

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY
Magazine

No. 186. March 2022



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Winter wheat and oak trees near River. (See River Common walk on page 13).

FRONT COVER

A young Mary Carver with twin lambs at Hoes Farm, c. 1932. A photograph by George Garland whose original caption reads 'Hullo twins! A happy snapshot from a West Sussex farm where the arrival of early lambs cheer us with thoughts of spring now not far ahead'.

BACK COVER

A Scarlet elf cup fungus, *Sarcoscypha coccinea* or *Sarcoscypha austriaca* in River Wood, reproduced here at about life size. (See River Common walk on page 13).

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 plus 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 £14.00, single or double; postal £18.00, overseas nominal £25.00. Further information may be obtained from any of the following.

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Alexandra Soskin

By the time you read this we will be well into the new year. I do hope 2022 got off to a good start for you. For the Society, we were very pleased to start the year with the launch of the digitised Magazine archive and the new website. The launch took place just before Christmas. If you have not yet had a look, do please visit www.petworthsociety.co.uk and have a browse through a treasure trove of magazines going back 40 years or so. Miles Costello provides some intriguing search suggestions in his editorial on page six.

We believe the magazine's oral history archive is a rare record of its kind. It is now preserved for posterity, both physically and for search purposes. On the website, we felt it was appropriate to dedicate the archive to Peter Jerrome. We also thank Jonathan and Claudia Golden for so generously funding the digitisation work. We are immensely grateful, as will be the wider public, who can now explore this rich resource.

The re-launching of the website presented a good opportunity to introduce some new facilities. In the first instance, you can now buy event tickets online. Further, we are planning to introduce the ability to apply online for new memberships and to renew existing ones. We hope this will be more convenient for some members. For others who prefer, as before, to complete the form and send this to us with a cheque this will of course remain an alternative.

Although, reluctantly, we postponed the opening event of this year, as we now emerge from the pandemic, we feel more confident in planning a programme of events for 2022. We have rescheduled the postponed January Happy Days Big Band event, and you can find details for this and other events over the next three months on the events insert in this edition. As other future events are scheduled we will post them on the website and in future editions of the Magazine.

We also expect to be able to hold the Annual General Meeting this year. This is scheduled for Tuesday the 17th of May, starting at 7 p.m., with a speaker and then refreshments to follow. As our first face-to-face AGM since the pandemic period, we look forward to meeting members then.

March is subscription renewal month. Reluctantly, we have taken the step of raising the rates this year. This was not an easy decision; but, as you can imagine, the Magazine, and other costs, have risen relentlessly over the years. The Society has been taking these rises on the chin; but as nobody can remember the last time the subscription rate went up we hope you will find this relatively modest increase

now acceptable. We hope you will agree that it still represents good value. When you fill in your subscription form, to help us with our general digitisation, we would be grateful if you would add in your email address on the subscription form. Many thanks!



Giving our Heritage a Voice

We are seeking new Society Management Committee members.

Two of our committee members have unfortunately stepped down for health reasons and so we are seeking replacements.

The role is not too onerous! We meet roughly six times a year. We generate ideas together and share the events development, planning and preparation.

What we are looking for is an enthusiasm for Petworth and its heritage; ideas and, ideally, contacts to help in their development; and a 'make it happen' disposition!

If this sounds interesting we'd love to hear from you. Please email me via: info@petworthsociety.co.uk.

Alexandra Soskin, Chairman.

EDITORIAL

Miles Costello

Great news. The Petworth Society online archive and website is now up and running and ready to use. Creating the archive has been an enormous challenge with some 180 issues of the magazine and almost 8,000 pages of text and photographs digitally scanned, all of which can now be searched online. The project has been a formidable commission carried out by a leading archiving company under the direction of the Society chairman Alexandra Soskin. The task was made all the more complex as it is just part of a scheme to create a modern, easily accessible web site where current and potential members can interact with the society in ways that were previously impossible. Whether you may want to browse back issues of the Magazine, read hundreds of written oral recollections, research your family history, learn more about their lives, the job that your grandfather may have done or the street that you live in, then this is the essential one-stop place to go to: www.petworthsociety.co.uk. If you have ever wondered what became of young Harriet Moore who poisoned her illegitimate baby in Petworth Workhouse or why the ancient Hungers Lane is still believed to be the haunt of witches and ghostly apparitions then here is the opportunity to dig a little further, but perhaps not too deep, for you may uncover some skeletons in your own cupboard.

With this issue of the magazine you will find a subscription reminder and it is important that this is paid promptly if you are at all able to. This helps Gemma and Nick and goes some way to keeping the Society's finances in order. You will, I am sure, also notice that there has been a small increase in the subscription for 2022. This is the first increase in many years and the result of rising costs which the Society is reluctantly no longer able to absorb. I think that you will agree that the Magazine and membership of the society still offer terrific value for money. Membership can be paid in the usual ways by bank transfer, a cheque by post to Gemma or in a sealed envelope at Austens. Gemma will also be at the March book sale if you wish to pay then.

After last year I am not even going to try to predict what 2022 will hold. Hopefully we will be able to put on more Society events, though sadly The Happy Days Big Band evening which Sarah worked so hard to organise had to be postponed at very short notice, it has however been rescheduled and details can be found in the accompanying inserts and we look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones at this exciting evening event. Walks have always been a big part of the Society calendar but seem to have tailed off in recent years. This

is something that we are determined to address and so the second, or is it the third, Gog walk will take place on Easter Saturday April the 16th. Organised in collaboration with the Petworth Past Facebook group the walk which takes in Lovers Lane, The Gog, the Dog's Grave and The Virgin Mary's Spring is rapidly becoming something of a tradition. The child and dog-friendly walk is open to all and starts at 2.30 p.m. from the parish church.

