

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY *magazine*

No.196. September 2024



Looking downstream on the by-pass section of the River Rother at Coultershaw in July 2024. See 'Grain watermills in the Rother valley: some stories' on page 6. The foaming water is from the turbulence created by the fish-pass and weir from where the photograph by Jonathan Newdick was taken.

FRONT AND BACK COVERS

A close-up of water tumbling over the fish-pass and weir on the by-pass section of the River Rother at Coultershaw. See 'Grain watermills in the Rother valley: some stories' on page 6.

Photograph by Jonathan Newdick.

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY

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The Petworth Society was founded in 1974 'to preserve the character and amenities of the town and parish of Petworth including Byworth and the parish of Egdean; 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, anywhere and the annual subscription is £20.00 for UK addresses and £30.00 for overseas addresses. Further information may be obtained from any of the following.

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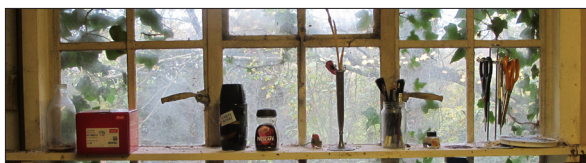
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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Mulcahy

It has been a very busy six months since my last notes and what a memorable six months the Society has had. The first event of note was of course the fiftieth anniversary celebration, half a century to the day since the first event, and taking place in the same venue – the Leconfield Hall. Sumptuous canapes and wine served, and indeed sourced, with appropriate panache by Elly and her team. Then upstairs to hear three erudite and well-informed speakers embracing changes over these fifty years; Lord Egremont on the Estate, Janet Duncton on the town and Miles Costello on the Society. Delivered to a full house of over ninety members, it was fascinating and utterly enjoyable. Our sincere thanks to all who contributed and made this such a special night.

The Society Facebook page now has almost 500 members, and along with website development by Bev Sewell, has improved the marketing of our events, leading to much higher attendances. Full Society members are now getting e-mail reminders of events – that is assuming we have their e-mail addresses.

Ian Yonge put together an exciting summer programme with large attendances at all our events. At the Ebernoe walk, a joint event with Petworth Past, led and organised by Jean Stemp and Janet Ford, even a nightingale appeared for us. We had an historic walk around the Park, led by Ian and an archaeological walk led by Henry Wakeford, rather appropriate as it signals the beginning of a NT archaeological dig in the Park. A Stag Park walk, led by Gerald Gresham-Cooke, attracted 42 walkers who were all thoroughly entertained and informed.

The book sales are proving successful under Mike and Sarah Singleton with help from Ron Saunders, but we are always grateful for more help if you are free. The next sale is on September 14.

Finally, I need to report on the Society's AGM in May, an important meeting as the Committee and indeed the Trustees felt that the fifty-year-old constitution (Act of Association) of the Society was somewhat dated, failing to mention its charitable status or indeed the establishment of the trustees. The proposed new constitution was accepted unanimously, and this will be sent to the Charity Commission and posted on our website.

We have more exciting events coming up, with a full Autumn programme but in the meantime, enjoy what's left of the summer, and enjoy this magazine.

EDITORIAL

Andrew Loukes

We are grateful for the complimentary messages we have received regarding our previous edition, the extended Miscellany celebrating fifty years of the Society and its publications. Especial thanks are due to our dedicated hand-delivery team who literally had to shoulder the burden of its extra weight!

As an antidote to the additional word-count of the anniversary issue we here offer a particularly visual September edition, heralded by Jonathan Newdick's stunning cover photography which in turn was inspired by Hazel Flack's latest piece on the watermills of the Rother. Hazel's article rightly contrasts the picturesqueness of these places, beloved of artists from Constable to Hitchens and beyond, with the often-sobering stories of those who worked there.

It is no surprise that the 1966 guide to Petworth, here shared by Bob Sneller whose family had received their complimentary copy as the proprietors of Allans, highlights the visual appeal of the town itself in both its 'picturesque old houses' and 'the impressive Petworth House which is celebrated for its paintings.' Perhaps more unusual for a tourist brochure is its detailed breakdown of the general and water rates paid by residents. We hope you enjoy all aspects of this rare survival which we have reproduced as faithfully as possible.

The broader artistic heritage of Petworth and its surrounding area is further reflected in this issue, not least by Miles Costello's visit to the former home of the fabulous mid-twentieth century illustrator Harold Roberts, whose work has occasionally featured in this magazine and deserves wider attention.

We also have Jonathan's latest report from the studio of sculptor Alison Crowther, which I managed to see for myself this summer and found the artist impressively transforming another monumental piece of Petworth oak into a reception desk for a Californian office building.

Finally, I am indebted to my former colleagues at Manchester Art Gallery for allowing us to reproduce in high-definition Bertram Nicholls's enigmatic and beautiful watercolour recording North Street in 1942, a picture which belongs in the upper echelons of Petworth imagery.

Grain watermills in the Rother valley: some stories

Hazel Flack

This article continues the series produced by the Coultershaw Research Team as part of the Rother Valley History Project. Previous articles have covered the 1923 fire at Coultershaw Mill (*PSM* 192), and a history of Iping Mill (*PSMs* 193 and 194). Here we look at the background of grain milling, and bring together some of the stories about the people who lived and worked at some of the watermills along the River Rother and its tributaries. Terwick Mill at Trotton, and the experiences and memories of its twentieth-century family of millers, the Aylings, is used as a framework, as research on this site in particular elicited many first-hand stories. The Team is always pleased to receive further information from local people who have memories, photographs or artefacts to share, either from their own experience or from that of their ancestors, to add to our archive.

EARLY GRAIN MILLING

There is archaeological evidence of British cultivation of grains to make bread from the Mesolithic and Neolithic eras, and a Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, noted that Britons were grinding grain to make flour in the first century BCE.¹ While not evidence of actual mill-working, the discovery by the Ayling family during the 1960s of Mesolithic flint implements and tools in the grounds of Terwick Mill, indicating an ancient flint-making site, suggest that it was a place of industry several thousand years BCE.²

From prehistoric times until the mediaeval age, grains were ground by hand between two stones (querns), initially by rubbing the grains by hand with a small stone over a larger stone. This method further developed, by mediaeval times, into the technique of using two circular stones rotating above one another by use of a stick inserted into a hole near the edge of the upper stone. From Roman and Saxon times waterpower began to be used, and waterwheels from that period were made from wood – usually elm – which had an intrinsic resilience to being constantly wet. The design of waterwheels changed little over the centuries, until the eighteenth century, when the discovery and gradual changeover to the use of cast iron enabled an improvement in strength and durability. The flow of water to the wheel

was regulated by diverting or concentrating it through building sluices, weirs and millponds.³

MILLING AND THE RIVER ROTHER

The River Rother and its tributaries have been the setting (in some cases for up to a millennium) of a number of watermills along their courses, between Steep (near Petersfield) and Hardham (near Pulborough). There is historical evidence of around thirty-five watermills in the valley, from around the seventeenth century, though for many of these there are no longer any above-ground traces of their previous existence. Some of these sites were also mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as former mill sites. The majority of these thirty-five or so mills were used for milling corn or other grains at some time in their history, though some diversified from, or into, other industries such as fulling, dyeing or papermaking.

