tradition and many readers of this Magazine will have their own recollection of them. It may be of lardy rolls of an almost paradisaical freshness, of a smiling polite presence at Northchapel Stores or Loxwood. It may be an impression of white aprons or black dresses, the phrase 'Next pleasure please' or simply the feeling of an all-pervading religious background, never obtruded yet never discussed. The "Cokelers" were an integral part of that village world in which they flourished, at the same time they were in some ways hardly of that world at all.

My first direct contact with them was for this Magazine, a trip to Northchapel in 1982: an account of the sect appearing in PSM 29. It seemed a good idea to talk to them, given that numbers were diminishing rapidly and that their old commercial power was largely a thing of the past. At this time they were still, to an extent, a worshipping community. Elizabeth Cole, leader of the Northchapel brethren, was in bed; she had, I was told, problems with her legs. She was a lively and intelligent lady and in no way defensive. She was quite prepared to tell me what she knew of the "Cokelers" or "Dependants" as she preferred to term them. "Cokelers" was a nickname used only by outsiders, never by the brethren themselves. There was, she stressed, a lot she did not know about earlier days but she pointed clearly from a diminishing presence in 1982 toward colourful beginnings in early Victorian London. The Dependants were originally an offshoot of the Peculiar People, charismatic faith-healers and anointers with oil. They were a sect of the sprawling industrial suburbs along the river, Southwark, Plumstead, Barking, Canning Town and of the tiny settlements in the heartland of rural Essex from which the sect had begun. Charismatic healing and anointing with oil seemed a long way away from the quiet bedroom at Northchapel.

It was out of this crucible of faith healing, sudden conversion, public opprobrium and passionate belief that John Sirgood, a Gloucestershire shoemaker living in London had come south in 1850. Journeying in response to a divine call, his delicate wife Harriet sometimes trudging along beside him, sometimes carried in the wheelbarrow or handcart that bore his few worldly possessions, he came, at least as the story goes, to Loxwood. It would be in this rural fastness that his message began to take root, and here clumsy attempts made to eradicate the sect. These attempts were, as so often, counterproductive. Miss Cole attributed the somewhat austere ideals of the Dependants to the grinding poverty of a world of large families and intemperate fathers where a child's dinner might be a rabbit head and a slice of "hard pudding".

A few years later I was shown a large box of letter books, hymn books and other documents, coming from Northchapel but in some cases originating from Lord's Hill over the Surrey border. In biblical phraseology these were literally "brands plucked from the burning" for they had been saved from an intended bonfire. Here was that entree into the secluded world of the Dependants that so many outsiders had wished for but never been granted. The Dependants, like many sects, had an almost paranoid reluctance to show the documents of their faith to outsiders. They had, it must be said, good reason for caution. Accounts of the brethren written for the outside world tended to be at best inaccurate and patronising, at worst effectively libellous. I later found that the very nickname "Cokelers" was a perpetuation of old forgotten libels. In earliest days the severely moral Dependants had been termed "cuckolders", in reference to their alleged scandalous living. Even the brethren themselves had forgotten the origin of the nickname, linking it rather with their founder's supposed predilection for cocoa as opposed to alcoholic beverages.

About this time I made the acquaintance of Alfred Goodwin, last leader of the Dependants. Alfred was all too well aware of the risks involved in talking to outsiders and we started with a few almost apologetic notes. Alfred felt that a hurrying, materialistic world had no time for the old-fashioned piety of the Dependants. It was said that he had burned a certain amount of material but I didn't ask him. The Dependants were certainly no longer a worshipping community. Was Alfred right to be doubtful? To some extent perhaps, but not entirely. Over a period, talks with Alfred became a regular feature of this Magazine and Alfred seemed to feel that good might come from this remembrance of a vanished past. At each meeting he would come along with something new, the Warnham letter book, life stories of leading Dependants, the hand-written Norwood hymn-book made by the Circus family, father and son. So much material gave the feeling of walking in an abandoned temple. Alfred knew that temple when it was functioning and it seemed my responsibility, having been given so much, at least to pay tribute to that temple in its golden days, even if I could not reconstruct it as a living entity.

Alfred Goodwin died in 1996, but here, sixteen years after my first conversation with Miss Cole is *John Sirgood's Way* - the story of the Loxwood Dependants. We've sometimes despaired of financing such a large book on such a local subject. It will have around 280 pages, be hardback, with 25 illustrations, a map and an index of Dependants and others. The text does not dwell on the later commercial activities and acumen of the sect but tries to trace the beginnings and early development. It's very much a "Sussex" book and much, certainly, is quite new.

This is not a commercial enterprise. There are 150 numbered copies at £40 each. If we sell these we break even. It's as simple as that. As with the book on Ebernoe (1996), when it's gone, it's gone. I suppose, as with the Ebernoe book, there's a theoretical possibility of reprinting in a different format but that is really most unlikely. Whether, as the Ebernoe book did, *John Sirgood's Way* will sell out in a week, I don't know. I will talk about it at Ifold, Loxwood and at the Leconfield Hall. Further such excursions will depend entirely on what stock, if any, remains. If you would like to order beforehand, please see the separate sheet - but this does not guarantee supply.

P.

Petworth House - Petworth Residents' Open Evening - Friday 4th September 1998

The National Trust is opening the doors of Petworth House to local residents free of charge for a special Open Evening this September. This is an opportunity for the people of Petworth to have a privileged look at not only the Showrooms but also many other "hidden" areas of the House and Grounds and the work of the National Trust at Petworth. When the 3rd Earl of Egremont owned Petworth House in the early 19th century, he held fetes and other events for tenants and local people in the Park. The National Trust aims to carry on this tradition, to develop more links with the local community and to show how it seeks to conserve and present Petworth to visitors today.

On Friday 4th September 1998, between 5.00pm and 8.30pm, the property will be opened to 500 local residents who have collected a special free ticket. A number of special activities will be taking place:

- Follow the Treasure Train around a specially devised route which covers the House, the Kitchens, the Bedrooms, the Tunnels, Cellars, Icehouse, Attics, Roof space, Chapel and Turner's Studio. There will be an edible prize for those who find all the treasure and complete the trail successfully.
- Join the Storyteller in the House between 6.30pm and 8.30pm to hear stories about Henry Percy "the Wizard Earl", who lived at Petworth in the early 1600's.
- See how the National Trust restored the Oak Hall wallpaper. Come and try your hand at preparing wallpaper for the Oak Hall, with Allyson McDermott and her team from the Conservation Studio, the Battery House, Petworth.
- Find out about the favourite things in the House of the staff, volunteers and some local people.
- Display of items from the Petworth House Archives by kind permission of Lord and Lady Egremont, relating to the servants and estate workers, including wage books and dinner menus. Meet Alison McCann, the Archivist in charge of the Petworth House Archive and find out about the history of your home.
- Displays of work by local schoolchildren, based on visits to Petworth organised by the National Trust's Education Officer. The Mural created for the education area in the Servants Quarters by pupils from the Herbert Shiner School will also be open for viewing and Petworth's education volunteers will be on hand to show visitors the specially developed suite of education rooms and the handling collection of Victorian household objects.
- Picnicking in the Pleasure Grounds and Park (weather permitting!)
- The National Trust Shop will be open.
- *Free glass of wine and nibbles for every visitor.*
- Opportunity to join the National Trust and/or become a volunteer at Petworth.

I am keen that as many people as possible should come and, particularly perhaps those that have never been to the House before, and see some of the many things that are going on here. Then maybe some might want to become more involved with the Trust at Petworth and join our team of volunteers and supporters. We are all working to make sure that Petworth is conserved for future generations to enjoy and offers facilities for all age groups." Diana Owen, Property Manager.

Entrance to this event is by *Ticket only*.

Visitors must pick up a ticket before the event from the Tourist Information Centre in the Market Square or from the Church Lodge Entrance to Petworth House, next to St Mary's Church. Tickets will be available for a fortnight before the event, from Monday, 24th 1998. Proof of residency in the town (bank statement, driving licence etc.) must be brought along when picking up tickets as we won't know everyone's faces! There will not be any tickets available on the night. There is a maximum of 500 tickets so don't leave it too late!

Parking available in the House Car Park and in the Town.

For further information please contact: Beverley Hoe, House Steward, The National Trust, Petworth House on 01798 342207.

Ian and Pearl's Arundel Park Walk

A very hot day can make for fewer walkers, but, in fact, although it was hot, the company, considerably augmented at Whiteways, was more than respectable. But where to park? The sun had brought the bikers out in force and space was "limited" - a euphemism - "non-existent" might be a better word. In the end we had to park in a lane across the road. We walked over the A29 at the roundabout and were in Arundel Park. This would be a fairly simple walk round the hill and back. We'd been here with John and Gloria on a biting February afternoon, how long ago? Checking back, we found it was 1992. We'd always promised to be back. Whereas then we'd tried all we could to keep out of the piercing wind, on a day like this any breath of breeze would be welcome. The South Africans, a poster informed us, would be playing cricket here next week.

Once in the park we were much on our own, the sunlit throng at Whiteways were already out of mind. Two riders could be seen on the gentle slopes below us but they were on horseback. The grass blew in the wind. Shorn sheep looked at us. Was it a little early for shearing? Was even the light breeze a little too shrewd for them? We didn't know. We continued round to see the view across the valley. A patchwork of different May greens, with the odd yellow block of rape. Burpham - the land of Tickner Edwardes, chalky fields, South Stoke. We could well be in that country again in August. Thinking of previous walks there, a man, met in a lane, then heard singing for friends in the church. Impromptu, a trained singer who had not sung for two years and more. I can't remember why now. We were an age just looking and thinking before moving on to make the circuit.

Talking of other things as you do on a walk, of Joanna Southcott's remaining followers, some still remain. To open the Bishops' Box - or of a Swedenborgian church in Kent. The last of the followers of Lodovic Muggleton have finally died out. A religious group that didn't

think meetings and services either necessary or desirable. Piety struggling on in an age of middle-aged bikers on machines that in twenty years or more have grown altogether more powerful than those they had once known. Back toward Whiteways, a beech tree with leaves of the most intense olive green, Ian and Pearl with cold drinks for this, perhaps the first real summer's day.

P.

Petworth Gardens Walk - 21st June

Poppies in the wild gardens at Somerset Lodge, berry fruit reddening despite the constant June rain. Vegetables in the French garden, the old roses. Familiar territory to some of us, a revelation to newcomers. "The asters didn't come up, neither did a second packet, and by that time it was too late." A heron has taken some of the younger fish - "Herons have to live as well." The larger fish are probably beyond the heron's capacity to do more than alarm. A time of tension in the pond. Talking of medlars, in some ways a disappointing fruit, owing more to expectation than anything, flavouring the jam with lemon and the lemon taking over if you aren't careful. Having to tear the party away, after all we do have other gardens.

We straggle next door towards Somerset Hospital; the long walled border would grace any stately home. The apple tree on the lawn, Lord Derby, but you wouldn't know that in June. A grey-painted gate leads out into the Rectory Fields. Angela remembers a nights' alarm some years ago when someone forgot to bolt the gate and the inhabitants were woken up in the middle of the night by horses galloping up and down the lawn. An episode that distances but isn't forgotten. The gate is invariably checked now. We talk to Stan Wheeler in the sunshine then it's off again down bustling North Street. The afternoon will be a constant contrast between the public face of the street and its quieter hinterland. Turning quickly right to Alison and Peter's garden, a triumph over a difficult site, a celebration, if you like, of a difficult site. Circular stepping stones on a steep slope, lemon balm, alchemilla, even a teasel, then an allotment on the flatter ground at the bottom. Looking out of this to other patches, fenced but with dense vegetation that indicates allotment ground long neglected, such as you often see in strips from train windows. Allotments are more a hobby now than a necessity.

Back through a maze of Sunday afternoon back gardens. Mrs Mollett's smaller garden requires some to come out before others come in. Again the motif of returning to the road. Coming upon potatoes recently dug in a small pot, the haulms drying in the unaccustomed sun, cabbage and pale green round lettuce. Up steps with Sussex marble and briefly back to the unending traffic. Not long before we leave the dusty street again, this time for the quiet of Thompson's Hospital, residents sitting out in the patio over afternoon tea. To talk of an older Petworth. Yankie Ayling bringing his donkey up from Limbo. One thinks of the traffic-ridden street outside. George Garland telling a yarn of Yankie knocking a door in North Street (very much a Leconfield Estate enclave then) and demanding to see an acquaintance.

A woman comes to the door dabbing her eyes with an apron as people did in those days. "He's just died". "B----r it," says Yankie and drives the donkey on up the road. A generation growing old when Garland was a young man. Tales now with a kind of half-life of their own, apocryphal or not? Who can say? Depending for their survival on George Garland telling me and my remembering it. And Barbara, Yankie's granddaughter is here with us for the day. Connections. Why was he called Yankie? No one knows. But George Garland was himself in half-touch with a much older Petworth. Remembering him talking of Jimmy Hampton the Duncton undertaker, who doubled as undertakers did, as the village carpenter. He'd go to London periodically to buy furnishings for his coffins: nails, plates and other things. It was the time of the Jack the Ripper murders and Jimmy Hampton used to carry a black patent leather American bag similar to that supposedly carried by the Ripper himself. Jimmy was hauled in for questioning and unwise enough to relate his experience on his return home. Thereafter he was always known as Jack the Ripper.