2022 will see considerably fewer book sales than in previous years and I must say that I am enjoying the slower pace. The next sale will be on Saturday March the 12th just a few days after you receive this magazine. Books do still come in and one in particular recently caught my attention. *The School of Arts, or Fountain of Knowledge* was published anonymously in about 1800 and contains an amazing cornucopia of what was once considered to be essential information. Passing over advice on destroying moles and cures for piles I came across the following which is very close to my heart and I thought may be useful to share with some of our other follically challenged members.

For Baldness. If the hair falls off by reason of head-ache or other distempers. First wash the head with a decoction of Maidenhair, Beet and Myrrh, and then rub the root of the hair with the following oil. Take an equal quantity of Juniper berries, Laudanum, Wormwood and Maidenhair; boil them in a pint of wine, and half a pound of Myrrh, till the wine be almost consumed, and use it morning and evening. Or, you may steep Mice-dung in vinegar, and rub the hair with it. Rat's-dung is likewise as good for this purpose. Or, boil black Venus hair, and with the decoction wash the head and rub it with Bear's-grease.

If you have books to donate please don't hesitate to call me on 01798 343227 or email info@petworthsociety.co.uk.

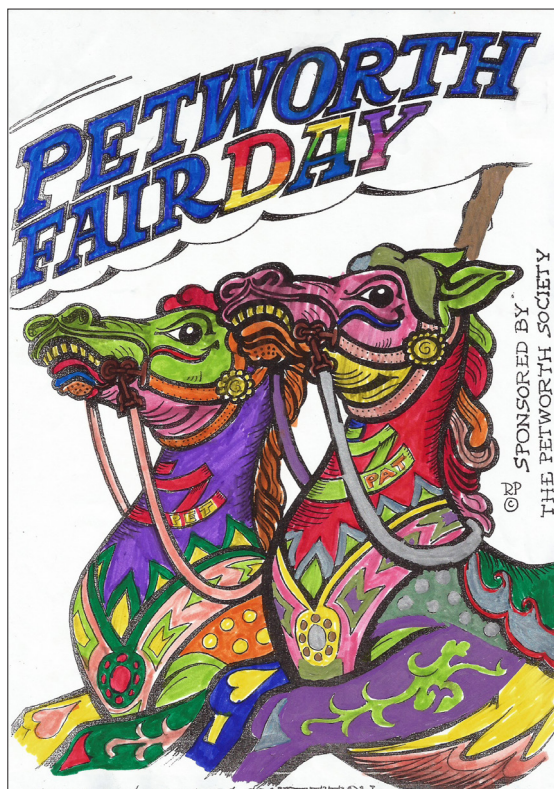
Yet again Gerald has contributed one of his excellent walks to the Magazine. River Common is of particular interest as it was home to Denis Knight, a socialist and peace campaigner who with his family set up home there in the early 1950s. Speaking to his daughter Liz for *PSM* 156 she described to me the cottage where they lived and where her parents hoped to create a self-sufficient life away from the post-war bleakness of London.

My parents had half a cottage, a couple of acres of field, a big garden with a very ancient well in it, from which we took our water up by bucket, and, of course, use of the common pasturage. We kept goats, pigs, hen, ducks, geese and a pony. All these creatures wandered happily around the common as well as the garden. My mother drove us to school by pony and trap. We grew more

or less all our own vegetables, and my father made our bread, my mother butter and cheese.

Even as recently as the 1950s River Common was extremely isolated. A tiny scattering of cottages spread along a no-through lane. If you haven't visited River Common, which is just north of Upperton, then please do.

I am sure many of you will have heard of the passing of Mike Hubbard shortly before Christmas. For some years he was well-known as the Petworth Society town crier, however Mike was best known as 'the singing postman' and a great raconteur. A devoted cricket fan and staunch Liberal he would use any opportunity to regale you on either of those subjects. Throw in tales of his grandfather 'Winkle' Ayling the Lickfold 'Bun King' and Mike would be in his element. A near neighbour, in recent years Mike would occasionally walk round to visit and having exhausted his not inconsiderable repertoire of tales he would, on leaving, bid farewell at the doorstep with a rendition of 'Danny Boy'. A character in every sense of the word, he will be missed.



Each year the Society sponsors a schools colouring competition in which primary school children are invited to colour an A4-size pre-drawn poster to publicise Petworth Fair (even in those years, as now, when the Fair cannot take place).

The entrants are invited to use any medium of their choice and this is one of the winning posters in the 2021 competition. Many of the children approached the task with ingenuity and enthusiasm, some applying sequins and other inventive decorations. In judging the competition we were impressed with the results and the winners rightly deserved their prizes of book tokens.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A jockey's suicide and other matters.

Dear Miles,

The person who is recorded in the Estate Yard graffiti (*PSM* 180) as having shot himself but whose name has been largely obliterated is the jockey Fred Archer. It occurred to me that if there was no recollection of anyone having shot himself locally then it could be that it was a national figure, and in my copy of *Chronicle of Britain* I looked up the date and found it was Archer. He lived in Newmarket and it doesn't seem as though he rode a great deal at Goodwood or had any conspicuous successes there, but he was a well-known and enormously popular jockey of those days with a profile corresponding to someone like Frankie Dettori today, so his suicide was a national news item. He had been ill with typhoid, and the constant struggle to keep his weight down also probably made him depressed. (He was 5 feet 10 inches which is tall for a jockey, and racing weights were lower in those days). He was also a compulsive gambler – jockeys were allowed to bet in those days – and that no doubt added to his problems.

I notice that some of the other graffiti were about horse-racing so his death would have been of particular interest to the people who wrote it.

Andrew Brooke, Pulborough.