HALFWAY BRIDGE MILL IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A delightful introduction to the trade of the grain miller from the nineteenth century can be found in a previous edition of this magazine (*PSM* 120). This account, itself reprinted from an 1896 edition of *The Miller*, relates to Halfway Bridge Mill, at Selham. At the time Halfway Bridge Mill was being run by a Mr A. J. Blaker, who also ran the nearby Lodsbridge Mill. The author describes how the mill is powered through steam (driven by a boiler and engine), as well as a pair of waterwheels. The power is transferred to three pairs of millstones – two for wheat and one for barley. Before being ground, the wheat is passed through a cleaning system comprising a scourer (a brush that cleans the outer layer of the grain); a trieur cylinder (a sieving system separating different shapes of grain into pockets within a rotating cylinder, with the help of centrifugal force) and a smutter (another form of scouring process).⁴ There was also a bakery on site, which converted ten sacks of flour per week into bread. During Mr Blaker's tenure, the mill was supplemented by a roller system, and the article finishes with the elegant assertion that: 'Carts and vans deliver bread and flour daily throughout the district, all orders receiving prompt attention.'

TERWICK MILL IN THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Often watermill businesses would be run by succeeding generations of the same family. One such family was the Aylings of Terwick Mill, beginning with Jesse Ayling in 1897. Terwick Mill comprised two separate corn mills: Old

BELOW Terwick Mill, undated but probably
c.1900. Copyright unknown.
Reproduced courtesy of West Sussex Record Office
(WSRO.am-235-1-4).

Mill, believed to have been built around 1646, was a small corn mill with one pair of stones, while New Mill (built around 1746) was larger, with two pairs of stones. Each mill had its own breast shot waterwheel to drive the stones.⁵

Census information tells us that Richard Mercer, born in Ditchling, was the miller at Terwick Mill (employing four men) from at least 1841 until the 1860s, when the role was taken on by James Allen from Hampshire for around ten years, followed by Edward Catt (formerly of Coster's Mill at West Lavington) who ran Terwick mill until the 1890s. [It would be interesting to know if there was any link between Edward Catt and the family of Phyllis Gwillim's husband. Phyllis, married name Catt, was the daughter of John Gwillim who was miller at Coultershaw, Midhurst North and Fittleworth Mills in the early years of the twentieth century].

In 1897 Terwick Mill was purchased by Charles Hodson, and this is where



Jesse James Ayling comes into the picture. Jesse was the son of a shepherd, with no prospects; as a child he helped his father by working in the sheepfold, and did not have much to eat or many clothes to wear. ⁶ It was difficult at that time for a farm labourer with little education and a large family to break out of farm work, but this was Jesse's ambition, and he was particularly interested in the workings of mills from a young age. His father could not afford apprenticeship fees so Jesse, whose school attendance had been erratic, went to night school and worked his way into the business. His first job was at Hunston Windmill, which was then owned by Charles Hodson. Jesse learned the business as he worked, and while at Hunston he married and his son Frank was born in 1888. When Charles Hodson bought Terwick Mill he was not interested enough in getting involved in the day-to-day workings, so having been impressed with his employee's abilities he appointed Jesse as the foreman there.

In 1905 a lease document described fixtures and fittings at Terwick Mill, including one cast iron wheel geared with oak timber cogs and one elm timber spur wheel geared with beech cogs. There were also two pairs of French burr millstones, a flour dressing machine, an Archimedes screw flour worm, a Stevens roller mill and an Arunfields flour purifier. ⁷

THE MILLSTONE DRESSER AT MIDHURST NORTH, BEX AND TERWICK MILLS

One of the regular jobs on a mill was 'dressing' the millstones. Charles Russell, who was born in Paddock Wood in Kent in 1902, learnt the trade from the age of fourteen with his miller father, and eventually got work in three of the Rother Mills: Bex Mill, Terwick Mill and Midhurst North Mill. In an interview with the West Sussex Records Office in 1978 he described his work. ⁸ At a young age he learned to dress the millstones. This was a routine maintenance job, involving the use of a pick to sharpen the grooves. He called it 'cracking', and was proud to record that he was able to produce with a pick 'sixteen cracks to the inch'.

Charles Russell also gave an insight into how the shifts were worked at Midhurst North Mill in his time. There were three principal jobs at the mill: one person running the stones, plus the rollerman and the packer on the plank. There were three shifts each day, so nine workers in all. The shifts

were 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. and 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., so the mill was working 24 hours a day. If someone from the next shift was late, the equivalent person on the previous shift had to stay until they arrived. Russell said that they worked each shift for a week at a time, so every three weeks he had to do the unpopular night shift all week.

Later on he became miller, and then foreman at Midhurst North Mill, around the time that new owners took over in 1930. These owners, the Whitmans, took the roller mounts out, and installed vertical dreadnaught stones to produce feedstuffs. The stones were fed by a feed roller that went into the side (one stationary and one a runner into the stone). Centrifugal force sent the ground material to the edges, preventing it falling to the floor.

During wartime Charles worked for a time at Terwick Mill while the sons of the miller there were in the army, and after the war he worked at Bex Mill until 1958, when he went back to North Mill. North Mill and Bex Mill by this time were both owned by the Bartholomews family, and a hammer mill plant had been introduced at North Mill, driven by electricity without the need for millstones. Charles felt that this change was made because there had been no-one there in his absence to carry out the stone dressing. Charles said that there was no skill in high speed hammer milling, and that it used much more power than a pair of millstones, in good hands, would use. He retired through ill-health a year or so later, and North Mill closed down shortly afterwards.

TERWICK MILL – MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

Jesse Ayling's son Frank grew up in the business and took over when Jesse died in 1917, and his two sons Ted and Dennis joined in the business when they were of age.