I have digressed. Down the steps into the sunken garden at Thompsons, alchemilla growing from the cracks. Orange hawkweed (Hieracium aurantiacum) with its brilliant orange growing out of the lawn - a magnificent euphorbia in the border, the carmine flowers of the ubiquitous flos jovi - I can never remember the more usual name. "Madame Pricklynose" Jean says it was called at Monks Gate. It's five to four already, back into North Street again, convolvulus over the grey painted estate railings, scuffed grey doors that will presumably yield to the restored light brown colour.

Down to Donkey Row. Another mystery. Why is it so called? I've no idea. The present houses seem to have replaced an earlier, more picturesque row of cottages, but that would still be a long time ago. Look at the drawing in the Magazine - late Victorian? Thoughtful gardening, a raised plot with vegetables. Fried egg plants and marigolds to keep off predators. Over toward the Pleasure Gardens, the smell of new cut swathes of long grass by the Park wall. Walking up against the stream of visitors. The walk begins to straggle in the late afternoon sun. Waiting for people to catch up. Homemade elder flower cordial at Rectory Gate House, a lovely garden to relax in, neither too big nor too small. Then an unscheduled visit to Gillian's garden at Barton's Cottage. Difficult to remember a better Gardens Walk. There are other Garden Walks but the Society's always seem to have a character all their own.

P.

Visit to Applesham Farm - 5th July

Travelling in the front seat of a minibus is a stately process. Through Pulborough and Storrington then right into Steyning. Stuart, driving, had been to Applesham before with the Young Farmers but it was a fair while ago, he said. Through Sunday afternoon Steyning, then unfamiliar-sounding small settlements, Anniston, Botolphs to Coombes. An oasis of sunshine in a run of dismal wet days. The minibus was full up, but the Wimbledon tennis

final had cut our numbers. We were told, however, that some would be waiting for us at Applesham. They were.

Chris Passmore, who had spoken to the Society last spring, was his usual genial self, pointing out first the still-used VR letter box in the wall of one of his buildings. His grandfather, he said, would reply to the day's post while the postman was having a farmhouse breakfast of eggs and bacon. The postman would then take the letters back to Shoreham. Leisurely days, without a hint of "time and motion"! A line of buildings with black painted weatherboard stood still in reasonable condition, but the sound of the blacksmith and other farm craftsmen was to be heard no more.

On to a trailer with bales of straw to sit on, familiar enough to the Society from visits to Costrong at Kirdford. The party just fitted on to the trailer. Sheep and lambs - this is classic Findon fair territory - we later saw a first prize certificate from 1927. Big light brown Limousin cattle from the Massif Central. Chris said they started off with just three in the early 1970s. The farm lies in a "bowl" of downland just as he had explained to us last year.

For the chalk flowers this was probably the best week of the year. There might be as many as 50 of the 140 varieties in full bloom and some twelve of a couple of dozen different grasses. The blue flowers of tufted vetch were common as we climbed the steep scarp. Chris rattled the dried seed pods of the yellow rattle, hence its name. Fairy flax was an attractive name for the delicate white plant often called purging flax. Audrey found what turned out, perhaps, to be the star of the afternoon, a small plant with flowers of a luminous blue, round-headed campion, the "pride of Sussex", and emblem of the Sussex Downsmen. Chris told us some old names, "Kilk" for charlock, "Kech" for cow parsley. Cowslip leaves were everywhere but the flowers were no more. Chris said the hillside had been studded with them this year. The bee orchid had already seeded, but the pink spires of other orchids were clearly visible. Eyebright or salad burnet with its thin leaves, as the name implies, used for salads. I wondered whether anyone still troubled. Ladies' and heath bedstraw, the catalogue could go on and on. A meadow as people remember meadows. Chris pulled up a wild parsnip. The parsnip smell of the broken root was intense. Its cousin hogweed stood out on the skyline just across the meadow. "Go to bed at noon", a large dandelion like stem, had, as its name suggests, retired before our arrival.

We looked across to the old power station at Shoreham with the sea in the distance, then down from the bowl to the old Sussex barn with the newer Dutch barn carefully concealed behind it. Sussex barns of the old type are now something of a rarity on the Downs. The four cottages that adjoined the barn were demolished in the 1950s. The farm had itself been Leconfield Estate until sold in the early 1920s. Chris pointed out the craters of several chalk pits, long since disused. The profusion of wild flowers, he explained, was not, as might be expected, the result of simply letting nature take its course, that way lay a tangled mass of bramble and shrub. These flowers exist in what is effectively a carefully controlled environment. Left to itself chalk meadowland will become choked and its distinctive plants starved of light, air and nourishment. The solution lies in grouping which takes out the brambles and larger weeds before they have a chance to get going. Restharrow, wild thyme and birds-foot trefoil. Chris picked a seeded stem of the last and stood it upside

down. The resemblance to a bird's foot was uncanny. He told us something of the importance of grass and the various clovers for farm economy. Here even the nodding thistle is allowed its flowering time for the butterflies to enjoy. It's an attractive plant with a surprising delicate fragrance.

Back past the site of the cottages. In the 1851 census men from Petworth are listed here, building them, sleeping on site. The other side of Steyning was too far for returning home at night. Perhaps once one was built they'd sleep in the one they'd built. Hedges don't flourish on the Downs Chris said. It's a land of fences. Lancing College appeared and disappeared with the undulations in the terrain.

Back to the buildings suffused with the striped pink flowers of mallow. The barn of course had once been thatched. Memories of sheep-shearing, and it still goes on. The roundhouse was built for a pony to operate machinery. 1790s probably. Other sources of power made the pony redundant but the roundhouse remained in use and now, logically enough, houses the electricity supply. Looking at the low entrance to the barn from the farm, the poles would come off the high laden waggon after the top sheaves had been taken off. Then the cart would go in. The higher opening on the far side and the through draught would allow the chaff to escape during winnowing.

Lastly tea in the garden. American pillar roses, hollyhock by the wall with not a trace of rust. To look from this rural stronghold across to Shoreham and Brighton in the distance, not that far away. Then the ride back through the Sunday afternoon countryside. A really first-rate expedition.

P.

The 'Aces' and other matters

I was born in Petworth and lived all my childhood there at No.19 Station Road, together with my three sisters, Peggy, Beryl and Jean, also my two dear brothers, Geoff and Roy who have sadly passed away. Geoff was a keen footballer and many a day I have stood cheering the team on in the Park.

We used to play up in the Copse which was across the fields from our back garden, also round the Hills and down by the swinging bridge in Hungers Lane. We had a wonderful view of the Downs and the gardens were much longer than they are now, there were no garages or houses built out the back. Our neighbours along that row of houses then were the Colnans, Sadlers, (with Marian, Eric, John and Ray) Diplocks, (I am still in touch with Audrey and I know she will be reading this) Summersells, Greens, then our family Phelps, Wallington, Francis, Collins, Dean, Taylor and Valente.

In the Summer we would help in the corn field and have a ride on the waggon back to Webbers at Frog Farm.

We went to the Infants School where the Library now stands, then on to the Girls School in East Street where we were taught by Miss Wootton, Miss Smith, Miss Bevis and and a

London teacher, Mrs Bell, who came with the evacuees. I remember when it was so cold, putting the milk bottles round the stove to thaw out. Of course we never forget the day the Boys School was bombed and the friends we lost, it will always be with us. Peggy went on to Chichester High School and Geoff and Roy to Midhurst Grammar.

I remember going with the school to the local cinema to see the film *King Solomon's Mine* which was a great treat, I believe we were given an orange and a bag of sweets.

Mrs Whitcomb (Chum and Pauline's mother) used to hold dancing classes and we put on lovely concerts in the Iron Room. Everyone helped with the costumes and make-up and it kept a lot of us youngsters occupied. We also took our concerts to the troops who were stationed locally.

One of the families who came from London was Mrs Adams (Auntie Mabel) and her daughters Eileen and Joan. They continued to live here after the war and there was always a warm welcome when we tapped on her door in Pound Street.

As we grew up and left school Jean worked in Bowyers Chemist Shop, myself in Newland, Tompkins and Taylor which we both enjoyed, Beryl also worked in Bowyers and Peggy in Pitfield and Oglethorpes. There were a nice variety of shops in those days such as Tunks, Knights in the Square who sold those lovely lardy rolls, Hazelmans, the good old Internationals, Meachens and Moneys to name just a few. I mustn't forget the Four and Twenty Blackbirds and the Hobby Horse. Also Biggs, the Butcher in High Street where our father was Book-keeper for many years.

Our brother Roy had his own Band which was called "The Aces". They used to practice in our house and we would go into the garden to see if it was too loud but no one complained as far as I can remember. I expect there are a lot of people who can recall dancing to his music in the Iron Room. We can remember a few of the members names who played at different times but not all. There was Dave Harrison, Chum Whitcomb, Tommy Greest, (sadly killed in the war) Baxter, Newman and one or two others

"The Aces"

We may have had hard and diffcult times especially our parents, but we were never bored, yet there was no T.V., no telephones for us, no computers, certainly not much money but we made our own entertainment.

The one most important person during our childhood and in our later years was our mother.

Donkey Row, Petworth, a Victorian drawing.
See "Anne's Garden Walk."

Jimmy Hampton with his horse-drawn hearse - probably in the 1880s. See "Anne's Garden Walk." Photograph by Walter Kevis.

She was always there for us with plenty of love no matter what we did. I don't believe she ever had a holiday apart from going to relatives and the odd day out to the seaside which was a great treat. She was a very special mum.

Pauline Chandler (Phelps)

A visitor to Petworth in the 1890s

James John Hissey wrote a number of books on his travels in England in the 1880s and 1890s, attractively produced and featuring the author's own illustrations. His books can sometimes be found on the second-market but they tend to attract a fair price £30 to £40. Hissey was fairly prolific ; a series of such books appearing from 1884 onwards covering much of the country. His favoured mode of transport was dog-cart or phaethon. Painting a broad canvas as he does, Hissey like so many leisured travellers of the period, makes little attempt to penetrate beneath the surface, offering a few general impressions on an overnight stay, often filled out with fairly general comment or personal reminiscence. In one of his later works, *On Southern English Roads* (1896) Hissey comes to Petworth and makes the following observations. I have omitted some passages of personal reminiscence which have nothing to do with Petworth and are of no interest for this Magazine. In December I will append his comments on Fittleworth. There is effectively no parallel to his account of the Roman Catholic Church in building and local reaction to it although Charles Holland's comments in St Mary's Parish magazine which are reproduced in *Petworth: Time Out of Mind* (1982) may be of interest.

On leaving Midhurst Hissey writes:

Now our road dipped down through a deep cutting in red sandstone, and a further descent brought us to a spot marked as "Halfway Bridge" on our map. A very pretty spot it was, at the foot of a tree-clad glen, a tiny valley with a wide, winding stream flowing through it, that worked an ancient mill-wheel with much droning and creaking.

Then it was uphill again, and a short drive through an open country brought us to Petworth, where at the "Half Moon" — an ancient inn that has outlived many generations of travellers — we found comfortable quarters and luxurious loose-boxes for our horses.

As there was still an hour or so of daylight left, we set out, sketch-book in hand, for a ramble round the old town, that just escapes being quaint, but is full of picturesque little bits, that appeal, however, more to the artist than the architect. At one part, where the houses suddenly ended and the country began, we found before us a deep and wide valley, over which we had a fine view of the distant wooded uplands, and looked down upon the roof-trees of farmsteads in the vale. I do love these little rural towns ; for one thing, they have no dismal suburbs ; at once where the houses end the country begins — the genuine country, too.

On the crest of the hill, where we stood admiring the pleasant view, we noticed a fine church in the course of construction. This had more of the real medieval feeling about it,

save a somewhat too mechanical rendering of the traceried windows, than we had ever found before in a modern building. It even managed to interest us; as a rule nineteenth-century ecclesiastical architecture produces but costly eye-sores, a mere meaningless piling up of stones—or bricks—and mortar, that profits only the contractor, and certainly never arouses our enthusiasm:—

In the elder days of Art,
Builders wrought with greatest care
Each minute and unseen part ;
For the gods see everywhere .....

Inquiring of a stranger passing by, we learnt that this was a Roman Catholic church being erected by a gentleman, whose name I have now forgotten, "but where the congregation are to come from," furthermore said he, "I don't know. There are not many Catholics in these parts ; they'll just have to make them." This casual, half-joking remark set us seriously a-thinking. What of the twentieth-century religion?

Then returning to our inn we chanced to pass a watchmaker's shop, and we looked in, as our watch had stopped. Here we most unexpectedly discovered quite a small museum of old things ; some of these, though not all, were for sale. We purchased an ancient Sussex rushlight holder and a pair of tobacco tongs for a few shillings. We had no idea till then that there was such an article as the last, and we begged to have its use explained to us. It appears that the instrument, which is small, shapely, and neatly made, was formerly employed to lift a live ember from the fire to light the pipe with. The tongs are also provided with an iron stop, the purpose of which was to ram the tobacco down in the pipe. We have never yet returned home from any tour without having bought during the journey some relic of past days, valued both for itself and as a pleasing memento of the expedition.