Dear Miles

I thought that you may be interested in a few brief notes about my time as a member of the Petworth Youth Club during the late 1940s and early 50s. The club was held in the Hampers Green hall on Wednesday evenings from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. John Simmons and George Young were the two very able senior members who ran the club and they certainly didn't stand for any nonsense. How the two of them managed to find the time for the youth club I do not know as John was the cinema projectionist at the Regal Cinema in the town while George was always busy cycling to and fro from Burton to Ebernoe where he helped a man who had the commission to carve a figurehead and outside panels for the Cutty Sark at Greenwich. George was very clever and was always looking for hard mature wood to carve into electric light wall brackets. Another hobby was as a portrait artist and his pictures were often displayed locally. It seemed to me that George and John were always under a lot of pressure from the local council to make the club pay and help with the expenses. One year it was decided to put on a show at the Iron Room in the Square. Sadly I don't think that a lot of money was raised.

Dancing was always popular at the

youth club and we would usually have an hour of it during each session, the music provided by a record player. Old records with a good beat would be played and the boys would ask a girl for a dance and then escort them back to their seat when the dance was over.

The club had a number of coach outings and one must have been in 1949 when we visited the Bognor Youth Club. We also went to Littlehampton – or was it Worthing – to take part in a six-a-side football tournament where we drew Worthing High School A team. We didn't know that corners as well as goals counted as points and we lost by a single point. Meanwhile the girls took part in a stoolball competition at the same place though I don't recall the result.

One of our favourite autumn activities was making torches out of sticks and hessian for the Bonfire Night procession at Hampers Green. Gordon Gwillim from the mill at Coultershaw was always involved in this and used his lorry as a float on the day.

Brian Verrall, Sutton.

As this magazine was going to press we were saddened to learn of the death of Brian Verrall who had long been a supporter of the Society and a good friend. (Miles).

Dear Miles,
Whilst I fully support the proposition that the denuded tower of St Mary's is in need of a suitable capping, to do so by recreating the previous rather unedifying structure would to my mind be both a costly mistake and a missed opportunity.

The position of the new capping is sufficiently divorced from the historic centre of the town to stand alone and thus lend itself to a wide range of options.

Might I suggest a competition, open to young newly qualified architects or indeed architectural students to produce an innovative contemporary design? Potential features might include subtle solar panels which could double as a surface onto which computer generated imagery could be projected when appropriate. For example in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Sunday, The Petworth Festivals and Christmas Events.

Surely this is Petworth's chance to prove itself a vibrant modern community, not afraid to create something truly exciting rather than taking the safe dull option.

Roger Hanauer, Byworth.

Bearing in mind that the proposal to replace St. Mary's church spire is very much in its infancy this magazine welcomes any rationally held views on the subject. (Ed).

Dear Miles,
Your incisive review of Shaun Bythell's *Diary of a Bookseller* (PSM 185) was such that I was inspired to read it. And having read it I was tempted to go to Wigtown to see Mr Bythell's bookshop for myself – if only to meet the extraordinary Nicky who seems to be able to be deliciously attractive and staggeringly unappealing at one and the same time.

I take issue, however, with your claim that it is quite possible to buy a book and

receive it the very next day for less than the price of a decent cup of coffee. Well, yes, of course it is but it's neither always the case nor is it necessarily desirable. I recently ordered an expensive book from the Petworth Bookshop which cost me the publisher's price of £50 and would be ready for collection the following morning. Amazon's price was £48 but to have it the following day they wanted an extra six pounds. But apart from pricing it is surely preferable to support a local

business rather than a multi-national with dubious and exploitative employment practices and which, according to a recent *Times Literary Supplement* has a '... loss-making subsidiary in Luxembourg which enables them not only to avoid paying tax on income but also to receive enormous tax reliefs that can be used in the future to ensure that little or no tax continues to be paid.' I don't understand it but I think it's called a no-brainer. Jonathan Newdick, Petworth.

Sir Edward Elgar – a recollection

'P.C.', edited from *The Petworth Society Bulletin* No. 32

The other evening the radio related the story of Sir Edward Elgar. Immediately I was back in 1920, walking with my mother up the long, dusty road which leads from the river at Fittleworth up to the church. A long, slow pull. It was a boiling hot afternoon and my cotton sunbonnet stuck to my head.

As we passed the church gate and turned left to climb an even steeper hill, we passed the house of a family friend. It lay back in its beautiful garden, windows open wide. The woods behind the house towered up the hill, sheltering it from strong winds.