In 1961, the writer of the *Guardian* newspaper's 'Country Diary' column (identified only as 'E.L.G.W.') described a visit to this mill of 'ancient character, unchanged since 1760.' He described how the old and new mills formed a single building, with two mill wheels, side by side, turning the millstones in each mill, and the river rushing to the large millpond beneath the opened sluices. He had a chat with one of the two sons, who was proud

BELOW Terwick Mill in 1902 and one of Jesse Ayling's two horse-drawn carts with its proudly painted tilt. Copyright unknown. Reproduced courtesy of West Sussex Record Office (WSRO.am-235-1-3).

to explain that 'we grind our corn, we don't tear it to pieces as the new machines do'. The miller's son also took the diarist into the old mill, much of which had 'slipped out of the straight; the floors sagged, and ceilings were shored up'. The diarist was also told that the cogwheels communicating the drive to the millstones were hand-made of cherry, oak or apple wood; much easier to repair than metal cogwheels. The son also talked about the otters that came to play in the river, and showed his visitor the meadows filled with trees and wild flowers.⁹

Ted later explained to a researcher more about these two waterwheels, both running at once; the larger wheel breastshot and the smaller one undershot. There were peepholes at strategic points in order to see how the wheels were going. The older mill had one pair of stones, the newer mill two pairs. They would grind maize meal, barley meal, and had use of a grain feeder, an oat crusher, a centrifugal machine for flour, and a maize kibbler (which was used to chop the maize up into



BELOW Ivon Hitchens *Terwick Mill No. 7*
Splashing Fall c.1947, oil on canvas, 52 x 105.8 cm.
Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

OPPOSITE Ted Ayling hauling sacks of flour at Terwick Mill in the days when what appear to be bald front tyres on tractors were more acceptable than now. Reproduced courtesy of Gravelroots.



smaller pieces). The mill could produce four to five hundredweight of flour in an hour, but the work was seasonal, according to what was available locally and what was needed by local farmers in terms of animal feedstuffs. They would take grain from farms within about a ten-mile radius.

When Ted started working at Terwick Mill the business had two horses and carts; then they got a lorry and disposed of one of the horses and carts; finally they worked just with two lorries. The family lived in two cottages a short distance away from the mill.

In 1940 Ted and Dennis joined the army for the duration of World War II, also spending some time as prisoners-of-war, then returned home in 1946 to continue assisting their father Frank. Prior to the war Ted had been mainly involved in the administrative side of the business, but after returning from the war he was pleased to be more involved in the actual running of the mill, including driving the lorry for a time when they were between drivers.

In 1957 the mill was put up for sale, alongside the mill house (with a long-term sitting tenant, Mrs N. J. Bramley) and a pair of cottages. The sale particulars noted that Frank Ayling was the tenant of the mill, paying £51 6s per annum, plus rates. The 'new' mill was four storeys high, on stone footings





and with a tiled roof, and across the mill yard was a two-bay carhouse and a three-stall stable, each with stores and granaries above. There were two weirs to operate the water flowing to the two mill races, and the whole site covered just under 1.2 acres. The two cottages were also tenanted by Frank Ayling, but on a renewable weekly basis by verbal agreement, for which he paid £16 18s per annum, plus rates.¹⁰ It is not clear who purchased the mill, but the Ayling family continued to run the mill there for the next decade or so, with Ted and Dennis taking over when Frank died in 1963.

Mills could be dangerous places, but Ted Ayling was somewhat disgruntled about health and safety requirements. He described factory inspectors as being 'tedious', requiring them to place guards around machinery and workings. But the real problem was when the requirements of the factory inspector (for example remedying a dangerously narrow staircase) conflicted with the Preservation Order that had been placed on the mill in 1957, and this limited repairs and improvements. To get round this at the time, employees were not permitted to work in the area around the staircase – only Ted and Dennis could use it – but this was not sustainable in the long term, and he slated this as one of the reasons they went out of business in the mid-1960s. Musing on the need for safety features at the mill Ted recalled hearing about a fatality, before his grandfather's time (about 1880), when a man fell between the wheel and wall, and Ted was of the view that this was probably a suicide. He said: 'trained men don't do silly things'.

TRAGEDY AT HURST MILL

However, a tragedy at another mill in the 1860s showed just how dangerous the waterwheel could be.¹¹ George Shier, a thatcher aged 65, his son (also George, aged 38) and brother Henry, were returning to their home in Harting from Petersfield Market on October 30, 1861, when they stopped by the pond at Hurst Mill. They saw the miller, and a lad, attempting to set the mill off so that William Chalcroft, the new mill owner, could see the mill grinding for the first time since he had taken ownership only a few months previously.

William had stepped onto the wheel with both feet to start it off, but it had 'hung up', so he asked the Shiers if they could give a hand. Father and son went to help, one by pushing with his feet and the other with his

OPPOSITE The millrace and millpond at Terwick Mill, undated but probably c.1900.

Copyright unknown. Reproduced courtesy of West Sussex Record Office (WSRO.ph10891).

hands, while Henry looked on. As they all pushed it began to move, and William immediately jumped back, but George and his son held on for too long, lost their balance, and both slipped between the wheel and the wall. The wheel, which had only moved about four feet in all, now came to a dead stop. William called for help and the lad immediately tried and failed to release the two casualties, as they were jammed between the rim of the wheel and the brickwork. William, Henry and the workers levered the wheel backwards, but it took twenty minutes to free the two casualties. George senior was already dead, and his son was rescued after falling into the water. Attempts were made to revive him but he also died of his injuries a few minutes later. George senior left a wife, Jane, and six other adult children. George junior, also a thatcher, was unmarried. On November 6, 1861, an inquest was held at the Greyhound Inn, before the coroner for West Sussex, Mr R. Blagden. After deliberation the jury returned a verdict on both men of accidental death caused by being crushed by a water wheel. Father and son were buried in the same grave at Harting.

ART OF MILLS AND THE DISGRUNTLED EMPLOYEE

Watermills have always attracted attention from artists, for their picturesque countryside settings beside waterways. Fittleworth Mill was a popular subject, painted in watercolour by John Constable (1776 – 1837)¹² and in oils on canvas by George Cole (1810 – 83).¹³ Ivon Hitchens (1893 – 1979) painted a number of semi-abstract landscapes inspired by Terwick Mill and its surroundings, for example *Splashing Fall*.¹⁴ But the conditions for workers were not always so idyllic. In 1887 Hardham Mill came up for sale at auction, and the agent described it as a desirable property in a picturesque and healthy neighbourhood.¹⁵ Some years later Mr Frank Strickland was taken on as a flour miller's improver, book-keeper and odd-jobs man, and lodgings were provided for him. Later, after retiring to Canada, he recalled his time at Hardham Mill, describing it as 'small and rat-infested'. Mill hands were given a penny per (dead) rat tail; these were kept in a pigeonhole in the office where he worked, and were very smelly. He hated his job, and was not very complimentary about his lodgings either, which he described as 'crooked', adding that while this was nice for the artists that thought the place a paradise, it was less so for those who had to live there.¹⁶