After consulting our map during the evening we decided that we would drive on the morrow to Worthing, crossing over the Downs by Findon. We selected Worthing, not that the town offered us any attractions in itself, but because the drive there promised to lead us through an interesting country. We were basely making a convenience of Worthing as a place to sleep in!

Out of Petworth it was downhill at first. At the foot of the descent we noticed two gray old stone-built farmhouses and a stone trough for water by the roadside, such as one often sees in the "North Countrie." The dale-like look of the valley, with the picturesque wayside trough and substantial stone farmsteads, recalled to mind Derbyshire.

We now ascended on to high ground, and the country broadened out into a wide and wild common, a bit of unsophisticated nature charming in its ruggedness, a common dotted with stunted gorse and wind-twisted dwarf oaks, between which wound sandy roads. The summer wind blew fresh and keen across this elevated spot. It was mere fancy truly, but somehow high up there we seemed nearer the great white clouds that were driving across the vast expanse of sky overhead. Perhaps the feeling was due to the clearness and rarity of the atmosphere, that apparently so shortens space. I well remember, whilst travelling in California, the exceeding difficulty I had in at all correctly estimating distances in the wonderfully pure air there, the far - away seemed so comparatively near to me ; it did not

melt away into a blue mystery, as with us, that is so poetical and space-suggesting. I really think that the Dutch and English atmosphere is the most artistic in the world — it gives the landscape such a mellow idyllic look that it more than compensates for all its other supposed shortcomings.

PHA 7587 - a Question of Connections

Fairs, as I have often said before, are all about waiting. Local history is all about connections, one stray reference tying in with something already known, and usually this connection creating a mystery where none was before! Local history is perhaps best seen as a series of mysteries. If you knew all there was to know there would be no local history at all. For that reason any history of Petworth, however compendious, is simply a step along an infinite road. And that, I think, is how it should be.

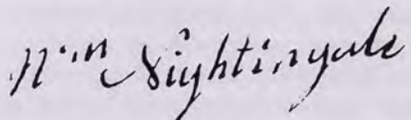
Such thoughts are suggested by PHA 7587, two fairly run-of-the-mill depositions concerning an assault in December 1800. These sworn statements are written in a good legible hand and taken before the Earl of Egremont who countersigns them. A covering note by William Tyler, the Earl's agent, is in the former's invincibly illegible script and it is something of a relief that this simply appears to duplicate the other statements. The crucial witness is one William Nightingale, a carpenter, and victim of the assault. It appears that, between ten and eleven o'clock on the night of the fifteenth, Nightingale had been called from his house by a servant of Matthew Warren, the maltster, and told that some persons were attempting to force an entry into his master's home. They had already broken some windows. Nightingale together with one John Terry, a private soldier in the Sussex Militia, a lodger in Nightingale's house, set off in pursuit of the miscreants with the Warrens, father and son. Nightingale had a musket and Terry a bayonet. In modern terms perhaps Terry would be described as a "territorial". The Warrens' and the Nightingales' houses adjoined. The prospective intruders had been dressed in soldiers' habits but had now disappeared. Clearly there would be no reparation if the offenders were not found. It was essential therefore to find which soldiers had been out that night. It was now that a party of foot soldiers had come into Petworth for the night.

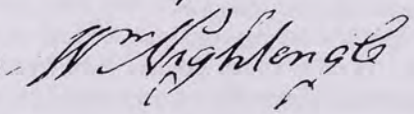
The foursome set off round the "public taverns" in pursuit of their quarry. As they were coming out of the Swan Yard they ran into three officers and James Carr, sergeant for a recruiting party then in Petworth. They had already met these men in the town and asked them if they knew of any soldiers being in the town that night. On their enquiring again Carr and the officers "raised a quarrel" with Nightingale and the others and demanded to know who their officers were. They had no right to be carrying arms. The officers attempted to wrest Terry's bayonet from him as also a bayonet and fowling piece that the Warrens were carrying. One of the officers then struck Nightingale with a bludgeon, knocking him to the ground and making a cut nearly an inch and a half long. The statement notes that the soldiers had marched from Petworth at six o'clock the following morning. Whether Carr was with them is not clear. A shorter composite statement by the Warrens and Terry adds nothing.

Of a denouement there is no sign. Without a police-force as such, justice was very much a matter for individual initiative. Whether there were any sanctions that could be taken against such fast disappearing and not certainly identified miscreants is problematical. The need for speed reminds of the old medieval court of pie-powder when offenders at an annual fair needed to be dealt with virtually on the same day. If not, they would simply melt away.

Without initiating a major search, it is likely that a little more can be said about William Nightingale. A person of that name appears as one of the signatories in an application to the Bishop of Chichester to register the Providence Chapel in Golden Square in March 1828 while two invoices for Mrs Harriet Palmer at Avenings show a William Nightingale as a carpenter employing perhaps a couple of men. In 1829 he renders account for repairing a gate at the Pound, repairing an "ironing board", a dresser and a "horse", presumably a clothes horse. Other outdoor work includes repairing wattles at the hog pound and "preparing stuff for cribs", no doubt for the lambing season. He also lists repairs to the cider press and apple mill, and makes a ladder. The Palmers were a wealthy family and had a small farm at the Pound and various scattered smallholdings. Another invoice to Mrs Palmer, this time from 1843 is again a mixture of household and farm carpentry. While the invoices are clearly written out by someone else, the 1843 one carries Nightingale's signature as a receipt. Pigot's 1826 Directory makes no mention of Nightingale so he would probably be in a fairly small way of business.

It is interesting to compare signatures - that from 1800 and that from 1843. Are they of the same man? I would have thought so: the N is very distinctive even if the spelling differs. By 1843 William Nightingale would be 78, the 1841 census gives his age as 76.

1800 Signature (from PHA 7587) 

1843 Signature (from Palmer invoice) 

According to the 1841 census William Nightingale is living in Back Road, in Ayres' Buildings, one of four cottages fronting on to the road and facing the stables of Petworth House. In those traffic free days Back Road was a legitimate street with a frontage. A rough map of the buildings surrounding Ayres' Yard at the top of Lombard Street, perhaps from the 1860s, lists William Nightingale as sometime occupier of the third of these little houses; in the 1841 census he was living there with a lodger. There is no mention of any family. Was William at this address in 1800? If he was, it would have been but a short trip down to the Swan Yard. He seems to have died in 1850.

P.

Material from Petworth House Archives reproduced by courtesy of Lord Egremont.

Gwenda Morgan records the outbreak of war in 1939

As many members will know, Gwenda Morgan was a great supporter of this Society. We have often used her wood engravings as the cover of this Magazine. Gwenda achieved national recognition for her work, but was rather reticent about this, many people in Petworth probably never knew that she had done wood engraving at all. Of late years Gwenda lived with her step-mother Una at Ridge House in Station Road and, for a while, when Una died, on her own. She died in 1991.

In 1939 Gwenda went to work as a landgirl, quite a culture shock for her, I imagine, and she kept a diary of her experiences. At this time she was living with Una at the Old Bank House in Market Square. Gwenda was a somewhat retiring person but clearly thought her diary a work of some interest and envisioned it being read in later years: it was carefully preserved among her papers and one or two sentences have been carefully erased or (occasionally) neatly cut out with scissors. The diary comprises four fair-sized exercise books.

For the many who knew Gwenda the diary will have a particular poignancy, but those who did not know her will still find this account of the days heading up to the outbreak of war of great interest. The first entries are very full. In the nature of the case, later entries tend to be cursory at times, farm-work being rather repetitive. Gwenda started at Hallgate Farm, Byworth, moving to Frog Farm, Petworth, in 1940. Mr and Mrs and Peter T are of course the Thorn family. Peter still farms Hallgate.

Cymru is Gwenda's dog. Captain Oglethorpe is one of the principals at the Market Square solicitors. O.B.H. is Old Bank House.

Ed.

August 28th 1939

First day on the land. Arrived at Hallgate at 9 o'c. Mr. T. took me up to the potato field where I picked up potatoes in bucket and filled sacks while the men dug. Later in the morning went to see sheep rounded up and treated with powder for fly sores and some disinfectant stuff (that smelt like Jeyes') for maggots. Ate apple turnover under a tree on the way home for dinner. Back by 2 o'c 'bus and to the hayfield behind Parker's cottage. Helped at elevator with pitchfork. Very hot day and I got very thirsty. Mrs. T. asked me to have tea under rick with herself, Mr. T. and Peter. Walked home over fields the way Mrs. T. showed me. Felt tired and rather blistery but think I shall like it very much. Hope weather won't get hotter, though. Don't think it possibly can. Have drunk quarts of water since getting home. Land Army working outfit arrived but shan't wear it this hot weather. There were lots of seagulls in the field beside the potato rows.

August 29th. Tried on new outfit. Much too large everywhere but shan't send it back yet as my own overalls are cooler. The rubber boots are O.K. Shall keep them at the farm. Took 'bus to the Welldiggers Arms. Followed path across big field to the hayfield by Mr.

Hurley's house. There were lots of cows in the big field and when I saw red boards up in the hedges I thought they meant there was a bull in the field so was a bit nervous. No need to be however for when, later in afternoon I asked an old man while shaking hay what the boards meant he said they are to warn huntsmen against jumping the hedges because of wire in them. A hot day but not so oppressive as yesterday. Mrs. T. brought tea to field. Wrist began to hurt after tea and a lump came up. Left at 6.30. Walked home over fields and bathed wrist in Virgin Mary Spring. Thirsty again. Go to same hayfield tomorrow at 2 o'c. Men keep calling the elevator, the alevator. Thought at first they were saying alligator. The other thing is a sweeper (or sweep ?). It broke down today owing to a hole in the ground where water pipes had been laid and not properly filled in. It seemed to be alright later. Everyone takes bottles of liquid (cold tea?) to drink at intervals. A good idea, I shall always bring lemonade.

August 30th. To same hayfield at 2 o'c. Shook hay and made a field full of beautiful cocks. Lovely day not quite so hot, but nearly. The sweep was one borrowed from Mr Smallridge and he wanted it back so Mr. T. took it behind the tractor, up endways. Tea with Mr. Mrs. and Peter in field. More hay cocks after tea till 6.30. One man said he wished Hitler would come to Byworth so that he could have a go at him with his pitchfork. Wrist not so bad as the work was lighter today. The walks home in the evening with a wash and drink at the Spring are lovely. Everyone says there are no cornfields on the farm this year so do not know what the work will be when haymaking is finished. Someone suggested hedge trimming. I'd love all this if it wasn't for the prospect of a war. Same time and same field tomorrow (It's really two fields side by side). There are two more fields after this one.

August 31st. Rained, so went to farm instead of to hayfield. Cleared up after all, however, and turned out hot and sunny. Dug potatoes in Mrs. T's garden and put into sacks. Nice big potatoes but rather boring after an hour or two. And the stinging nettles. Would rather have gone haymaking. Lemonade and cake for tea sitting among the potatoes all alone. Evacuation of London begins tomorrow. Thoroughly depressed and wrist rather a nuisance again. Must help to billet the children tomorrow so it will get a rest. Hope Cymru will be alright with all these children coming.

September 1st. Germany has begun to bomb Poland. Damn and blast Hitler. Didn't go to farm. Billeted children.

September 2nd. Not going to farm again till Monday. More children to be billeted today and tomorrow. Capt. Oglethorpe says we shall declare war today or tomorrow. How awful. The children yesterday were nice little things. Rather tearful. Mostly from Peckham. Mrs. Morley Fletcher was marvellous at the billeting table. Don't know how we should have managed without her. This is how it was all done:- Children arrived by 'bus from Billingshurst station with luggage labels round their necks with their names on. They sat at desks while their small parcels of luggage were tied together and labelled. Then they were taken to the lavatories, and then ten at a time to the nurses who looked at heads, chests, and throats. Then they were given buns and milk. Then they came ten at a time to the billeting tables where their names were written down in a book with names and addresses of foster mothers and amount to be paid to each foster mother. Then name and address of foster mother was pinned to each child and they were taken to their billets by girl guides or boy scouts,

with a bag of rations. (Rations consisted of corned beef, condensed milk, biscuits and chocolate). No children sent to us at O.B.H. yet.

Sept. 3rd. Sunday. At war with Germany. Oh, well, we expected it. Finished sticking up ventilators etc. in gas-proof room. All dark curtains are up and some of the windows stuck over with brown paper to obscure light. Policemen are wearing their gas mask haversacks and steel helmets. I suppose it is necessary but how silly it seems in peaceful Sussex. Roads are painted with white lines so that people can find the way in the dark. Sat in the boys school all the afternoon and evening expecting more people to arrive from evacuated areas but they didn't come after all. Rather a muddle about it somewhere. A few mothers with young children arrived at the Infant's School and were found billets (with difficulty, as no one seems so ready to take in adults as children). Lots of aeroplanes went over during the night. British, fortunately.