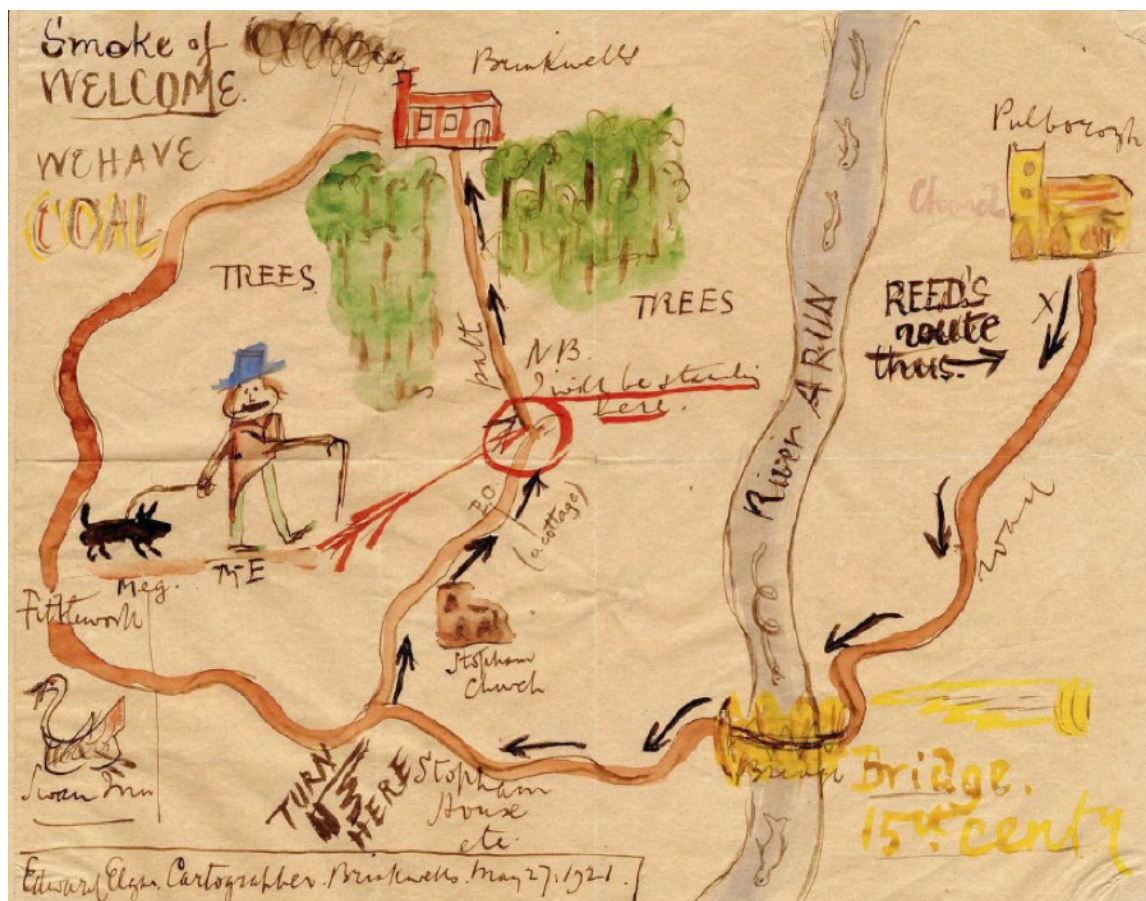
With her finger to her lips my mother stopped, motioning me to keep quiet. As we stood in the road the notes of a piano came clearly out from the open windows. Not in any way like the tinkling my sister and I managed to perform. No, this was masterly, a lovely melody with occasionally some crashing chords. I opened my mouth to question but was again hushed.

From tea-time visits I remembered the grand piano, but now I could see a strange lady in the garden. 'Where are Mr. and Mrs. Balcombe?' I whispered as we walked on. 'They are at their seaside cottage for six weeks,' was the reply. Lucky things! What wouldn't I have given for a bathe in this heat. 'Then who?' I queried, 'That was Mr. Elgar playing,' said my mother, 'He is a famous composer and he and Mrs. Elgar have rented the house while the owners are away.' I thought about this while the faint strains of music followed us up the hill. As a child of eight I was not very impressed, although I sensed that my mother felt it had been a wonderful experience to have heard him playing.

That August I sometimes saw Mr. Elgar out walking through the village alone. He was very tall with a droopy moustache, and carried a long, staff-like stick. He used to go striding over the two bridges by the mill, speaking to no one as he passed. The following year he took a cottage at Bedham and rarely came down into Fittleworth. To a child he seemed a lonely, sad, stern man; and although I watched him pass I was in awe of him.

History relates today that he was indeed an unhappy man, but when I think about it I am glad that once I saw him and heard him play.

BELOW Composer as cartographer. This map was drawn in 1921 by Edward Elgar and comes from the collection of the Royal College of Music. While it has been published elsewhere it is worth reproducing here for its local interest. The map provided directions from Pulborough to Elgar's home at Bedham for his close friend W. H. Reed.



River Common walk

Gerald Gresham Cooke, Tillington Footpath Warden

This lovely walk gives great views of the peaceful countryside, far from the madding crowds, with long views of Blackdown, the tallest hill in Sussex at 918 feet. The hill straddles the counties of Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey.

Leaving Petworth by car westwards on the A272, take the first turning right up the hill at Tillington. Keep going through the next village (Upperton) and with the Park wall on your right, go down the hill. After half a mile, turn left at the River Common sign – No Through Road. After about three quarters of a mile (GU28 9BH), the road forks left on to a private road (which will form the end of this circular walk) and right on to a farm track. Park somewhere here but avoiding the entrances to Treve Cottage, Rock Cottage and the entrance the field.