FLOOD, FIRE AND OTHER CHALLENGES

Water mills have often been subject to serious damage by flood or by fire (as the previous articles about Iping and Coultershaw Mills have already

shown). At Hurst Mill a stream had been dammed up to create a millpond. On September 15, 1880, following a heavy downpour, the millpond burst through the embankment that had been built to divert the water to the millwheel, and swept away masonry, crops and garden, as well as causing considerable damage to the corn standing in the mill building. A large gap 25 feet deep and 15 feet wide was created in the head of the pond, which was left empty of water, leaving nothing but mud. The cost of damage was estimated at £1000.¹⁷

Sometimes national issues could impact on the operations of the mills. On June 9, 1843, Lord Egmont¹⁸ received a letter from land agent Alexander Brown about a number of matters regarding tenancy and repairs of various properties within Easebourne.¹⁹ He goes on to say: 'Have advertised North Mill twice in the *Sunday Express*, but have not had a single feasible application for it. It will be as well to delay advertising it in other papers till the fear of this Canada Corn Bill has subsided, the millers are much afraid of its effect upon their trade.' The Canada Corn Bill was designed to give preference to colonial over foreign imports. It proposed a reduced tariff for grain (including corn and wheat) imported to the UK from Canada, in support of Canadian growers, but clearly caused concern to British growers. The Act was passed in 1843 but repealed in 1846.

THE CLOSURE OF TERWICK MILL

From after the war up until the beginning of the 1960s it became harder to continue making a living at the mill. Business had gone down and it was difficult to get or retain staff on the wages they could afford. While the landlord would provide the material for repairs, as tenants they had to cover the cost of the works. This included at one point the road bridge.

The harsh winter of 1962/63 caused considerable problems, Ted saying they 'went through hell'. The water wheel froze to the wall and they couldn't get the mill going or do deliveries for eleven weeks. They were grateful for customers who remained loyal. In 1966 a report was commissioned into the feasibility of continuing the mill business.²⁰ The report was written by J. Kenneth Major B.Arch., A.R.I.B.A., but it is unclear who it was commissioned by. Principally a description of the mill buildings and its workings and equipment, including 'a wonderful set of millwright tools and tackle'. Mr Major concluded with a plea for Terwick Mill to be enabled to continue as an operating business. His arguments for this were: it was the only operating watermill of its kind in Sussex; it was a small tracking mill; it belonged to a lowland system with water never introduced to the top of the wheel, with large storage capacity for

grain; it was a fine mill visually, in an attractive and accessible position close to the south coast, of interest to visitors.

His further recommendation was that, ideally, a tenant miller be appointed on a peppercorn rent to run the mill as an operating business, suggesting: 'it would not be expensive to repair or maintain, and if accommodation were required the granary could be converted into a house'.

Also in 1966 Ted was interviewed by the *Evening Argus*, and a half-page story under the headline 'Famous Watermill Grinding to a Halt' was published on September 1. The article included photographs of the mill, and of Ted and Dennis respectively in front of the buildings and at work on the grinding gears. Ted explained that prospects were no longer good as this was the age of the big millers, and they were the last of the fully operational water mills in Sussex. He was looking forward to a holiday for the first time in thirty-three years (adding 'unless being in the army and a prisoner-of-war counted'). He suggested that the mills could be converted or made into a tea place, explaining how popular the place was with local artists.

Mr Major's recommendations (and Ted's suggestion) were ultimately ruled out and work began in 1966 after Ted and Dennis's retirement to convert the mill into a private three-bedroomed house, with many of the original mill workings retained. Just over twenty years later the house, along with the mill pond, fishing rights and an acre of land was put up for sale for £340,000.



Frank P. Ayling
Terwick Mills
Rogate, Sussex

FIBRE
CONTENT
5.75%



Weatings



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Frank P. Ayling
Terwick Mills
Rogate, Suss

FIBRE
CONTENT
5.75%



Weatings

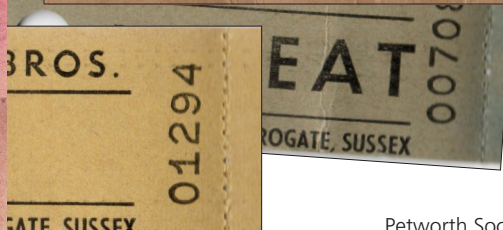
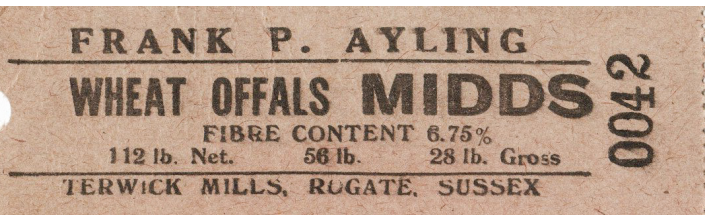


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Frank P. Ayling

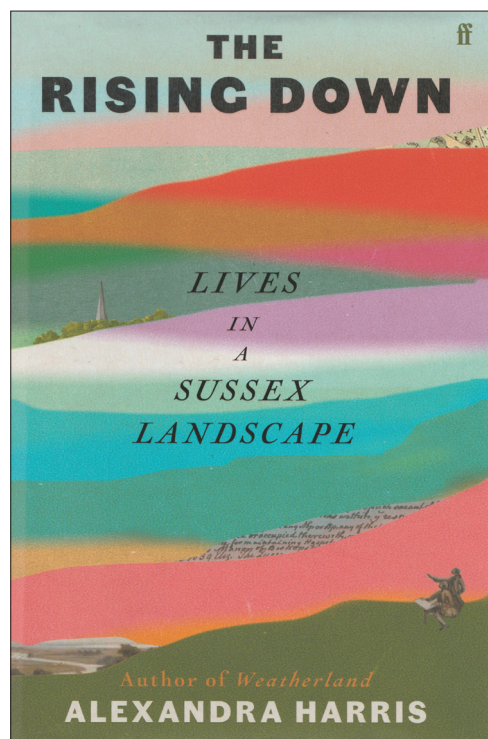
- 1** Mills Archive Trust. *From Quern to Computer: The History of Flour Milling*, 2016. **2** Sussex Archaeological Collections, 1983, Archaeological and Historical Notes, vol. 121, pp.183-224. **3** Vince, John. *Mills and Millwrighting*, 1978. C. I. Thomas & Sons, Haverfordwest.
- 4** 'The Northwestern Miller' *The Northwestern Miller Production Annual*, 1935-10-16, vol 184 issue 2 section 2 – Archive Catalogue (millsarchive.org). **5** Gregory, F. & Martin, R. *Sussex Watermills*, 1997, S. B. Publications, Seaford, p. 91. **6** WSRO – Oral History (used with permission): OH 50.
- 7** WSRO: Add Mss 19544. **8** WSRO: OH 38. **9** *The Guardian* (1959-2003); 'A Country Diary' August 11, 1961 **10** WSRO: SP 100.
- 11** *Morning Chronicle*, November 9, 1861; *Southampton Herald*, November 2, 1861. **12** Constable, John, 1834, *Fittleworth Mill, Sussex*, London,V&A. **13** Cole, George, 1881, *Fittleworth Old Mill, River Rother, Sussex*, Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. **14** Hitchens, Ivon, c.1947, *Terwick Mill No. 7, Splashing Fall*, Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. **15** WSRO: Add Mss 28344. **16** WSRO: MP 7626. **17** *Hampshire / Portsmouth Telegraph*, September 22, 1880. **18** Not to be confused with Lord Egremont at Petworth, this was George Perceval, the sixth Earl of Egmont, who was MP for West Surrey and whose family seats included Cowdray Park. George was a nephew of the assassinated Prime Minister Spencer Perceval. **19** WSRO: Cowdray Mss 1905/1. **20** WSRO: MP 5274, WSRO: MP 7823.