'You, you and you'

At the beginning of the war we were living in Peckham, my husband being a full-time fireman at Woolwich, working 48 hour shifts with 24 hour rest periods and often sleeping at the fire station. My daughter was just over a year old. Camberwell Council ran the clinic I went to and it was suggested at the clinic that some of the young mothers and mothers-to-be should be evacuated to the country. It was a Camberwell Council initiative, taking in the districts of Peckham and Nunhead as well as Camberwell itself. A woman four doors along from me, who had a boy of three or four and a daughter of two, was also interested and in fact came to Petworth, as did another woman from a neighbouring street. I think in all there were some six mothers with children and fourteen expectant mothers. I had talked it over with my husband of course and it was really he who persuaded me to leave London. Petworth, as you know, had a great number of evacuees from the Peckham area but our project had nothing to do with this and I knew nothing of other evacuees from our area, nor, curiously, have I any memory of the Chelsea Day Nursery. Memory does, of course, play tricks, particularly over almost sixty years. Remember too that we were basically in the House itself, the Day Nursery essentially in the Servants' Block.

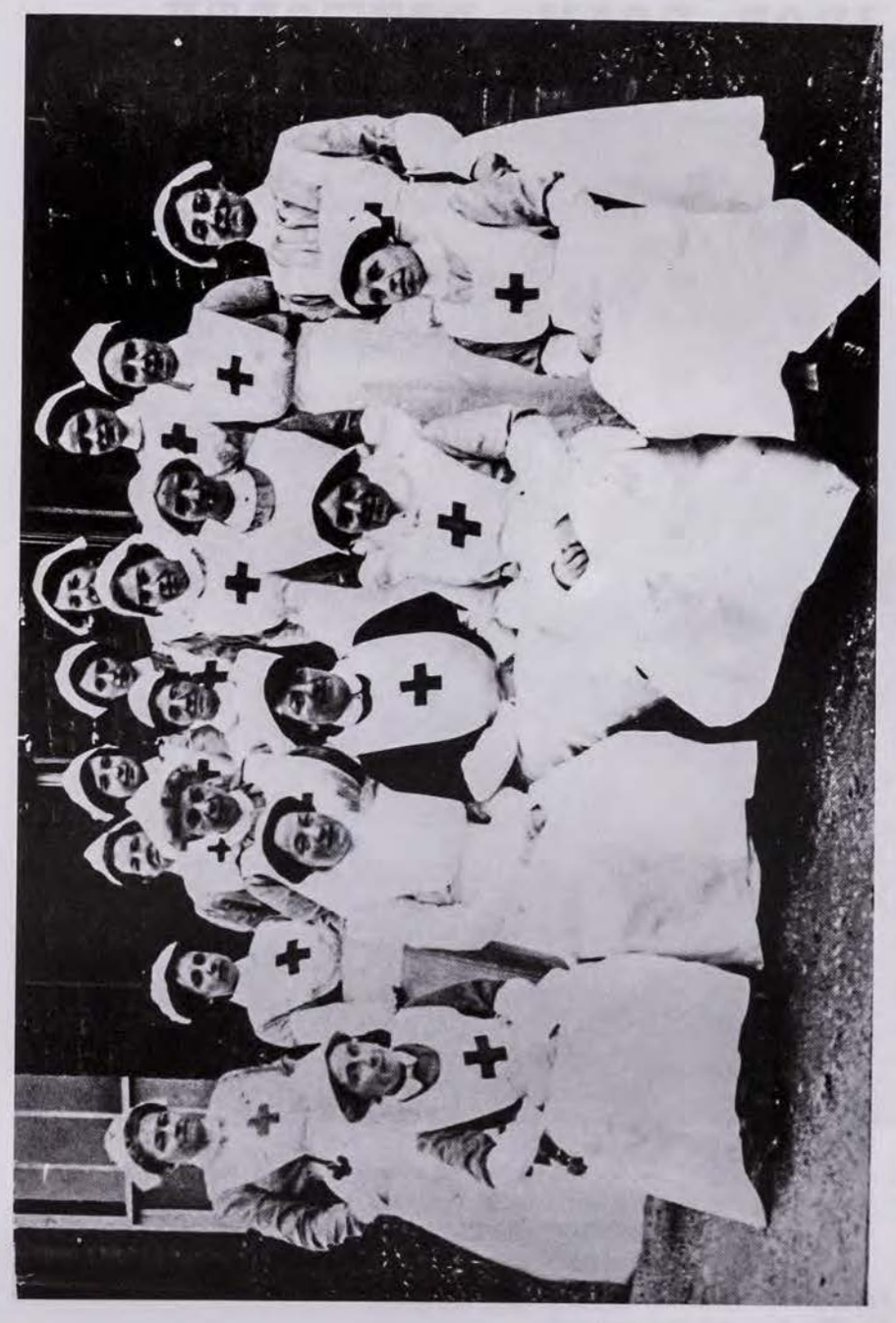
We came to Petworth by coach and were received at a hall (probably what you call the Iron Room) and billets allocated, rather on the "You, You and You", principle. Organisation was still very basic. I think people were more doubtful about taking expectant mothers and those with young children than they had been about older children and we were eventually assigned to Petworth House. Mothers with children were put in rooms at the top of the House in what we supposed had been, before the war, servants' rooms. The mothers-to-be were on the floor beneath, in what we supposed were the maids' rooms - very pretty with chintz curtains and armchairs to match. Perhaps these were in fact guest rooms. We all shared a bathroom at the top of a flight of stairs that led to the downstairs dining room. My near neighbour from Peckham shared a room with me, high and cold it seemed. There were double beds for each of us and cots for the children.

An early alarm was the night watchman tramping up the stairs in the middle of the night. He came round twice with a torch. We had been told about this but the first night he woke us up and frightened us out of our lives. He sounded so loud as all the hall and the stairs were polished wood. Then we remembered and burst out laughing, putting our hands over our mouths so that he wouldn't hear us.

We were not allowed to use the front of the House. We came in the big gate that had been used by the huntsmen before the war. We then crossed the cobbled yard into the House, going through a room with toilets on one side and wash basins and mirrors opposite. We then passed into a hall. We had to leave our prams on the ground floor and carry our children in blankets up the spiral staircase. We counted the steps one day and it came to over a hundred, I can't remember exactly. There was a lovely view, out of the window, of the park and lake - fields and pond we called them. We were given a spirit lamp to boil the children's milk and make tea and prepare breakfast, but dinner and tea were downstairs in a room with a marvellous view and French doors opening out on to it. There were patches on the wall where the pictures had been removed. You say it is the Marble Hall. Food was cooked for us in the kitchens. It was good but quite unlike anything we were used to, so we didn't really appreciate it. Jugged hare, pasta, fish with parsley sauce. I've always been rather a finicky eater and I've never drunk milk, so it was all rather difficult. No alternatives were offered and I was often hungry and went off to the general shop or the bakers to buy what I could in the way of rolls, sandwiches or fruit. The milk pudding I saved for baby after dinner. Another problem with the system was that it left us absolutely nothing to do for ourselves; I'd be walking about with the pram most days. I might walk on the Downs (Round the Hills) or round the Square but it was a long day. My husband managed to get down once or twice but he couldn't stay at the House itself and found it very difficult to find anywhere that would put him up for the night.

Once we were having our meal in the dining room when I asked the footman who was serving us if I could have a jug of gravy for the baby. "I don't know," he replied, "I'll have to ask the chef." Nothing seemed to happen and I took matters into my own hands. I took a jug, went through the door the men came from and asked the waiter where the kitchens were. He directed me and I went through a door down some steps and along a long tunnel. On either side were tins of food, sugar and other things. Eventually I arrived at the kitchen, a big room with ovens down the sides and a huge table in the middle at which the staff were working. All round were shining copper saucepans and other utensils. It was quite clear that visitors to the kitchen were very unusual. I was asked what I wanted, then the chef was told. He muttered something apparently in French and pointed at several pots, probably in the bain-marie. I filled up my jug and went off. The funny thing was that when I got back all the girls wanted some. The little that was left I boiled up next day for baby on the spirit stove.

I never felt very much at ease on the rare occasions that I met Lady Leconfield, she asked us once how we were getting on and arranged a visit for a small party of us to see the greenhouses. I suppose the man who showed us round would have been Fred Streeter but I didn't know at the time. One of the expectant mothers said, "I shall have a peach on my baby's nose if I don't have one," but nothing was said and the ripening peaches remained where they were.



Red Cross Nurses about 1914.
See "It's the chap in front of you ... "
Identifications in note at end of article.

IRON ROOM, PETWORTH

A GRAND CARNIVAL DANCE

in the above on

SATURDAY, MARCH 5th

at 8 p.m.

Roy Phelps & His Band

CARNIVAL NOVELTIES

Tickets 3/-

"U-NEED-US," 70/72 Arundel Street, Portsmouth, Hants.

Poster for the "Aces" band - late 1930s?
See "The Aces and other matters."

"Major A.E.W. Mason at work in his study at New Grove, Petworth, his Sussex home. Major Mason's new novel, The House of the Arrow, *has just been published by Hodder and Stoughton". Original Garland caption from the mid-1920s.*
A.E.W. Mason is mentioned more than once in this magazine.
Photograph by George Garland.

Monday Feb 14th.

ROYAL WEST SUSSEX HOSPITAL, CHICHESTER.

~~THE SECOND ANNUAL~~

POUND DAY

In Aid of the above Hospital will be held on

~~**Saturday, November 6th, 1920,**~~

In order to provide an opportunity for all inhabitants of the District served by the Hospital to give according to their means, will you kindly assist by giving ONE POUND or more of the following articles, writing your name on the outside cover?—

Tea.	Golden Syrup.	Pears.
Sugar.	Jam.	Onions.
Coffee.	Marmalade.	Mustard.
Cocoa.	Sultanas.	Pepper.
Tapioca.	Candid Peel.	Custard Powder.
Sago.	Cheese.	Egg Powder.
Pearl Barley.	Butter.	Flour.
Macaroni.	Margarine.	Baking Powder.
Cornflour.	Bacon.	Biscuits.
Semolina.	Peas or Beans.	Soap.
Rice.	Potatoes.	Starch.
Raisins.	Carrots.	Soda.
Currants.	Beetroot.	Blue.
Dried Fruits.	Apples.	

Or any other article suitable for use in the Hospital, such as—

Oxo.	Cotton Wool.	Washing Powder.
Bovril.	Bandages.	Scrubbing Brush.
Eggs.	Vaseline.	Blacklead.
Flannel.	Matches.	Brooke's Soap.
House Flannel.	Brooms.	Metal Polish.
Lint.	Knife Powder.	
Linen.	Emery Cloth.	

Iron Room Petworth.

GIFTS OF SILVER OR NOTES will be especially acceptable.

All gifts will be received at the ~~Hospital~~ between the hours of 2 p.m. ~~9 a.m.~~ and 6 p.m. or by—*

Mrs Beacher St.

Donors will be allowed to go over the Hospital if they so desire on Pound Day. Articles collected in the outlying Parishes should be sent to the Hospital, if possible, on Monday, November 8th.

*Name and Address of Parish Collector, and Hour of Collection, should be inserted here.

R. J. Acford, Ltd., Printers, Chichester.

A poster for Pound Day 1921. This is probably a printer's proof. See "It's the chap in front of you ..."

Conditions were fairly basic. We washed our baby clothes in a little sink and tied a piece of string across for a drying-line. There was nowhere to air the clothes so we wrapped the nappies round us and aired them as we slept. The chambermaids changed the sheets once a week and did a little cleaning, as we did, but we never actually saw them.

Once we met a gentleman and asked if it was alright to walk in the park; we thought we could push the prams over to the lake. He was a rather short thick-set man with white gaiters and a dog. He was very pleasant and said that this would be alright. We were worried about trespassing. He warned us however to be careful because the lake was deep and there were a lot of weeds in it. We thanked him and asked his name and he said, "Lord Leconfield." There was no barbed wire in the Park at this time. Sometimes on a Sunday we went to church, but it was purely voluntary; we were under no obligation to go. Miss Harris, Lord Leconfield's secretary was very nice and basically responsible for us. She took our ration books when we arrived and certainly did what she could to make us welcome.

The trouble was, I just wasn't happy. I was far from home, lonely, the stairs were difficult, the food was strange, my husband had great difficulty in seeing me and there was nothing for us to do. There were tensions too. My daughter cried a lot and kept us awake. My room companion didn't consult me but went straight to Miss Harris. At the same time, however, another mother who had a room on her own, with a rather boisterous son was asked to keep him under better control. He was also inclined to wet the bed which didn't help. She just upped and left. It was like that. We never saw her again. I was asked if I would take the room; it was at the end of the corridor. I agreed, on condition that the mattress was changed. After about a week I decided Petworth House simply wasn't for me, went to see Miss Harris and asked for my ration books back. Was anything wrong? She asked. I couldn't really say, it was a combination of things.