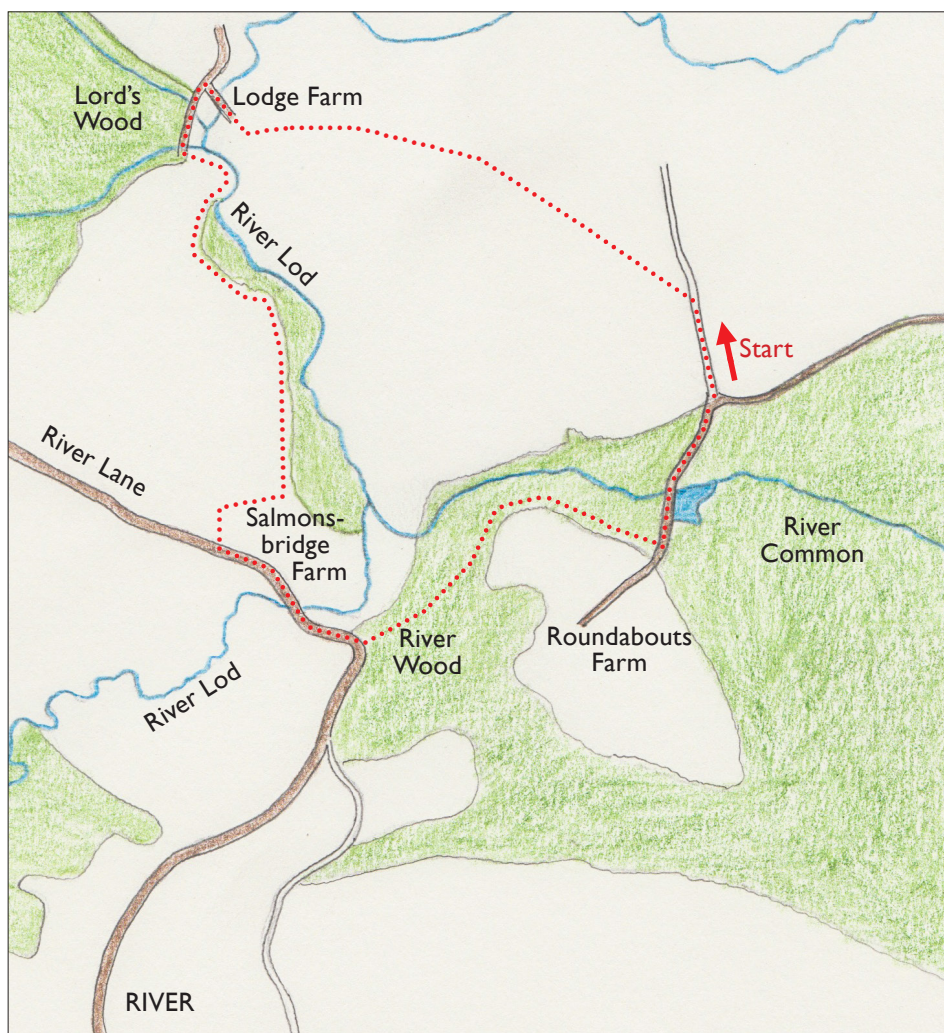
Walk north along the farm track, which is very wet in places after rain and requires wellingtons, as do other sections of the walk. After 200 yards, under a fine oak tree on the left is a new kissing gate and a footpath sign. Take this path and head west across the pasture with the hedge on your left and pylons on the right. When the hedge veers off to the left continue straight towards a gate-wide exit of the field. The possible cattle in the field are docile, but take care if you have dogs with you. Here you see the distant view of Blackdown on your right, and Bexley Hill with its mast for radio and television transmissions ahead of you. Continue into the next field and head towards a group of old barns (Lodge Farm) – now an award-winning conversion into offices.

Walk to the left of Lodge Farm and through a kissing gate (with a rather strong spring), after which turn left down the tarmac drive. This leads to an ancient drovers bridge crossing the River Lod (hence Lodsworth, whose Parish we are now in). The river joins the River Rother at Selham Bridge, about two miles further downstream. After the bridge, turn left on to a tarmac road, continuing until the right hand bend where we go straight ahead into the field.

Enter the field, and turn left following the unploughed grass half way round the field, keeping river and wood on your left. Enjoy the wide open aspect of the field and sky. Continue into the next field through a gap in the hedge (do not turn right), and continue alongside the field. At the corner, turn right and then after 100 yards, turn left through a little copse towards the road. Can be muddy under foot here.

On the road (River Lane), turn left passing the attractive Salmons Bridge Farmhouse on the left, and cross Salmons Bridge – another ancient bridge. Keep on the road, and after 80 yards leave the road to walk straight ahead into River

Wood. Follow the (rather indistinct) path through the ancient woodland until the waymarker sign, after which bear right up the gentle hill. Continue past two waymarkers and a finger post and continue up the slight hill until the next finger post, then turn sharp left skirting the back of a farmhouse (Roundabouts Farm). The path leads out into an open field (below power lines). Turn right towards the house to join their drive and then left down the drive (surrounded by nothing except fields and woods) and on to the very quiet tarmac road. Continue down and up the slope, passing an ancient overgrown pond on the right and after 300 yards return to the hamlet of River Common where your car will be.





Late sunshine filtering through winter trees at Salmonsbridge at about two thirds of the way around the River Common walk.

The first Chief Constable of West Sussex 1857-79

Alan Moore

On the 5th of March 1857 the adjourned West Sussex Quarter Sessions held in the Town Hall at Petworth were opened in order that the county magistrates could select a Chief Constable for the western half of the county of Sussex. The ninety-six applicants had been reduced by elimination to a shortlist of just three who were Captain F. B. Montgomerie, Captain Berwick and Colonel Dalzel. Having considered the candidates, the magistrates then voted with Captain Montgomerie scoring 39 votes while the others received three and nine votes respectively. The magistrates then agreed unanimously to elect Captain Montgomerie as Chief Constable subject to confirmation by the Home Secretary. It was proposed that the Chief Constable's salary would be £300 per annum with an additional £100 for the rent of a house and £10 towards an office.

Montgomerie had previously served as a Captain in the 99th (Lanarkshire) Regiment in India and was now a half-pay army man. He had also been an officer in the New South Wales police, and it was this experience which greatly influenced the decision of the magistrates. A married man, Montgomerie and his wife rented a house in Upper Street, Fittleworth where the police headquarters were located. Sadly Ellen Mary died suddenly in July 1866 and her grave can be found in front of the south window of the Chancel of St. Mary's Church at Fittleworth. Montgomerie remarried in 1870 and with his new wife Mary Adelaide had six children and continued to live at Fittleworth in some comfort with parlour-maids and house-maids, a coachman and a groom.

Captain Montgomerie commanded the West Sussex Constabulary for 22 years until his untimely death at the age of 56 on October the 12th 1879 while visiting nearby Blackdown House. During his service he had been responsible for the setting up of the police force for the western half of the county and the recruiting and training of officers and constables. He was a strict disciplinarian and was quick to dismiss those that did not meet the standard required. He was respected by those that served under his command which was demonstrated on his death when a stained glass window was purchased for Fittleworth church by members of West Sussex Constabulary as a memorial to their Chief Constable. The subject of the window depicted the soldier Cornelius at prayer with an angel above, chosen by the Reverend A. P. Simpson, the Fittleworth Rector. The bottom panel of the window is inscribed 'In grateful remembrance of the late Captain F. Montgomerie Chief Constable of Western Sussex from 1857 to 1879. this window is erected by

the members of the Force who served under him'. [The capitalisation is true to the inscription but why 'grateful' is mysteriously spelled 'gratefut' is a mystery]. The window is located on the south side of the Sanctuary and can still be seen to this day. The funeral took place on Saturday the 21st of October when Montgomerie's coffin, which was made from polished oak with brass fittings, was carried into St Mary's Church, Fittleworth, by four police sergeants and four constables, with superintendents acting as pall bearers on each side. The funeral service was led by the Reverend Charles Holland, Rector of Petworth.