BELOW A selection of sack labels from Terwick Mill.
Reproduced courtesy of Norman Langridge.



A lot more than an anchorite and a moose

Book review. Alexandra Harris, *The Rising Down: Lives in a Sussex Landscape*, Faber, £25. Jonathan Newdick



Alexandra Harris is on the train to Chichester. Somewhere between Amberley and Arundel she looks up from her book and sees the spire of a little church rising from the marshes. 'Its strange, slim spire, a Victorian addition with a fanciful hint of a Normandy chateau'. She wants to know more and, hurriedly bundling her papers and books into her rucksack, she makes an unscheduled stop at Arundel. Leaving the station she walks towards the town, past Swanbourne Lake and the Black Rabbit and down and up and down again to South Stoke and there's the church – St Leonard's. Her court shoes all muddy. A missed meeting. She crosses the river. It's tidal here, its waters

deep with histories on history in its ebb and flow. She walks on to North Stoke, tired now, her court shoes all but ruined, legs all stung with nettles. Another missed meeting. Too bad. This is important.

Is this the way for a respected professor of English to behave? Yes it is. In this case, emphatically yes. For this unscheduled excursion will be the genesis of *The Rising Down*.

They say you should never go back to somewhere you have been happy, but this is what Harris has done. Although now living in far away Oxford with its own fine river, it's the Arun valley that has a hold on her, for it's here she spent her childhood, went to school, sold ice creams in a kiosk at

Arundel in the school holidays, reading Milton between Cornettos.

I have read *The Rising Down* more than twice, yet I still don't know how to categorise or define it. It is cultural history, social history, art and literary history, even at times economic history but it's always local, and all woven with the thread of her own story in a prose which is never far from poetry.

The book begins with an anchorite walled up in St Botolph's at Hardham to worship God for years alone. It journeys through discoveries of long-forgotten people – the river keeper on the Arun in the 1630s when the river 'was busy with ships, barges, lighters... its tides carrying populations of watermen' and who wrote of his work 'during the time of his Water Bailiyskip being 26 yeares & upwards.' And on to the Second World War when James Roffey from Camberwell 'was billeted in the cramped quarters of Mr Burchell's shop opposite Pulborough station' and who 'formed a strong attachment to the patch of countryside in which he had been arbitrarily deposited.' And the Polish villages at Monkmead and Petworth, whose inhabitants, also arbitrarily deposited, had names that local people couldn't properly pronounce.

But it isn't all unknowns. There are detailed revelations about people we thought we knew – Gilbert White who came over from Selbourne to Goodwood to see the Duke of Richmond's new moose; John Constable's recording of a huge, hollowed oak canoe discovered between North and South Stoke. Early medieval, but he thought it to be pre-Roman; William Blake's joys and difficulties during his sojourn in his cottage at Felpham; William Collins's troubles with his poetry and his sanity in eighteenth-century Chichester where his father sold hats.

Throughout the book the emphatic sense of place is so strong that all the centuries seem to become one together and there were tears in my eyes as I read of the writer's ailing mother, unable to finish Simon Schama's *A History of Britain* but finding solace in the great-crested grebes diving in the water – seeing if she could hold her breath longer than they can.

Academics and cultural historians seem so often to write to impress with their plethora of long words. It's easy to do. Harris's approach is the more difficult. She can present complex arguments in such a way that the reader never needs a handy dictionary. This is impressive. Her first book, *Romantic Moderns* (Thames & Hudson 2010) won the Guardian First Book Award and a Somerset Maugham Award. If *The Rising Down* doesn't carry off some literary Oscars there is no justice.

PICTURE NOTE

Andrew Loukes

North Street, Petworth by Bertram Nicholls (1883 – 1974) 1942. Water-colour and pencil on paper, 31.1 x 50.4 cms. Manchester Art Gallery.

This little-known watercolour perfectly captures North Street as recalled by Jumbo Taylor in the years after he had moved there with his family during the 1930s:

‘...very quiet, few cars all day, the odd steam engine towing threshing drums and straw balers rumbling along, as well as boys on their way to and from the boys school down the road, chatting and playing.’

(*Petworth and the World – A Memoir*, 2022, p.23)

Nicholls’s view of a sunny morning, signed and dated 1942, looks north towards what is now the mini-roundabout where the A283 leaves the A272, with the Pleasure Ground wall to the left. Poignantly, the building on the right with its distinctive three gables is of course the Boys School referenced by Jumbo, which would very soon be demolished by the German bombing of September 29, 1942 with the tragic loss of thirty-two lives. Recollections of that day may be read in *PSM* 169, September 2017.

Beyond the junction and at the centre of Nicholls’s composition is the old Workhouse which had been decommissioned during the early 1930s and was now the private North End School for girls. Photographs and memories of this school can be found in *PSM* 179 (March 2020) and 152 (June 2013), with the latter including a George Garland picture clearly showing the picket gate, stone wall and two-tone Mason’s Arms sign captured by Nicholls and which are now also all gone. Garland’s later photograph of the demolition of the Workhouse / North End School in 1960 is reproduced in *PSM* 168 (June 2017). Perhaps the figures in Nicholls’s picture suggest, with some degree of visual poetry, a girl and a boy leaving their mothers before heading to their respective schools. The artist has certainly, albeit unwittingly, left us with an image which is both an important record of lost topography and an unusually powerful evocation of a lost world.