I got the bus to Pulborough. No one argued with me I just went. When I got back to Rye Lane station, a porter going off duty helped me home with my pram and few belongings. In 1940 our house was twice damaged by bomb blast. In fact we had the scullery lino tacked up to protect some of the damage. Opposite us a piano hung half in and half out of a wrecked first floor. In those early days of the war organisation was very primitive but as time went on such things improved greatly. We would later be evacuated to Bedfordshire. I didn't like that very much either. I'd only been at Petworth some five weeks or so in 1940 but I still remember it vividly even if, as I say, "memory jumps about a bit."

Rose Calvert was talking to Diana Owen and the Editor.

Dancing with the Tea-leaves

I have known Edie Smith for over sixty years and we've been firm friends all that time. In fact, as it happens, neither of us was born in Petworth, although Edie has lived here most of her life. I have only lived around here for odd periods but I always look upon this part of

West Sussex as my home. My great grandparents lived at Upperton, my father being born at Manor of Dean. At that time it was three cottages: my grandparents having worked for the Kenyon Mitfords at Pitshill, looking after the dairy, then situated in the cellars at Manor of Dean. My grandfather had been the cowman while grandmother made the cheeses, butter and other dairy products for the big house. I don't think the produce was sold at all. My father and his two brothers were born at Manor of Dean; I think my father worked to begin with as a part-time gardener, possibly also as a postman. He went off to London when he was nineteen; as a young man he played cricket for Tillington. When he was a boy aged about ten or eleven he fell down the cellar steps at Dean and broke his thigh. As I've said, the dairy was in the cellar and a flap had been left open. He didn't see it and fell through. He was kept in bed for six months waiting for the fracture to heal. When he went to London he worked for the railway and moved with them to Eastleigh. Eventually my grandparents retired to a cottage down towards the main road, then into the Tillington Road almshouses.

While I was still at school but before I took my examinations, my mother had a severe stroke so I had to leave school to look after my father and brother, but when I was eighteen my elder brother and his wife had to leave the flat they were in and came back home. This meant that I was able to leave home, although the only thing I could do was cooking - I'd done so much at home. I went as kitchenmaid at a big house near Bishops Waltham and learned there how to cook and present meals. I wasn't paid much; ten shillings a week, but the experience proved invaluable. After about a year my sister wrote to say that Mrs. Slade Mitford at River Cottage (now Tanners) at River wanted a live-in cook. I still have Mrs. Slade Mitford's letter offering £36 a year - quite good money then - and hoping that I wouldn't mind the inconvenience of living in the country.

When I arrived Edie was already working there and although I was technically the cook, we tended to share the work. One task was to pump water to the tank in the top of the house, particularly when the family had had baths. We were rather like bell-ringers, the handle sometimes taking us right off the ground. There were oil-lamps which needed very regular attention, no electricity of course, and for heating open fires only. River was well off the beaten track in those days and I soon realized that Mrs. Slade-Mitford's remark about country living was very much to the point. The Mitfords had three young daughters and a son, very young when I arrived. There were also four dogs and three cats, a live-in nanny and a governess, Miss Osborne, who came in from the Studio at Lodsworth. There was also dear old Mrs. Woodgate from River who came in part-time to help us. River was indeed very remote; a right of way ran through from Pitshill where Colonel Mitford lived. The Mitfords at River Cottage had a car, probably Hursts the builders had a van, but as regards motor transport that was about it. We were there for three years, Edie and I, Edie was nineteen and I had my twenty-first birthday while I was at River. Hours were long and we worked hard but looking back they seem happy days, full of laughter. Occasionally the old Duke of Norfolk would come to dinner and we'd put on a five-course meal. I could always say afterwards that I'd waited at table on the Duke of Norfolk.

We left after three years to go to Redens on Lodsworth Common, a house beautifully renovated by Mr. and Mrs. du Bruel. He was a tea-merchant, I believe, and somewhat older

than his wife. We'd only been there a month when he was taken ill, and, not long after that he died. We stayed on looking after Mrs. du Bruel, we had our own quarters and sitting-room. Mrs. Mitford was very disappointed at our leaving and told us so. Staff weren't that easy to recruit for country positions even in the mid-1930s.

At River Cottage, we both slept in a kind of attic. My bed had interleaved metal laths with a straw mattress below and a flock mattress above. It could be very cold and sometimes Edie and I piled all the bedding on one bed and slept together. The attic was reached by little steps set against a wall. We each had half a day off a week, and I would usually go to see my sister Mrs. Wilson at Upperton. Although Edie and I both had bicycles we were never off at the same time. There was also one day off a month and every other Sunday afternoon. I was confirmed at Tillington church by, I think, the bishop of Winchester. I was allowed out for the confirmation classes.

Supplies at River Cottage were basically delivered in - things like sugar and dried fruit kept in large jars from which we were allowed to take what we needed for the week. The fish man (Mr. Joyes I think) came from Petworth, as did Harry Howard for the International Stores, first on his bicycle to collect the order, then in the van to deliver it. We didn't have to do washing; that was put out and delivered back in big wicker baskets. The stove burned coal and anthracite and used to clinker very easily. We needed to be up before seven to be ready for early morning tea at eight. A quick, but strictly unapproved way of lighting the stove was to use rags soaked in paraffin! As I have said the oil lamps required a good deal of attention; they needed to be cleaned out and refilled every day. Mr. Jones, the gardener, was Welsh and lived at River Common. He was a tall, thin, man and great fun. I always associate him with yellow tomatoes.

I remember once our having to clean the dining-room carpet, having religiously saved all the tea-leaves for this task, keeping them in one of those triangular things that stand in the sink. There were guests but we'd forgotten them and were dancing about on the carpet scattering tea-leaves as if we were sowing seed - only to see everyone watching us from the drawing-room. We adopted a stray cat which got the blame for eating the fish in the pond. It had been stocked from a shop at Haslemere. There was a violet thunderstorm, the pond flooded, the fish were eaten by the house cat and our cat was the guilty party!

Time off was in short supply. We had more freedom at Redens. But at River Cottage we knew exactly what we had to do. If we did it no questions were asked. Occasionally we were allowed out to a dance. I remember once Mrs. Mitford saying to me, "I don't know whether you're trying to make me hot-headed!" In my hurry to get away to a dance I'd left her hot-water bottle under her pillow. Dances at the Iron Room were a shilling entrance. If "posh" they were one and six. Police balls at the Swan were five shillings to go in. There would always be a good band. The Iron Room was excellent for dancing as it had a sprung floor. We had our own circle of Petworth friends: George Ford from Grove Lane was a great dancer, Jack Clifford, John Vince. At New Year, just before midnight, we'd all come out of the Iron Room and dance round the Town Hall. We wore long dresses and to cycle home we'd hook them up to an elastic waistbelt. I can vividly remember once riding back in snow. There were dances too at Lodsworth. We could walk home from these either to River Cottage

or Redens. If we were in funds, Edie's brother-in-law would sometimes take his taxi and wait for us. We'd share the fare four ways. We'd go then to places like Graffham. No men were allowed into River Cottage. I remember once Edie's boyfriend coming into the kitchen to mend her bicycle lamp and Mr. Mitford saying in a loud voice to his wife, "B. those girls have got a man in the kitchen."

Kit Aldredge was talking to Edie Smith and the Editor.

'It's the chap in front of you that gets the shock!'

I was born in Petworth and lived at Culvercroft in Pound Street. My mother was Scottish. I was told that Culvercroft had once been the agent's house for Lord Leconfield. Certainly there was a door in the garden wall which took you straight through to the Estate Yard. I don't suppose it's there now. My father, Dr. Kerr, was the second doctor to live at Culvercroft, Dr. Barnes having preceded him. I was also told that the Swan Hotel had been designed by the same architect who had designed Littlecote House.

J. B. Watson, Lord Leconfield's agent, who lived at Littlecote, was a great friend of my father and it was he who aroused in me what would later become a lifelong interest in ornithology. This little book that he gave me as a present I've always kept and you can see his pencil note in it, a little faded with the years but still there. I think "JB" as he was always known, came from Sutherland. He loved playing billiards and my mother had brought a billiard table down with her when she came down to Petworth. My parents made a west extension to Culvercroft to accommodate a billiard room, two rooms for maids above an existing coal cellar, boot room and outside lavatory. JB often used to come up to play billiards on Sunday evenings. My father had a great fascination with all ball games and was in his way well-known for this. I loved JB as much as I loved ponies and horses and I loved to go down to Littlecote House which had a field in front of it. Here I would ride with Mr. Knowles, the Watson groom. He lived in the lodge on the left side, while Mr. Cox, the gardener, had the lodge on the right. In later years Mr. Knowles learned, a little uneasily I suspect, to drive a motor-car and worked as a groom/chauffeur. It was a sign of changing times. I loved to hear him talk of his early days as a stable lad and of his acquaintance with people like Fred Archer.

Margaret Watson is commemorated by a little plaque in the church. It relates that she died on "ship-board" - on a cruise in fact. I remember riding with her in Petworth Park and a swan running at us from the lake. Perhaps it was anxious about its nest. She was on a large horse and I had a pony. She was a small woman but strong and determined. She also used to drive a dog-cart. A relative of hers used to come and stay in a house by the Pound on the Tillington Road corner and I would go to tea. Mrs. Watson said, "Bunty, I do like rats-tail

silver, don't you?" I had no idea then what she was talking about but felt it best to agree. Mrs. Watson rode side-saddle, and it was possible to ride through Petworth in those days in the 1920s and think nothing of it. Once as we rode past Ernest Streeter's shop in Church Street she said to me, "Bunty, do you look at yourself in shop-windows? You should, always, to see if you're sitting properly." After she died JB's two sisters came to live with him. Both were later somewhat incapacitated by strokes and I can remember going to visit them.

My sister and I didn't go to school. We were taught by governesses, not an unusual thing in those days. We had Agnes Daintrey from Daintrey House in East Street to start with. She had a brother who was a clergyman, at one time at Holmwood near Dorking, and then in Cornwall. I remember that he had one of those flat hats much favoured by the clergy at this time - a "wide-awake" hat they were called. Like us, Alice Daintrey, Agnes' aunt, had a billiard table. It stood in the hall, there was a fountain, too, in the garden. We often went to Daintrey House to have tea with Agnes, and would then walk down to Bailliewick farm, tended for Miss Daintrey by Mr. Courtney from Byworth. There were four cows and a pony called Dulcie - you always remember what interests you - don't you? After Agnes we had Miss Wardle to teach us, a very competent lady who was also a Sunday school teacher. At seventeen I went to school in Paris.

It has to be said that to understand Petworth in the 1920s you must take into account the importance of social strata, a difficult concept in today's egalitarian world. Families moved more comfortably within certain divisions and as children we didn't question this; that, seventy years ago, was how it was, and as far as we knew that was how it had always been. The families we visited all kept maids and these are just a few of them. We played children's tennis at Hilliers when the Shakerley-Ackers came. Essie, Mrs. Stapylton's daughter, was a fair bit older than we were. My mother ran the Red Cross during the 1914-18 war and Essie was assigned to the unit to work at Petworth Cottage Hospital and asked to cut some soldiers' toe-nails. Mrs. Stapylton objected that this was no proper work for a young lady! A.E.W. Mason the novelist lived at New Grove. My father and mother would go to see him but I only ever saw him walking in Grove Lane. I heard that he liked to have the floor very highly polished, so much so that one evening the maid coming in with the supper went head over heels and dropped the lot. A.E.W. picked her up and sorted everything out. In she came again and the same thing happened. I don't know how A.E.W. reacted to a second disaster.

My father of course was doctor to so many of these people. Mr. Lascelles lived at Tillington House; his wife bred West Highland terriers. Just once I went to a hare-coursing meeting, Mr. Skinner the farmer from Strood was the slipper and it was in the field opposite the Petworth Park Cricket Lodge. Miss Bulmer from Tillington had a wheeled bath-chair pulled by a Shetland pony, Mrs. Walker from Standlands used to come into Petworth in an open four-seater - a landau? She was, I think, the wife of the agent to the Mitford estate. I remember, too, children's parties at Pitshill. Colonel Mitford had a silver watch which opened as you pressed the top. He told us it had been given to the family by Charles I when he was on his way to the scaffold.

Petworth and Midhurst always seemed a long way apart and completely separate

places. We looked much more to Fittleworth, Pulborough or Sutton. There was Mrs. Biddulph at Heath End, Major Courtauld at Burton Park, Mr. and Mrs. Enthoven at Barlavington Manor, Mrs. Randolph at Coates. At Petworth I remember Mr. Pitfield, then the senior partner at the solicitors, Pitfield and Oglethorpe. He was sidesman at St. Mary's and I can still see him carefully placing his gloves on the seat in church. He was a bachelor and on Sundays would usually take tea with Mrs. Nattali at Hill Top, Tillington or Mrs. Mant at Avenings. I had music lessons with Gertie Whitcomb in Pound Street. I remember once when they had just tarred the road I brought tar in with my shoes when I came back to Culvercorft. Nelly Gill worked with (I think) butter to get the tar out of my mother's carpet.