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared in the *Fittleworth & Stopham Magazine*.

BELOW A detail of the lower part of the stained glass window in the Sanctuary at St Mary's Church.



The Shy Ones

Judy Ray

It has been some time since we last saw one of Judy Ray's poems in the Magazine. Born at Great Allfields Farm at Balls Cross on the very edge of Ebernoe Common, Judy now lives in America where in 2005 she published *Sleeping in the Larder* a book of poems mostly about her life growing up at Great Allfields. One poem titled 'The Shy Ones' is about two women from opposite ends of the social scale but who both figured large at Ebernoe during her childhood. Miss Burse was the Ebernoe School cook while Miss Heath was the daughter of Admiral Heath, the owner of Ebernoe House. (Ed.)

The Shy Ones

Miss Burse

At the Big House Christmas Tree parties
she helped out in the kitchen, watched
children from the doorway, wiping
her hands on the pinafore apron,
short hair hanging like a pinned curtain
around her thin face. At school we saw her
with an apron, too, cooking our dinners –
sometimes meat rissoles or milk pudding
I would stare at for an hour, then take back
With abject apology that met her own
concern. She seemed to think herself
no more than a shadow to others.
We would see her gaunt figure hurrying
along the meandering Common paths
where she walked miles with a basket
from one kitchen to another and to her own cottage
far from the road. Shy of meeting, she scurried
on alone as if turning the corner
into the small pages of a children's story book.

Miss Heath

Even when she sat or kneeled
In the left-side pew near the front
of the country church, her straight back
was tall and familiar in suit jacket
or long-waisted summer dress.
Standing, she was six feet two.
She carried herself with a strong stride,
though it was her father who had been
an Admiral, her mother a Lady.
Charity chores took her to the city,
and she took on community roles
as church warden, and as host to the village
for a garden fete and to schoolchildren
for Christmas Tree Parties. And yet
I recall the fearful doubt in her eyes.
Despite the family name, her bearing,
and everyone's deferential politeness,
I believe she was one of the shyest.

Judy Ray graduated from the University of Southampton with a B.A.(Honours) in English. She lived in Uganda for almost six years in the 1960s, working as a secretary at Makerere University and then for *Transition* magazine.

In the United States, she made her home with her poet husband, David Ray, in Kansas City, Missouri, where she was associate editor of *New Letters* magazine, a producer of the radio programme 'New Letters on the Air,' and the first executive director of The Writers Place. She has also spent time in India, New Zealand and Australia.

Judy Ray has presented readings at many places including the Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival, Arizona State Poetry Society, Knox College (Illinois), Vitalist Theatre (Chicago), Kansas City Public Library. A recording of her poems is held in the Woodberry Poetry Room at Harvard University.

A tiny red squirrel

Anne or Bunty Kerr (?)

Among a small collection of Girl Guide logs is a slim cloth-covered exercise book. Rather battered and clearly well-thumbed, the little volume contains just a few handwritten pages interposed with nature pictures cut from a magazine and glued in among the text. I would guess that the notes may form part of a test from which the writer may gain a Guides badge. Set out as a daily log it covers the period from Saturday April the 13th to Wednesday the 17th and Wednesday the 24th to Sunday April the 30th, 1929. The gap in the middle of the period is not explained in the text and there do not appear to be any pages missing.

The writer I believe may be either Anne or Bunty Kerr, the daughters of Dr and Mrs Kerr of Culvercroft in Pound Street; both were Girl Guides during this period. (Ed.)

Saturday April the 13th 1929

The wind was not quite so cold this morning, but the sun did not appear all day. While I was walking in the fields I found quite a lot of cuckoo flowers or milk maids in a bank, also some lovely big primroses which were really very fine, they were growing in a damp place.

Monday April the 15th

Early this morning the sun shone brightly but the wind is still very cold. Most of the wild daffodils are over now, but the primroses are still lovely, also the wood anemones. While I was passing the church today I saw a rook ¹ carrying a twig into some nook in the spire.

Tuesday April the 16th

The sun did not come out this morning and it was very cold and dull. Later in the day the sun came out and while I was in Cowdray Park this morning I heard the cuckoo for the first time. He did not seem very sure of his voice, and kept 'cuckooing' in spurts, then stopping, and then going on again; he seemed to be trying to call people's attention to his first appearance in England after the winter.

Wednesday April the 17th

Today it was lovely all day really quite hot. All larch trees are becoming a most lovely bright green now, with their new foliage; and make their other cousins the fir

trees etc. look very dull in their evergreen 'dresses'. The wood pigeons are making a tremendous noise just now, especially in the pine trees in the Gog woods.

Wednesday April the 24th

Today my sister and I cycled around by Fittleworth, back to the Well Diggers, up Kings Pit² Lane, and back to the Horsham Road. It was a lovely day but there was a cold north wind. Near Frog Hole Pond we found some wild strawberry in flower, and also some stitchwort. In all the copses, daffs, primroses, bluebells, violets and wood anemones made a lovely carpet. As we pushed our bikes up Kings Pit Lane we saw some tiny creature run out of the wood on to the road, and sit for a moment looking about him, was it a rat? No, a tiny red squirrel! We stood quietly to watch him, and longed for a camera. He came running leisurely down the road towards us, stopping sometimes to inspect a deceptive stone, which resembled a nut. He did not seem to see us, and we held our breath as he almost ran over my sister's foot. He then picked up a piece of downy fluff, (perhaps from bird's nest), shook it vigorously, dropped it, and then ran daintily up the bank and into the wood. I clapped my hands to see if he would run up a tree, but he had disappeared completely.