Born in Manchester (hence this picture’s inclusion in the Manchester Art Gallery collection), Nicholls was a student at the prestigious Slade School of Art and by the 1920s was living in Steyning where he had earlier

married. He spent his final years in Worthing. The artist's work, therefore, includes numerous Sussex subjects – although this appears to be the only Petworth view – alongside other British and continental scenes. An oil painting of Steyning Church is in the Tate collection. His work in both oils and watercolours can be reminiscent of the great Romantic artist John Sell Cotman of a hundred years earlier and is particularly marked by its precision and correctness of detail, lending his view of North Street all the more resonance.



ABOVE AND PAGES 24-25 '...with some degree of visual poetry a girl and a boy leaving their mothers before heading to their respective schools'. This detail and the main image on the following pages are © Estate of the artist and reproduced courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery.





Petworth – ‘The Official Guide’ from 1966

Thanks to Bob Sneller for sharing with us Petworth Rural District Council’s Official Guide from 1966. It measures 18.5 by 12 cms, has 36 pages and a pull-out map of the Rural District. Its cover and principal pages are reproduced here at approximately actual size. Particular features are the advertisements with their succinct telephone numbers, George Garland’s photography – notably his stunning panorama looking towards Sheepdowns from Byworth – and the local information, which mentions none of Petworth’s pubs but recommends The Swan at Fittleworth, The Half Moon at Northchapel and illustrates The Onslow Arms at Loxwood.



PETWORTH HOUSE

PETWORTH

RURAL DISTRICT

S U S S E X

OFFICIAL GUIDE



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ii

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SUSSEX

The Official Guide

With Map and 13 illustrations

Photographs by George G. Garland, Petworth

Issued by Authority of the
PETWORTH RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

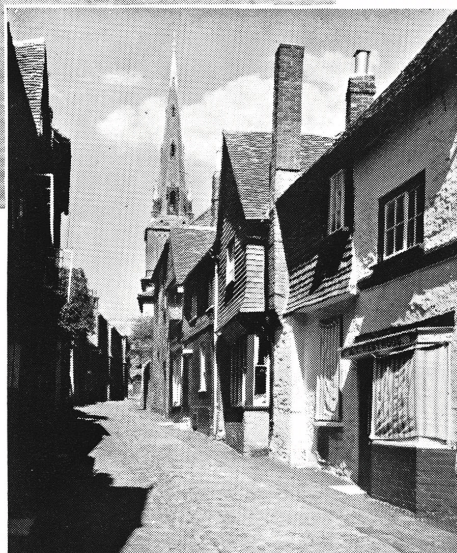
Newlands, Pound Street, Petworth

Telephone: Petworth 2241/2



Lombard Street, Petworth

**Inset: Before removal of
Church Spire**



PETWORTH

RURAL DISTRICT

The Rural District of Petworth, situated in the West of Sussex, comprises 13 civil parishes and covers 45,495 acres, or over 71 square miles, extending from the Surrey border, across the Weald to the South Downs about seven miles from the English Channel coast. Its eastern boundary is almost continuously defined by the course of the River Arun.

This is a countryside of most attractive and diversified scenery with an unspoilt natural charm. It includes fine chalk downs, extensive woodlands, commons and highly productive farmlands through which flow the River Rother, a tributary of the Arun, and numerous smaller rivers and streams. Both on the downs and amidst the wooded areas are viewpoints which afford widespread panoramas. A maximum elevation of over 800 feet is attained. Residential development has occurred mostly around Petworth, and at Wisborough Green and Ifold.

The imprint of time goes deeply here. Relics of prehistoric days are to be found on the South Downs. The Roman road of Stane Street may be traced across the south east corner of this Rural District, and the remains of the Roman villa at Bignor are some of the most notable in England. The Petworth district was a busy centre of the iron-smelting industry in Tudor and Stuart times. Ancient glassworks have been located at Kirdford and Wisborough Green. Sussex marble used to be quarried around Kirdford which is now a noted fruit-growing area.

In the historic little town of Petworth are numerous picturesque old houses. Here, too, stands the impressive Petworth House which is celebrated for its paintings. Old cottages in the secluded villages display fine timberwork, and many of the surrounding farmhouses were rebuilt c.1600 to c.1640. Stopham bridge was built in the 14th century. The ancient churches contain much of interest including wall-paintings, and tombs and brasses of well-known families.

ACCESSIBILITY

Petworth lies 7 miles east of Midhurst, 21 miles south of Guildford, 16 miles south-west of Horsham, 14 miles north-east of the West Sussex county town of Chichester, and 15 miles north of Littlehampton which is the nearest coastal resort. Bognor Regis and Worthing are only slightly further from Petworth. London is 50 miles distant by road.

This Rural District is served by the Southern Region of British Railways with the electrified line from Victoria and London Bridge to Bognor and Chichester. The branch line through Petworth has now been closed to passenger traffic, the nearest station being Pulborough, 5½ miles distant. An alternative route is from Waterloo to Haslemere, 12 miles from Petworth, which also provides an excellent service of fast trains.

Bus routes operated by the Southdown Motor Services Ltd., and the Aldershot and District Traction Co. Ltd., link the villages with Petworth, Pulborough, Midhurst, Haslemere, Horsham, Arundel, Chichester, Portsmouth, Bognor, Littlehampton, Worthing and Brighton. Long-distance coaches may also be connected for London and numerous provincial cities and coastal resorts.

GENERAL LOCAL INFORMATION

Banks. Branches of the Midland Bank and Westminster Bank are in Petworth.

Churches. In addition to the parish churches there are Nonconformist chapels in the larger villages, and Roman Catholic churches at Petworth and Duncton.

Early Closing. Wednesdays.

Education. Advancement may be gained from the primary grade schools in the parishes to grammar and secondary modern schools at Petworth, Billingshurst, Midhurst, Chichester and Horsham. Technical training is also provided by the County Education Committee. Evening courses are arranged in the larger villages for commercial and advanced subjects, art and handicrafts whenever there are sufficient students. There are independent and preparatory schools and well-known public schools in the vicinity.

Health Services. Petworth Cottage Hospital, and other hospitals with attached special treatment clinics, administered by the Chichester Management Committee of the S.W. Metropolitan Regional Hospital Board provide for all local requirements. Child welfare centres and natal clinics are in all the larger residential areas.

Hotels. This Rural District attracts many visitors, especially during the summer season, and good accommodation for short or longer periods is provided by the local hotels. The Swan Hotel, Saddler's Row, Petworth, is a well-equipped modern hotel under Trust Houses, Ltd. The Swan Hotel, at Fittleworth, offers comfortable accommodation and is a picturesque old building which retains interesting period features. Also picturesque is the Half-Moon Inn, North Chapel, which is widely known as the "Old Curiosity Pub."