We didn't have a great deal to do with Petworth House; although I recall once going to a rather old-fashioned nursery party at Petworth House. It would be about the time that the Leconfields adopted Elizabeth Wyndham. Somewhat before this, Lady Leconfield wanted to go to the circus on Hampers Common and she asked if she could take me. She had a pony tandem, the shaft pony was called Dobbs. I remember driving down but not our coming back. The circus had some wild animals, I think, but I particularly remember a monkey clambering about on the seats. For some reason Lady Leconfield wanted to speak to one of the circus people, a swarthy woman suckling a baby. "Child", she said, "Go and fetch that woman, I want to talk to her." I don't know what it was all about, but I watched with some unease the monkey clambering on Lady Leconfield's neck; it may have been picking at her pearl necklace. Eventually we went back to Petworth House to tea, Lady Leconfield, his Lordship and myself, just the three of us. Our private name at home for Lord Leconfield was "Twinkle-toes". He had a habit of fixing you with a stare. He'd walk miles in his almost luminous white gaiters. I think he quite liked my father and we were included in the periodical gift of venison which as an estate "perk" of the time. When Daddy fell off his horse when hunting and broke his collar-bone, his lordship came to Culvercroft to visit. We could hear him stomping up to the billiard-room. We hadn't had any notice of his coming. Once the hunt finished by the Hawkhurst crossroads and a car came to take his lordship home. "Miss Kerr," he said, "You must come home in my car." Lord Leconfield also insisted that I wear his overcoat. Fred Taylor, "John the Baptist", would lead the two horses back home. Our groom at that time was Fred's brother, Dickie.

There was a great pageant in Arundel Park. It would be 1923 I think. My father played the part of a king, riding on a horse supplied by Mr. Tupper at Bignor. Mr. Newman, the rector of Sutton, was a leading light; he was always a great one for anything of a theatrical nature or the Sussex dialect. Theatricals were very much a part of life in those days and when Mr. Provis came as rector in the early 1930s, Mrs. Provis put on a number of plays, one was "Fresh Fields" by Ivor Novello. My father had a part too. The Old Folks Party in the Iron Room was another thing - we used to put on a "scratch" show to supplement the Blackmans' concert party from Arundel. Ernest Streeter from Church Street was famous for his monologues and George Garland could do this as well. He was already very much a part of Petworth life, although I found him rather gruff at this time. The Kaffir Minstrels were another local attraction, Jack Underhill and Arch Pullen being prominent.

A notable occasion in Petworth's year was Pound Day, held in February in the Iron Room. It was originally intended for the Chichester Hospital as much as for Petworth Cottage but by the time I was involved proceeds went basically to Petworth Cottage. The idea was to give a pound. It might be a pound of anything, tea, sugar, whatever you could afford - or it could be a pound in money. At this time, in the late 20s perhaps, my mother used to run it and we children would help out at reception. The Iron Room was always the venue for such events; the Town Hall seemed a little austere. The Bethlehem tableaux, a kind of nativity play, I well remember too - again in the Iron Room. The tableaux were very much the idea of the rector Mr. Powell, pronounced Poel with a long 'o'. His brother-in-law I remember was the writer Lawrence Binyon who wrote the famous lines, "We shall not grow old..." The Bethlehem tableaux started off simply enough but became more elaborate as the years went on. Originally it was just reading from St. Luke's Gospel with the stage draped with black curtains. Mr. Powell had a marvellous reading voice. Norman Dunlop was curate then. I seem to remember Mrs. Vickery from Keyfox as Elizabeth and Mr. Thayer from the choir as Joseph. Someone from West Burton was chief shepherd. Reg, Frank and Hubert Whitcomb were the three kings.

Here are some other bits and pieces that come to mind. Grove Tennis Club was a focus for social life during the summer. There was another, rather less exclusive club in Petworth Park. Once we followed Petworth Fire Brigade to Loxwood for a fire. It turned out to be at Loxwood Stores, and I remember seeing the Cokeler ladies in their black dresses running out with baskets of food for the firemen after the fire had been put out. Then there was the Club Room in High Street (now Chalcrafts). Here we had Girl Guides, or folk dancing. We would go out dancing to places like Coates Castle there was a very strong folk dancing club at Sutton in those days. The Club Room was also where we had an annual Maids' Party for our maids and their friends. We always liked to think that no one ever left us except to get married.

I haven't mentioned the Tudor Revels in 1938; they were held in Petworth Park and Mrs. Montfort Bebb had a lot to do with the arrangements. It was very much in the theatrical tradition I have already mentioned. Three last random memories: Mrs. Adsett at Somerset Hospital was an elderly lady with a ramrod back. If we slouched at table my father would pull us up sharply with the rebuke "Adsettemus" - a Latin-like reminder to emulate her. We had whooping cough as children and were kept in quarantine for several weeks. Imagine the feeling of joy at being eventually allowed out and running from Culvercroft down Pound Street to Fanny Knight's sweet-shop (now the Chinese take-away). Lastly Miss Mayne at Archway House. She was a great gardener and very much influenced by Gertrude Jekyll. She once gave me a book by the great lady. I always remember her saying, "It doesn't matter if you've got an ugly mug. It's the chap in front of you that gets the shock."

Bunty Musson was talking to the Editor.

Added note

Photograph of Red Cross Nurses c1914 see illustration.

Front Row: 1-5 from left.

Miss Stapylton, trained nurse (?), Mrs Kerr (Commandant), Mrs Lambert, Miss B. Skinner.

Middle Row: 1-8

Mrs Pull, Miss Sutton, Mrs Walker, Miss K Summersell, —, Miss Gaydon, —, (?) Mrs Smith.

Back Row: 1-5

Mrs Sainsbury, Miss Older, Miss Nash, Dorothy Cooper, Lucy Chandler, —.

These identifications were probably made in the early 1960s. Some are certainly accurate, some perhaps less so. Spellings may not be reliable.

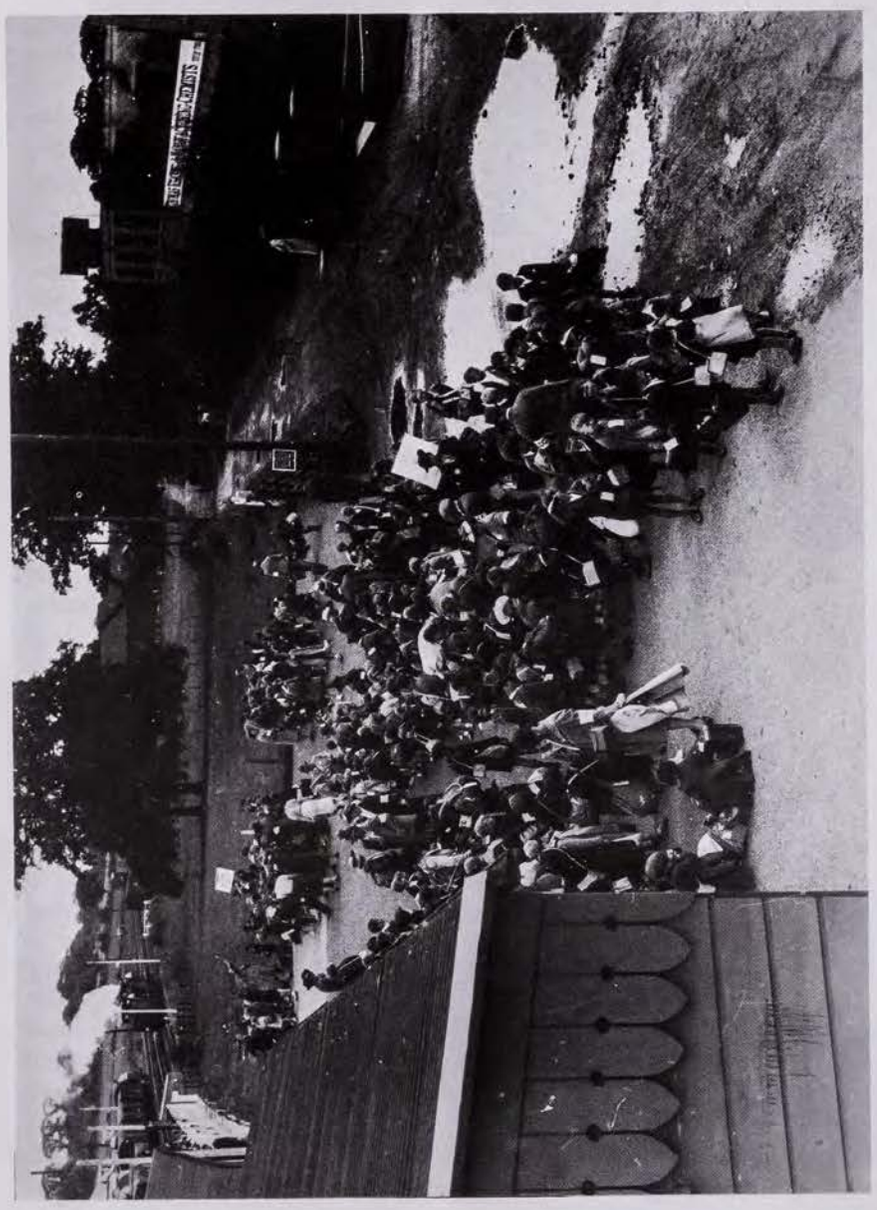
Topping Up the Stock-Pot

Mr. Grant, the chef at Petworth House, came to my parents' home at Hunston to interview me, or, perhaps more exactly, to talk with my mother about my working at Petworth. The vacancy would have come through the Servants' Register Office in East Street, Chichester. I was fifteen and had worked for a time in the kitchen at Sir Philip Reckitt's house at Compton. (This family were the Reckitts' Blue people.) It was a fairly small establishment compared with Petworth and Sir Philip was away a good deal. I can't quite remember how I came to leave: it was something to do with my having to come home in the dark on my days off. I had to change buses and my step-father, who was somewhat over-protective, didn't like the idea.

On first impression I rather liked Mr. Grant. I certainly didn't feel overawed by him, although I later found that he could be quite strict. In fact, of course, I didn't decide about the job, that was a matter for my mother and Mr. Grant. Exactly the same thing had happened at Compton except of course that that had nothing to do with Mr. Grant. Nor did I go to Petworth straight away, I imagine that Mr. Grant will have written to offer me the post. I don't remember.

There was a place in West Street, Chichester, opposite the Cathedral where the bus from Hunston stopped and I could pick up the Petworth bus. There was no one to meet me in Petworth and I walked up from the Square to the House as directed. Despite my step-father's anxieties, I never felt at all worried by this. I went in by Church Lodge. It would be early in 1937.

The very day I arrived I walked in through the kitchen door and was astounded. The kitchen was much bigger than the whole ground floor of the house I'd been brought up in. I soon realized something else: the food was so much better than anything I had been used to. "Halfpenny buns" for tea (yeast buns with currants) or pieces of cake or sponge. I'd been used to plain bread and butter - perhaps a little jam.



Peckham children arriving at Billingshurst Station in 1939. The children are carrying luggage labels as identification. See extract from Gwenda Morgan's diary. Photograph by George Garland.

Evacuees at the Virgin Mary Spring. September 1939.
Photograph by George Garland.

I was one of two junior kitchen-maids in a staff of four - or five if you included the indispensable Fred Baigent who worked in the scullery. The two leading figures were Mr. Grant and Olive Tomkin the cook. Olive was probably in her late twenties, although as a girl of fifteen I thought she was relatively "old". She certainly seemed quite senior and she certainly knew what she was doing. My title was "vegetable cook" and that was exactly what I did.

After lunch it was part of my job to scrub the kitchen floor and I and the other kitchen-maid took turns with each side alternately. The hard side was the east side; it was longer and the grease came off the range on to the stone floor. My solitary memory of Lady Leconfield is indelibly connected with scrubbing the floor. Her ladyship came into the kitchen looking for Mr. Grant. I was on my knees scrubbing and, never having seen her ladyship before, had no idea who she was. Could I tell her where Mr. Grant was? I had to say that I didn't know. As I had no idea who she was, I didn't address her as "Your ladyship". She just looked at me and said, "Do you scrub all this?" When I replied, "Yes", she said, "Oh dear, poor little thing." I can remember it to this day. Mr. Grant later told me, "That was Lady Leconfield you know." Scrubbing was done with a kind of liquid soap. I scooped it out of a tin, rather like a jelly. We had kneeling-pads, but neither of us used them much, what with the pad, the buckets, brushes and soap-tin, it all simply got too much.

Some vegetables I particularly remember. "Chinese" artichokes, globe is perhaps the more familiar name, were steamed in big copper fish kettles. Fred Baigent had to take the vessels off the high shelf for us to use. We had to go and find him in the scullery. We couldn't reach them, let alone lift them. He'd always say gruffly, "I haven't got time," and then just did it! Sometimes the artichokes would be used whole, the outer leaves being eaten as a delicacy with melted butter, or the outer leaves might be discarded and the heart used as a savoury on toast; Miss Elizabeth Wyndham was very partial to them and might take one if my back was turned. Very awkward if twelve were required and there were only eleven left. Despite this I got on extremely well with her.