In a field along the Horsham Road I saw a pair of pied wagtails. Then our nature study rather collapsed as I got a puncture and had to walk home! When at home we saw a tremendous blaze over Graffham, and concluded there was another common fire raging.

Thursday April the 25th

As I stood watching the birds in the garden this morning I noticed a single little blue-tit hopping about among the crumbs we had thrown out, enjoying a lone feast. Then two little sparrows came to join him in a friendly manner and he simply turned his back on them and flew into a tree nearby. Finding that he had the whole tree to himself he perched on the highest branch, sharpened his beak, and then commenced to sing in short, sharp, trills, whether from the joy of the spring morning or the fullness of vanity I should not like to say. But it seemed to me that his song was a challenge to any that dared enter his kingdom. I hurried from him to watch three plump partridges as they sedately walked round our garden fence and into the field again. Later in the day I saw some starlings busy with straw, apparently engaged in repairing their nest in our chimney pot.

Friday April the 26th

This morning it looked rather like rain. While I was out for a walk I found the three different flowering nettles, red, yellow, and white, all growing quite close to each other on one bank, and also lots of cow-parsley, and hog-weed.

As I walked along by the side of a hedge a blackbird flew off and I thought I had



'... was it a rat? No, a tiny red squirrel!' A photograph from www.commons.wikimedia.org.

found his nest, but it was a false alarm. As I passed another hedge I noticed another blackbird cock, who was ‘freezing’ hoping that I might not notice him, I did not hunt for his nest as he looked so worried, but waited quietly till he flew off, still thinking himself unseen.

Saturday April the 27th

This morning early it was very dull and we had two sharp showers; but later on it cleared up and the sun shone brightly. I saw quite a lot of sheep and lambs in the afternoon. We had a picnic and while we were having tea a cheeky wee blue-tit hopped quite close to us to see if we had anything for him, so we threw him a few crumbs. Then he flew back into a hedge and fetched his wife, but she was very shy and only perched on the railings and would not even let her husband fetch the spoil until we had moved away.

Sunday April the 28th

This morning was lovely and sunny and really quite warm. While I was out I saw some baby pigs and quite a lot of young chicks. In the latter part of the afternoon the sky clouded over and it began to drizzle slightly but it did not last long.

Monday April the 29th

First thing this morning it was dull and then it began to rain, which it continued to do off and on all day. While I was out I saw a great many sheep and lambs, and I noticed that the lambs were almost as big as their mothers, and not at all inclined to gambol and frolic. I found a great many cowslips on the downs today, but as it was raining hard I am afraid that I did not hunt around for animals very much, although I saw several rabbits and a great many cock pheasants.

Tuesday April the 30th

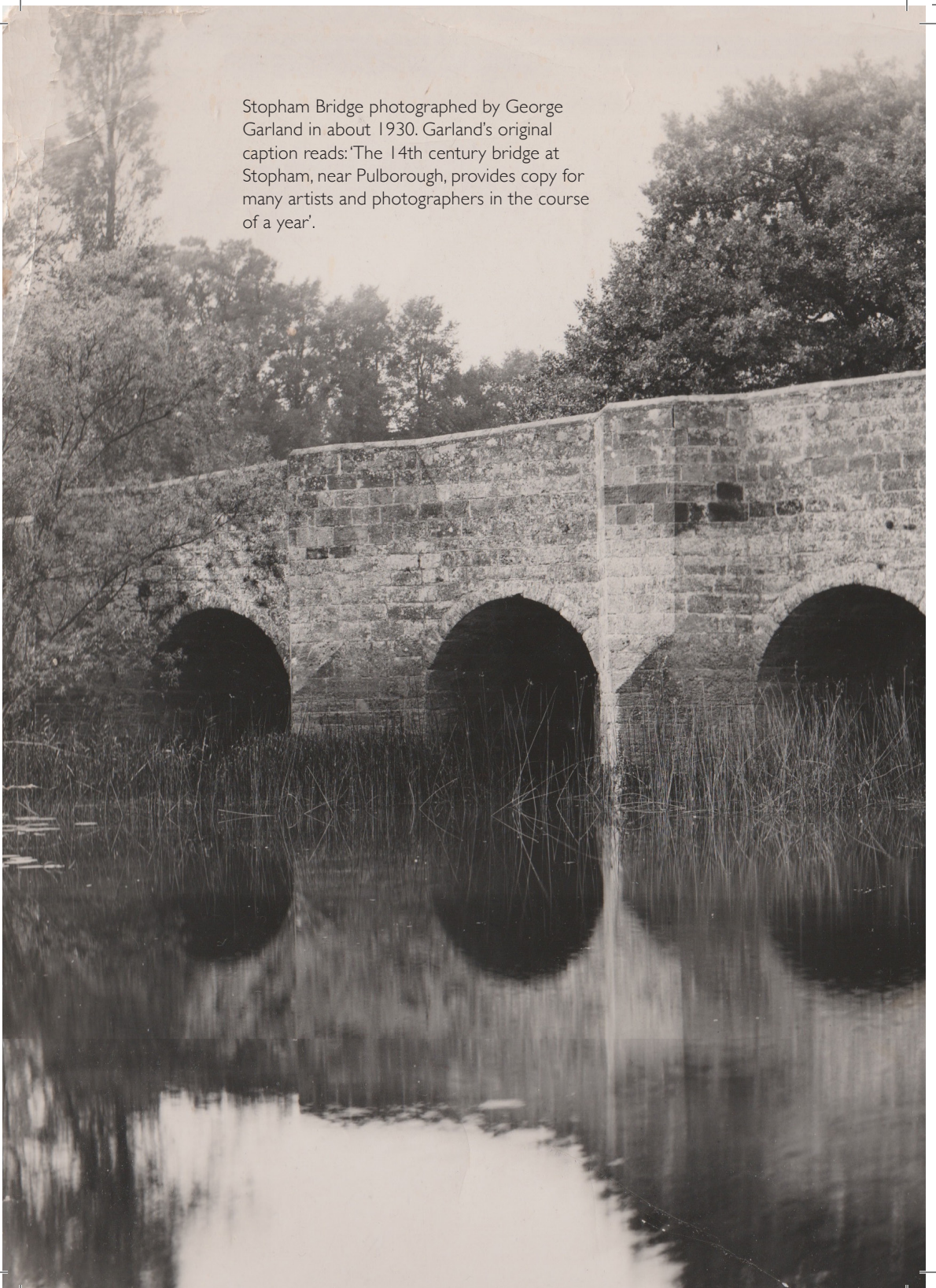
It was very cold and windy (north-east). While I was out in the morning I spent about twenty minutes in talking to some mares and their foals, they were such sweet little things, most terribly inquisitive. They would come towards me, then snort and run to their mothers to ask what the peculiar object was.