Housing. Prior to the 1939/45 war the Rural District Council constructed 218 houses, and since the war have pursued a vigorous housing policy providing no less than 451 further dwellings. Apart from development associated with agriculture, and some infilling in villages, private residential development in any numbers is mainly confined to The Fleet, Fittleworth and Ifold Estate, Plaistow.

Industries. Agriculture and its associated rural undertakings are still maintained as the principal industries. The heavy but fertile soil, which is composed mainly of Wealdon clay, produces good crops of corn and roots, and provides excellent pasturage for dairy herds. Sheep are still reared on the downs in the south of the Rural District. Agricultural lime is produced from chalk pits at Duncton. Kirdford is a noted fruit-growing area. There are light engineering works at Wisborough Green.

Local Government. Administration is by the Petworth Rural District Council which consists of 18 members. The Council Offices are at Newlands, Pound Street, Petworth. Telephone No.: 2241.

Newspapers. "Midhurst and Petworth Observer", "West Sussex Gazette", "Brighton and Hove Gazette".

Population. Estimated at 10,100 (June, 1964).

Public Services. A piped supply of water is provided in all parishes by the North West Sussex Water Board. Electricity is distributed by the Southern Electricity Board, and gas (only in Petworth) by the South Eastern Gas Board. The two latter Boards have offices in Petworth.



Onslow Arms, Loxwood

Rateable Value. £346,207. A penny rate produces £1,405. General Rates for the year ending 31st March, 1966: 9/4 in the £. The domestic water rate is 1/3 in the £.

Sport and Recreation. There are clubs for cricket, football and tennis. Games pitches are provided in the playing fields and public open spaces. The nearest Golf courses are at Cowdray Park, Midhurst, Pulborough, Horsham, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. Cowdray Park also has a noted polo ground.

The Arun is a well-known angling river. There is also good fishing in the Rother and other local rivers and some private lakes. Fox-hunting in season is with the Cowdray and the Chiddingfold and Leconfield Hunts.

Dances, whist drives, socials and entertainments are held in the village halls. Branches of the British Legion, Women's Institutes, cultural and recreational societies and youth organisations cover a variety of activities and interests.

There is a local Youth Centre at Midhurst Road, Petworth, which includes a swimming pool, open to non-members. Particulars are available from the Warden, Mr. S. C. Chapman, "Sunnyside", Midhurst Road, Petworth, Sussex.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Nearly two thousand years ago the Romans constructed their great road of Stane Street to link London with the old tribal capital at Chichester. This forded the River Arun at Pulborough to a posting station at Hardham and continued on through the present Petworth Rural District and over the South Downs. It can still be traced in Grevatt's Wood and Bignortail Wood, and on the chalk downs where it shows as a broad, straight road in a good state of preservation. On the ascent Stane Street is joined by a terraced way from the site of the Roman villa at Bignor.

In the 6th century the Saxon invaders firmly settled themselves and established the kingdom of the South Saxons which came to be known as Sussex. But the succeeding centuries were far from peaceful. Entries in the Saxon Chronicle record the fierce battles which occurred here in repeated attempts to keep out the Danes.

In 1066 William of Normandy landed in Sussex and ended the Saxon dynasty. Sussex was divided into six rapes, each with a Norman feudal overlord. Petworth and various other places in the Rural District are recorded in the Domesday Survey compiled by the Normans in 1086.

West Sussex stood for the Royalist cause in the Civil War whilst East Sussex had mainly Parliamentary sympathies. Chichester was besieged in 1642. Soon afterwards the strong castles of Arundel and Bramber surrendered, thereby causing the general collapse of Royalist support throughout this whole district.

A Panorama of the Downs from Byworth



PARISHES OF THE RURAL DISTRICT

PETWORTH

Petworth, from which this Rural District takes its name, is a large parish of pleasant and unspoilt scenery extending northwards for a distance of nearly five miles from the River Rother and Duncton Common. It comprises beautiful woodlands, high-set commons and productive farmlands through which flow clear streams to the Arun and the Rother. An elevation of well over 400 feet above sea-level is attained near The Fox.

Charmingly situated amidst these delightful surroundings is the ancient and most picturesque little town of Petworth, the history of which is closely connected with the notable mansion of Petworth House which stands in a splendid park on the west side of the town. To the south lies the development around Byworth, and beyond is the tiny hamlet and church of Egdean. Its small church, built in 1623, has been restored in the 13th century style.

Petworth was a manor in Saxon times and is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086. Since time immemorial the town has had an annual fair, which takes place on the 20th November. There are numerous charities dating variously from 1618, 1673, 1746, 1753 and 1836. The manor came into the possession of the Percy family in Norman times, and the descendants of this great family have held it ever since.

It is fortunate that this town has been able to preserve so much of its old-world charm. Along the quaint, cobbled Lombard Street, around Damer's Bridge, and in other narrow streets and irregular byways stand picturesque houses and buildings of considerable age and architectural interest.

Tudor House is a beautiful 16th century residence. Thompson's Hospital, North Street, comprises almshouses erected in 1618. Also in the same street stand Somerset Lodge (1653) and Somerset Hospital of early 17th century brickwork. Fine examples of timber-framing include a house (now a shop) of the Tudor period in East Street, and the picturesque cottages in Saddler's Row. New Grove, built about 1620, preserves many interesting period features. Here, Grinling Gibbons is said to have lived whilst he was carrying out his celebrated carving at Petworth House. The Town Hall, of stone construction, was erected in 1793 by the Earl of Egremont, but has since been considerably restored. On the north side is a bust of William of Orange, who once stayed at Petworth House. Petworth also contains numerous dignified houses of Georgian style although some of these may be considerably older, having been refronted during that period.

Petworth Church

The parish church dates from the 14th century when it replaced a much earlier building on the same site; but it was practically rebuilt in 1827 and has since been repeatedly restored, so that very few medieval features now remain. The architect at the rebuilding was Sir Charles Barry whose best-known work is the Houses of Parliament.

The western tower was formerly surmounted by a leaded spire which became unsafe and was taken down in 1800 when corner pinnacles were added to the tower. An octagonal brick spire built during the 1827 alterations soon proved too weighty for the medieval stone tower, and constant repairs were found necessary. It was taken down in 1947, the old tower being restored and strengthened at the same time.

From Pikeshoot to Switzerland

Alison Crowther's Petworth oak, part four, conclusion. Jonathan Newdick



After months of sawing, sanding and carving by Alison and her assistant, Philip Walker, the sphere from an oak on the edge of the Rother is ready for Alison to carve her initials into it. It is then carefully wrapped and palletted by the team from Mtec Fine Art who have been sending artworks around the world for thirty years, before the doors on the big lorry are shut and it begins its journey to Switzerland.