Spinach was something else that made a deep impression on me, no doubt because I had to prepare such huge quantities. It boils down so, and it was a matter of filling several large cooking pots, I had to wash it, strip out the central stalks, cook it, then take it out and drain it. We had hundreds of coarse washing up cloths in the kitchen, one use for which was to put the spinach in and press out the liquid. The idea was to end up with a flat block, capable of being cut into virtually solid chunks. The cloths were used for all sorts of things and constantly washed and rewashed. We even wore one round the waist to protect our aprons. It would be secured with a large safety-pin at the back and folded over at the top. Aprons were our own property and bought by us, so we were careful with them, although laundry was done for us. The white apron was worn over a green overall and we wore white elasticated caps. Potatoes were prepared by Fred in the scullery. He would leave me a bowl of them ready peeled for me to carry the cooking on a further stage according to the menu. Peas were another chore; I particularly remember Goodwood Week, shelling them endlessly. We might be feeding anything between thirty and fifty guests in a evening. Another tedious job was sieving carrots for purée. It wasn't used on its own but as a component of other dishes.

There was always a stock-pot on the black range and my last task at night was to put in whatever was left over, bring it to the boil for about ten minutes and leave it to simmer. The stock would be changed about once a fortnight - not more. You'd try to change it when you had several different things available. When you did change it, you'd give it a good boil-up to get it going. Fred would say, "Have you got any old socks in here?"

My job, as I have said, was "vegetable cook" but as a special concession Olive and Mr. Grant let me work on some pastry, good experience for later. I remember standing in the pastry room, rolling it out. It was all very quiet. Mr. Grant never made any noise: he always wore soft shoes and I didn't realize he was standing behind me. Suddenly a pallet knife thwacked on to my bare arm. "That will teach you to use the right knife, not just any old one," said Mr. Grant. In fairness it was a lesson I never forgot. Mr. Grant was a magician with pastry but also with icing. I remember for Goodwood Week in 1937 he made a series of baskets from sugar icing, each holding different sweetmeats.

The menu book stood on the big table in a wooden container with a hinged, curved glass top. The menu was always in French. You haven't got one in the kitchen at present but it was a notable feature. I didn't understand the French of course, but by the end of my time I could at least make out some of the vegetables. The menu book would be sent up to Lady Leconfield for her approval and would come back with her comments. Sometimes it would simply be, "I've never seen this spelled like that before" - or it would be a note that she didn't want something that had been suggested. The menu was provisional until Lady Leconfield had approved it. The box was of some dark wood like mahogany.

I got up at 5.30 and had to have the stove cleaned and functioning properly. I, or the other kitchenmaid, also had to blacklead it periodically. At the end of the kitchen there was a chute with a chain mechanism, this enabled us to bring in coal without going outside. If the coal ran low the garden staff replenished it. I see it's still there. When I had the fire going I'd lay out all the things on the table ready for Olive and Mr. Grant, different size knives and spoons, rather more than you have now. Olive always had a rolling pin. After this I'd have breakfast in the sitting-room. Remember we never had anything to do with the housemaids. We were in Mr. Grant's charge exclusively and talk with other departments was certainly not encouraged - even if we'd have had time! You've got the sitting-room set up as the chef's room. No doubt it was at one time, when I believe the chef's bedroom was upstairs and reached by a staircase from the sitting-room, now taken out. In my time however it was the kitchen-maids' sitting room and very much Olive Tomkin's preserve.

After breakfast I'd clean the chef's sitting-room and bedroom, now the northern part of the Education Room at the top of the corridor. Mr. Grant didn't sleep well and suffered a lot with arthritis. I remember having to empty and scrub the chamber pot and hating doing it even if it was a part of life in those days. The room was very cluttered and I had to clean it - at least in theory. Looking back I can see that I was no housemaid and never moved anything just a quick flick with the broom. Mr. Grant never complained but, on reflection, I do feel he might have done.

Mr. Nudds the butler once took me over to the big house to show me the arrangements in the dining room. It was Goodwood Week. "They're all out," he confided. In addition to

the floral arrangements, at each end of the long table stood a great block of ice, elaborately carved, slowly melting into a tray. The cutlery was gilt and every place at the table seemed to have half a dozen glasses. In fact it was one of my morning tasks to order the silverware. I would say, "Four large entrée dishes," "Three large flat dishes," "Six sauceboats"... whatever would be needed, and the footman would write it down in his book.

If I was finished by early afternoon, I might ask permission of Mr. Grant to go out for a walk. Remember I was at Petworth only during the spring and summer of 1937 so I saw the best of the weather. Knowing I liked a walk the footman asked if he could join me. It was no more than that. We'd walk round the allotments in Station Road and up Back Lane, nothing could have been more innocent.

This seems to have been reported to Mr. Grant and he went to see my mother. One morning I was scrubbing the kitchen when my stepfather came in. "What's all this about the footman? That chef's been out home carrying on and I want to see him". Without more ado he went off to find Mr. Grant in his sitting-room. He was there for some considerable time before reappearing with Mr. Grant. I was still scrubbing the floor. "Give your father a cup of tea and some buns," said Mr. Grant. "Pack your bags," my stepfather insisted, "I'm not having you scrubbing these great floors." I tried to explain that I needed to work a month's notice - otherwise I'd leave without a reference, a perilous situation for someone in service in those days. In addition I could hardly let them all down in Goodwood Week, there were a lot of guests and a lot of cooking to be done. So I worked out a month's notice. What was very upsetting was the fate of the footman. "Oh, he's going," I was told. I never saw him again. I felt dreadful, after all, we'd only walked together down Station Road. "You know the rules," was the attitude. I suppose, to be fair, that they took the view that they had a parent's responsibility if anything went wrong, but it seemed harsh then and it seems harsh now.

We never had our meals in the Servants' Dining Room, although the chef ate fairly regularly with the other senior servants. Tea he had in his own sitting room. As I have said, we were kept well away from the other servants. Our meals weren't left-overs, they were cooked separately for us. Olive did our tea and I think the stillroom would provide sandwiches. I never remember the fire alight in the kitchen-maids' sitting room but then the summer of 1937 was hot.

The kitchen was a very busy place at mealtimes, very much like a restaurant with the footmen hurrying in to collect meals from the hotplate - not just for the dining room in the big house either. The governess no doubt had her meals separately, the two children being in the nursery, perhaps the nanny too, although the children would be growing up at this time. If the family were on their own there were five courses, if there were visitors there would probably be seven, on occasion even eight. Soup, entrée, fish, game, meat, sweet and savoury were the normal courses for visitors. Obviously portions were relatively small and guests might elect not to have one or more courses altogether.

Sometimes I'd wander through the tunnel to the boiler-room, every now and again it would make a "whooshing" noise. No one seemed concerned about my being there. Lord Leconfield I never saw from beginning to end, although I have to say that if I had seen him I'd wouldn't have known who it was. I don't remember how I was paid at all.

By six o'clock I had to be back in the kitchen, not necessarily on the dot, but I would know by now what vegetables needed to be cooked. They would of course be already prepared. I can distinctly remember thinking, "I hope these carrots are done," and sticking a fork in to see.

Here we are in the kitchen. It's the same clock isn't it? These brass vessels on the big table are much as we had them, for salt, flour, herbs, things like that. Fred Baigent, as I've said, had to move all the big pots and fish kettles. He kept the copper spotless. Next to the potatoes in the scullery he had a container with silver sand, salt, and vinegar. There couldn't have been too much sand because he never scratched the pots and they always looked beautiful. No, I don't recall the spit being used but remember I never worked a Christmas here, apparently this was the great time for the spit. There were eggs in the larder pickled in Isinglass. Yes, I well remember Mr. Grant using that copper bombe marked LP1: he'd do vegetables in aspic, the vegetables being fancy cut first. You'd unscrew the bottom to release the vacuum and out it would come. That sort of thing was nothing to do with me - very much the province of Mr. Grant and, possibly, Olive.

Occasionally I'd cycle home on my day off. Coming in at night is a memory I've never lost. I'd knock at Church Lodge and Mr. Barnes would open up for me. If the light switch was turned off at the far end of the long passage I'd walk along in the dark feeling the cockroaches crunching and scuttling beneath my feet. There was no light until I got to the switch half-way up. When you turned it on you could see the cockroaches scurrying in all directions. I learned that if I was going home, it was a good idea to arrange with a friendly footman to have the light switched on at the far end. Getting up in the morning you needed to shake out your clothes, stockings especially, in case there were cockroaches. There were two of us in a room, almost a dormitory and there was a large fireplace at the end. We were allowed to light a fire but it did mean carrying firewood, logs and coal upstairs. You say it was probably policy to allow a fire to avoid contrasts of temperature with the hot kitchen. You're no doubt right but it wasn't something that occurred to us at the time.

Lesley Jones was talking to Diana Owen and the Editor.

A Tillington Childhood (7)

I have many happy memories of a large house at the top of Tillington Hill. First of all it housed a family named Trower, that would be during the first world war I believe. They had a lovely little daughter named Bridget. The nanny used to come with Bridget to tea with us and she, the nanny, was dressed in a long brown dress with a matching cape and a kind of cap affair which tied under her chin. How I envied Bridget's lovely button boots and her muff which was made of fur, I think ermine, with a cord hanging round her neck. I had a muff later on which was rabbit fur - quite nice but not a patch on ermine. After the Trowers left this house, A.E.W. Mason lived there (the author). Evonne Arnaud was a regular visitor. I remember

hearing of 'such goings on', but being too young to understand what that meant didn't bother about it but have since remembered. Later on the Podmores lived there.

They were a sweet family. Miss Podmore ran a scout group and I used to go out with them. The Scouts wore large hats and they used to make four dents in the crown. They carried a large wooden staff, I can't remember what they used it for. I didn't always mix with my brother, for one thing we used to fight so and he wasn't as outgoing as I was.

My brother and I had a day off school when the late Princess Royal (Princess Mary) married Lord Lascelles, (I believe it was February 1922) so my mother, brother and I walked to Midhurst to visit friends. I shall never forget walking through Cowdray Park, we seemed to go on for ever. We spent a lovely day with our friends and I know we had most lovely cream horns for our tea which made up for our aching legs. I don't remember our homeward journey - I believe the Southdown buses had just started. Anyhow, I know we didn't walk back - that would have been an impossibility. We enjoyed our outing - weren't we all hardy in those days. My mother always said 'shanks pony' never killed anyone. That saying meant walking.

If my mother was going out for an evening, she used to crimp her hair with a pair of curling tongs heated in the fire. What a hazardous job this was. She (my mother) had most glorious long golden hair and often I smelt the smell of singeing. She had burnt quite a handful off. What a difference it was then to now when we are lucky enough to sit in the comfort of our hairdressers.

There were many superstitions about when I was young. My mother's favourite was covering all the mirrors during a thunderstorm, others she didn't bother about. I had been in houses where knives must never be crossed on the table; if salt was spilt always throw a little over the left shoulder; bow to a new moon and turn round three times; if a garment is put on inside out, never change it round - that would bring bad luck; if the palm itched - that would bring money; lucky to have a bird mess on you; unlucky to see one jackdaw; pull the wishbone when you had eaten chicken - if left with the large half, that would bring good luck. I wonder who first thought of these oddities. I remember a saying of my father's - if he was surprised he would always say "Well I go to putt to buy a pig". My Grannie, if asked her age, always answered "as old as my tongue and a little older than my teeth". Another saying "This won't do, to get married tomorrow, husband to find, and money to borrow".

As we grew older, we had our allocated jobs to do. My brother had to fetch the morning wood in, and also scrub the outside bricks which we always called the "court". My jobs were washing up, cleaning the cutlery, and the windows downstairs, which I could reach standing on a wooden sugar box. The knives I cleaned by dipping a cork in a kind of white paste, and the spoons and forks with Silvo. All had to be washed in strong soda water. The knives were never immersed in the water as they all had bone handles which would have turned yellow. The drawer then had to be relined with paper and back everything went until the next week. The windows were cleaned with a little vinegar dropped in the water and were polished with an old counterpane, a honeycomb cover which went on the top of the beds. I remember all homes used them. The 'posh' ones had tassels all round the edges. I remember one window pane used to distort my face so I used to make ugly faces at myself.

I think I must have been about 10 years old at this time, yet didn't feel at all overworked or downtrodden. I think we were all given a feeling of responsibility.

I have an old school report signed by Miss Baker, a teacher, and Mr. Brown our head teacher at that time. I was 10 years 5 months old. I see I had an 'A' for most subjects so must have had a few brains.

My young friend and I used to spend quite a lot of time in Tillington Churchyard. A large old yew tree stood outside the church (I wonder if it is still there). We decided to eat some of the bright red berries on the tree. I remember the taste to this day, they were very sickly sweet and rather slimy. Soon afterwards we were both violently sick. I know now that these berries are very poisonous - like the proverbial cat that must have been one of our nine lives gone.

The smell of apples during the autumn always reminds me of my bedroom at Tillington. Part of the floor was bare boards and my mother used to lay masses of paper on the floor, then she laid in very neat rows Blenheim Orange apples to finish ripening for Christmas. I was too scared to take one. On the other hand, we always had plenty of apples to eat, usually the specked ones. The apples on the floor were called 'keepers' as they kept until Christmas.