Gone but not forgotten...

Sir Charles Barry's Royal Sussex Hospital and the Third Earl of Egremont.
Andrew Loukes (with thanks to Alison McCann)

Taken in June 2024, the photograph below captures the last remaining piece of the original Royal Sussex Hospital building which has now been fully demolished to allow for ongoing modernisation. The idea of a county hospital had been championed 200 years earlier by the Third Earl of Egremont, who also contributed £5,000 towards its construction and running (around £290,000 in today's money) and laid the foundation stone in 1826 – the hospital opened in 1828. Its architect was Sir Charles Barry, whose iconic spire for St Mary's, Petworth (1827 – 1948) was built in the previous year (see *PSM* 183 for the history of the spire).

To mark Egremont's munificence in supporting the hospital, local subscribers paid for a marble bust of him by the eminent sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey and it was placed in the board-room in 1831. Five years later, in acknowledgment



of his wider patronage at Brighton, a full-length portrait by George Clint was commissioned in 1836 to hang in Brighton Town Hall (it is now in the stores of Brighton Museum and Art Gallery) and an engraving was made of it by the leading printmaker Thomas Lupton. The wording beneath the image reads: ‘... presented to the Town Hall, Brighton, by the Inhabitants as a mark of their Esteem for his distinguished Work, and in Testimony of the high estimation they entertain of his munificent Support of the Public Institutions of that Town and of his Services as Lord Lieutenant of the County of Sussex.’



OPPOSITE

The last remaining piece of the original Royal Sussex Hospital is demolished in June 2024.
Photograph by Ian Warrell.

LEFT

The Portrait of the Right Honourable The Earl of Egremont, Thomas Lupton after George Clint, engraving on paper, 1837.

A principal feature of Clint's composition is the newly operational hospital which sits prominently in the landscape beyond the sitter. Both Chantrey and Clint had been among those British artists who regularly stayed at Petworth House during the 1820s and 30s and their work is well represented in the collection. Clint attended the 3rd Earl's funeral at Petworth in 1837 alongside J.M.W. Turner and other artists.

SHORT NOTICE OF SALE.

UNDER DISTRESS FOR RENT.

GLATTING FARM, SUTTON NEAR PETWORTH,

ABOUT FOUR MILES FROM PETWORTH AND FITTLEWORTH RAILWAY STATIONS.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY

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FINE UPSTANDING CART MARE,

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STRONG AND POWERFUL CART MARE,

NINE YEARS OLD.

Two Iron-Arm Dung Carts, Waggon, Cambridge Roller, Four-Cylinder Ditto, Two Iron Ploughs, by Howard, Duck's-Foot Harrow, Chain Harrow, Cake Crusher, Turnip Cutters, Winnowing Machine, Rick Cloth, Iron Cow Cribbs, Six Wood Sheep Troughs, Pig Trough, several Ladders; about 25 Head of Poultry, 12 Hen Coops; also about

50 QUARTERS OF BLACK AND WHITE OATS;

ALSO THE

HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE & EFFECTS

Comprising good Gate-Leg Oak Table, Carved High-Back Chair, Mahogany Bureau, Wicker, Cane-Seat, and Easy Chairs, Couches, Three Mahogany Chests of Drawers, Mirrors, and various other Effects.

ALSO GOOD ENDOVER-END CHURN, MILK PANS, AND DAIRY UTENSILS.

MAY BE VIEWED ON THE MORNING OF THE SALE.

Catalogues may be obtained of Mr. NEWLAND TOMPKINS, F.A.I., Valuer, Surveyor, and Auctioneer, Pulborough and Petworth.
Printed at the Offices of the West Sussex Gazette and South of England Advertiser, Arundel and Horsham.

Under distress for rent

Difficult times at Glatting Farm. Jonathan Newdick

As a post-script to the two articles on Glatting Farm by Annabelle Hughes in *PSMs* 192 and 193, Miles Costello has discovered this sale poster for the farm effects at Glatting from 1904. It is not known who the tenant under distress for rent was but it must have been a sad day.

As well as the items listed as main headings, the following are to be included in the sale: 'Two Iron-Arm Dung Carts, Waggon, Cambridge Roller, Four-Cylinder Ditto, Two Iron Ploughs, by Howard, Duck's-Foot Harrow, Cake Crusher, Turnip Cutters, Winnowing Machine, Rick Cloth, Iron Cow Cribs, Six Wood Sheep Troughs, Pig Trough, several ladders; about 25 Head of Poultry, 12 Hen Coops'.

And among the household furniture and effects are: 'Good Gate-Leg Oak Table, Carved High-Back Chair, Mahogany Bureau, Wicker, Cane-Seat and Easy Chairs, Couches, Three Mahogany Chests of Drawers, Mirrors and various other Effects, Good End-Over-End Churn, Milk Pans and Dairy Utensils'.

BELOW Sir David Wilkie *Distraining for Rent*, 1815, oil on panel, 81 x 123 cm., Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh.

'Under distress for rent' and 'distraining for rent' were feared phrases within agricultural communities as rents continued to rise in the nineteenth century.



The Romany Rye

An artist's cottage frozen in time. Miles Costello.

The little cottage called The Romany Rye, frozen in time, nestles comfortably in woodland on the very edge of a Sussex village. A memorial to three Sussex artists, Harold Roberts and his sons Bevil and Luther, it has sat empty for over a quarter of a century, and yet the house is not unloved nor unwanted – it is just waiting to be woken from its slumber.

The old water tank by the back door still contains the overflow from the gutters, and the lemon trees, bearing fruit, thrive in the primitive conservatory which links the art store from the living accommodation. Inside, beds remain unmade, while shelves, bowed heavily by the weight of dust, hold a lifetime of artwork depicting long forgotten people and



places. Characters from Tolkien and Don Quixote stare up vacantly from the scattering of pen and ink drawings which litter the floor. The kitchen, primitive even by the standards of 1932, when the cottage was built, yields up a mixture of cleaning materials, empty jars and artists' paraphernalia, and by the sink calcified hand soap waits in expectation of hands that never come. The name of the cottage is presumably taken from George Borrow's 1857 autobiographical novel of the same name. It slumbers on.

Any captions to the photographs by Jonathan Newdick, apart from those on page 48 and their accompanying drawing, would seem superfluous. None of them was 'arranged' in any way – they are all as seen on the day.









A Christmas card by Harold Roberts for Major G. Mant, Mrs Mant and family of Avenings in Petworth, Christmas 1945 and (below) Harold's initials carved either side of an outhouse door at The Romany Rye.