My mother (and I believe Mrs. Peskett) used to do the cricket teas at Tillington. The cricket pitch at that time was in the field opposite the cemetery lane - this must be been in the early 1920's. Often sandwiches were left over so my brother and I, hoping to have a midnight feast, put a pile under our pillows. Of course, they stuck to everything spoiling our so called adventure. We had our usual telling off in the morning. I'm sure children were just as naughty when I was small, but of course, we were always punished by our teachers and parents. There was no radio or television in those days, so one didn't hear all the bad news.

If anyone living in a large house was taken ill, bales of straw would be laid on the ground outside to deaden the sound of horse and carts or, sometimes, a car.

I remember going on a school outing in a 'char-a-banc' (it had a soft hood which pulled right over it like an enormous pram hood). Halfway up Duncton Hill the brakes wouldn't hold it and we started to go backwards. The driver slowly steered it to the side of the road. Help came from somewhere and then, with the driver at the wheel, the 'char-a-banc' was slowly pushed up the hill. We arrived at our destination without further mishap, had a good day and then were all driven safely home. No doubt the brakes were repaired during the day.

Whilst out for a walk, my mother and I met a young girl with her parent pushing a tiny baby in a pram. How I envied her as I so loved babies. I heard the word "comebychance' and thought what a lovely name to give a baby. Years afterwards, I found out the words 'come by chance' was the name given to an illegitimate baby. How narrow that period was - how the young mother and parents suffered.

During 1923, my Grannie died. I missed her. Although not seeing her much, she was always there, losing her seemed to be another part of growing up. My brother and I were now minus our grandparents - losing Grannie meant our yearly visit to Henfield had come to an end.

I think I was about 12 years old when I started to have my first lessons before my confirmation. I remember this as a very, very happy time. I loved my school, Sunday school and Church, also my happy home life. Suddenly I heard whispers and the bombshell burst. We were moving to Petworth. My father had got a job inside the House as one of the night watchmen, a rise in wages and another lodge. I used to cry every night at the thought of moving. It meant another school, different friends and a different environment altogether. It meant goodbye to our lovely lodge and my wonderful surroundings.

In the meantime, I carried on with my confirmation lessons. We spent Christmas in our lovely lodge, then the awful packing up began. I didn't feel at all like celebrating the New Year, 1923, and as the move and muddle drew nearer, so I became more miserable. I said goodbye to all my school friends, my Sunday School, but carried on with my confirmation lessons. The dreadful moving day arrived. I believe the 31st January 1923. It was a most awful day and poured and poured with rain. Our furniture was loaded in one of Lord Leconfield's lorries, driven by George Cross, and we arrived at North Street Lodge and met the outgoing tenants, a Mr. and Mrs. Purser and daughter. They gave their lovely old ginger tom cat to me, which was sadly killed by a catapult. This lodge was a delightful little house, but just stood in a very large yard facing up to the back of Petworth House with just a wide flower border round it. For the first time in our lives, we had electric light and a flush toilet. We were always switching the lights on and off and flushing the loo - it was such a novelty and funny to look back on now. We had just one gas ring and Mum still had to use the kitchen range.

My brother, in the meantime, had left school. He was now an errand boy and worked for Mr. Dean, the local Petworth fishmonger. He always came home smelling highly of fish. I believe he brought home half a crown a week, 12½p now, but of course one could buy quite a bit with it. I had to go to Petworth Girls School. How I remember my interview with the Headmistress, a Miss Cousins. My mother accompanied me. One of the first things she said to my mother was, "I hate nits, I hope her head is clean." I was absolutely mortified. How dare she I thought - at that time I was 12 years old and was disgusted. I'm afraid from then on, for the rest of my school days, I always disliked her. She was a most difficult woman. She had a Cocker Spaniel puppy as a pet and used to bring it in the school with her. It was untrained and she used to ask various girls to clear up after it as it used to dirty all over the floor. I refused as I knew that my mother wouldn't allow one to do that. Imagine that happening in this day and age. Although my work did not suffer at this school, life was never the same. I loathed it and used to live for the weekends, yet I never grumbled to my parents about it. I suppose that would have been a form of telling tales. I have my last school report dated 1924. It is excellent -I seemed to have been good at every subject. What a long time ago that was and yet it seems only yesterday.

I was duly confirmed and used to look forward to going back to Tillington. My Aunt and Uncle were now living in our lodge - how I envied them.

I left my sewing classes behind and joined the Guides which I thoroughly enjoyed. Our Captain at that time was a Miss Upton and another lady who helped was called "Mog". She later married a Mr. Thayre and had a most lovely little son who was killed in the bombing

of Petworth Boys School in 1942. We used to have our Guide meetings in a room over the top of a hut at the end of Grove Street, Petworth. Our summer meetings we had in a wood which belonged to Miss Upton. We were made up of patrols and I was in the Bluebell patrol. I remember the Maybank twins, Dolly Townsend, Faith Wickham and our patrol leader was Margery Elice. I wonder if any of them are still living. 1924 was a very good year for the Petworth Guides as we won the cup that year. It was the highlight of my life as I managed to tie all the knots behind my back - I just pipped the other girl and I felt so proud. I remember that we went to Knepp Castle for that event.

The British Empire Exhibition was held in 1924 in London, I believe at Wembley although I'm not sure. The Petworth Guides spent a most memorable day there. Each large building represented a country ruled by us at that time. Everything was so interesting - we were in another world as travelling in those days was just for the chosen few. I so well remember India. I had never seen Indians in their national dress. A day was just not long enough to explore so much. The scenic railway was such a novelty as we had never seen such a contraption and most of us went for rides - what a thrill it was for us. No doubt the scenic railway was the forerunner of the rollercoasters. We walked for miles, there was so much to see in such a little while. I know we arrived back very tired having spent a most enjoyable day.

I still went to fairs and fetes in Petworth Park, but it had all lost its magic. The old storm lantern was discarded as Petworth was slit by gas lamps - I remember the lamp lighter coming round with his little granddaughter lighting the lamps with something like the awful map pole which frightened the life out of me all those years ago.

I used to be in the school and guide concerts, at that time I had quite a good singing voice. I also began taking a great interest in boys. My mother told me to 'keep myself to myself.' What words of advice - I didn't know what she meant. I know we girls were told we would go to the workhouse if we got into trouble. In the course of the conversation, we decided we got into enough trouble without having to go to the Workhouse for it. How times have changed - how innocent we seemed to be. Somewhen about the year 1924 a young person died. Her mother lived next door to our headmistress and we older girls were paraded into the room to pray over her coffin. I remember my parents were furious. I hadn't met her (the dead girl) as I hadn't been living in Petworth very long. I had never seen death but fortunately it had no affect on me.

Mrs K. Vigar (to be continued).

The Angel, Petworth. This drawing by Harold Roberts, reproduced from a newspaper cutting will come from about 1918. The original newspaper is badly discoloured.

'Something out of the basket!'

I have always lived at Lurgashall but I have seen many changes in ninety years and more. A very early memory is of sitting on a stile at Greenfields near the village green and being told that the war had started. It would be the late summer of 1914. I was at Lurgashall school during the war. As children everywhere, at least in the country, we had to pick blackberries to make dye and there were soldiers training in the countryside. The school had a gravel playground with a well. I remember playtime and doing exercises in physical training. The school was partitioned into rooms, one for the little ones and two for seniors, one sliding partition was of wood, the other of glass. There were coal fires at the side, and we'd toast our bread (and cheese) in front of them. We'd bring our own food; no school meals then, cold tea or cocoa brought in medicine bottles and jam cake. We'd go home for tea, often before Dad came back from work. He worked long hours in the woods although in later years he had his own business.

The school were saving up to buy a piano and there were periodic children's concerts to raise money; we sang, I suppose, I can't really remember, but we did buy the piano. When the school closed, some years after I left, the piano went down to the newly built village hall. I don't think we had so much holiday then as children do now. In addition to Christmas we had two weeks at Easter and four weeks in summer. What we did have was a lot of single days. Ascension Day was one. We'd all go down to church for a service, then the rest of the day would be ours; May Day was another holiday, with a Maypole on the village green. Oak Apple Day, May 29th, I think, was invariably celebrated by wearing oak-apples we'd cut the previous evening; if we hadn't got one the boys would attack us with stinging nettles. We made sure we had our oak-apples. The day celebrated the restoration of Charles II in 1660. On Friday Mr. Pain, the rector, would come and conduct a service at the school. He was a large man and very popular and is wife was nice too. She always wore black. The Pains had two sons and a daughter, Kitty.

When I was five years old, I had to go to St. George's Hospital near Hyde Park in London to have a naevus taken out of my back. I had another in my neck and I was told they were male and female. About this time I have a vivid memory of sitting in the kitchen at Windfallwood where we lived wearing a red petticoat given me by Lady Philipson Stow, wife of the lord of the manor at Blackdown. The Philipson Stows were significant employers in Lurgashall and a number of men from Lurgashall worked in the gardens at their house. A lady near us went up there to scrub the floors. Most of the younger men went off to the war and many, alas, did not come back. I didn't lose brothers in the war but the family next to us lost three sons. It was dreadful. They were very religious people and this must have sorely tried their faith.

Windfallwood is just out of Lurgashall and there were a number of small workers' cottages dotted about. There was a general shop just opposite our cottage. Doris Squires was the daughter of the people who ran the shop and was a great friend. We used to go into school together. Mr. Squires ran quite an establishment, selling groceries, meat, bacon and general

goods. The shop also baked its own bread. A man worked in the bakehouse all the time. At that time, during the war and just after, it was the custom to put potato into the bread. On Saturdays we would take our big fruit cakes down to the shop to be cooked in the oven in which the bread had already been baked. When the Squires moved (to Farnham I think) and the shop changed hands, I never saw Doris again.

Cottages at Windfallwood, Lurgashall, decorated for the Silver Jubilee in 1935 (or perhaps for the Coronation of King George VI in 1937).

There was a corrugated iron chapel on Shop Hill, as you go out on the road towards Gospel Green. The remains of it are still there although it's fallen down and there are trees and undergrowth growing through it now. It was nothing to do with the Cokelers who were strong in the area. Ralph Coomber and his brother were the moving forces behind it. Ralph later had a shop at Weyhill in Haslemere. I still have a bible given to me at morning Sunday School. My mother always went with us to the morning service; she had been a London milliner at one time and naturally was a great expert on decorating hats. She was a very smart lady and, rightly or wrongly, thought that the other chapel-goers made remarks about her smartness. In the end she stopped going. The building was always known by the name the "Tin Chapel". In the evening she'd take us down through the woods to Mr. Pain's service at the parish church.

The horse chestnut was always there on the village green; now there are two. The Farthing family had the bakehouse, while Mr. Hunt the blacksmith made all sorts of things in iron as well as shoeing horses. There was a village stores much as now, and a carpenter's workshop, the carpenter doubling as village undertaker. The village pond was still there at this time and when it froze we children skated (or rather slid) on it. Lurgashall was not the

sort of village where children had skates. The village shop gave children like us, who lived slightly out of the village, papers to deliver on our way back from school, or letters perhaps. In this way we'd pick up the occasional halfpenny - more then useful. I was much troubled as a child with chronic bronchitis and was away from school a good deal. The doctor, who was at Fernhurst, suggested I went away for a few months to my aunt's house at Turners Hill near East Grinstead, and in fact this did me a lot of good. It did mean however that I didn't receive any prizes for good attendance at school. Lady Philipson Stow would come down to the school and look at the sewing and knitting and award prizes. For exceptional attendance pupils might also receive a silver watch.

When I left school I went to work for Mrs. Barlow at West End on the way to Haslemere. I was "between maid", and this meant that I used to clean the other staff's quarters and in the afternoon give a hand in the kitchen; West End had a fair number of servants, to say nothing of gardeners and workers on the home farms. There was a cook, a house parlour maid, a housekeeper and one or two juniors like myself. On days off my mother would come over to pick me up in the pony cart. During the war she'd used it to pick up soldiers on leave at Haslemere Station or to take soldiers from the village to the station. My mother died when I was fifteen and a half but as my sister Emily was thirteen she stayed at home to look after Dad and the boys. Later I worked briefly in Petworth for Mr. Spurgeon the vet in High Street, doing the housework and sharing the cooking with Mrs. Spurgeon who was a great rider to hounds.

Petworth always seemed somewhat remote from Lurgashall. It was easier to go to Haslemere even if the actual distance was much the same. I never came in to Petworth for the November fair, although no doubt some Lurgashall people did. Lurgashall had its own annual fair on the village green with roundabouts, coconut shies and other things but I don't remember much about it other than pushing my brother along to it in his pram. A local fairground family ran it. At other times they'd come round with pegs and things and we'd exchange the rabbit skins we'd put by for "something out of the basket". Mr. Humphrey from Roundhurst had a little horse and cart and brought round fish, dried haddock, kippers - things like that. Later some people came up with a van from Bognor but by this time the Aldershot buses called at Lurgashall and the old remoteness was fading fast.

Mary Etherington was talking to the Editor