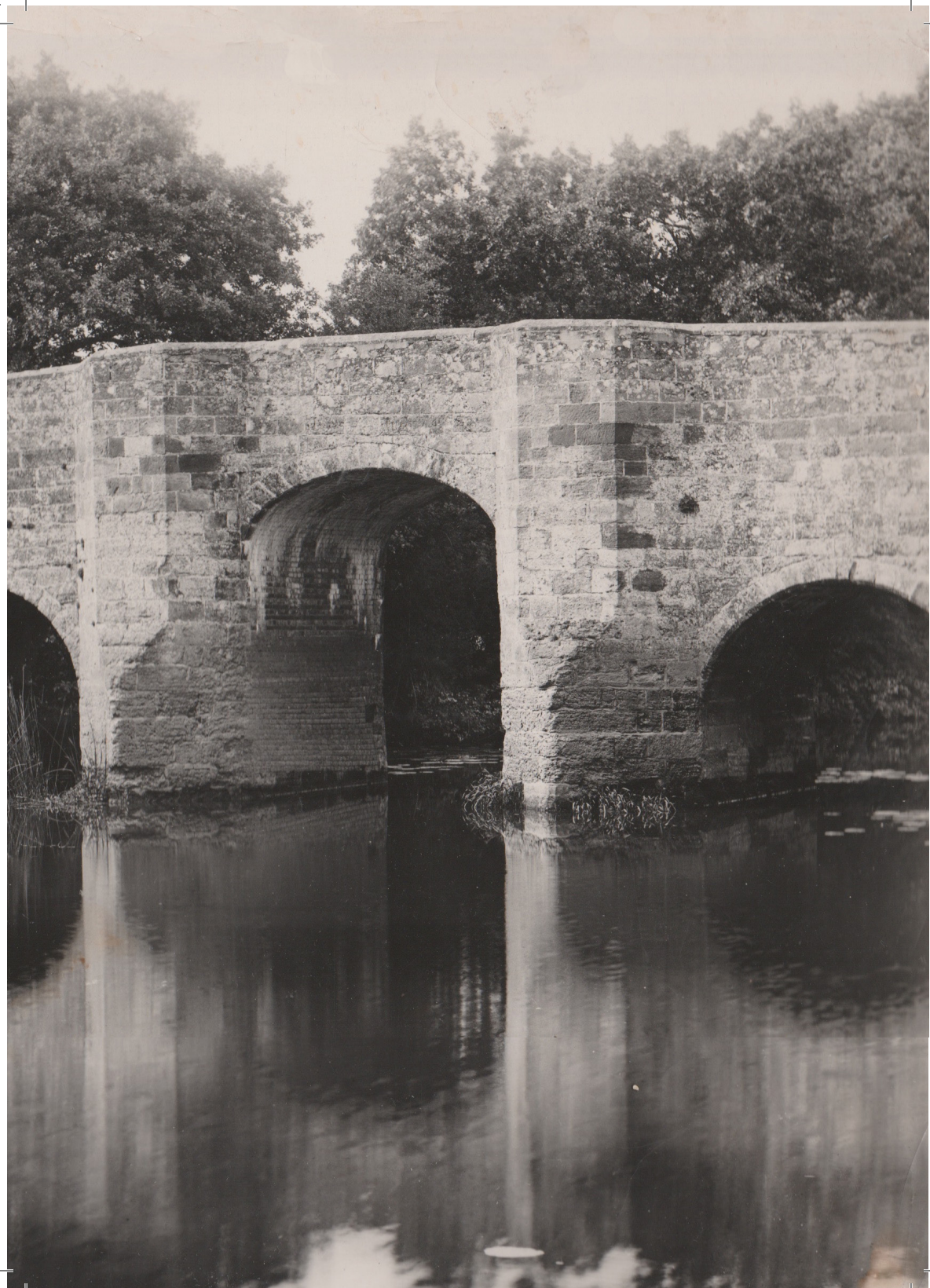
In the afternoon I went for a walk. While passing a field I saw two magpies strutting about, and I discovered something new (to me anyway), that magpies both hop and waddle.

1. According to H. F. Witherby's *Handbook of British Birds*, which was published ten years after these diary entries, the rook builds its nest '... quite exceptionally on buildings such as church spires and chimneys'. Without wishing to question the diarist's otherwise exemplary observations, this bird was more likely to have been a jackdaw.

2. These unusual spellings of Well Diggers and Kings Pit are true to the original.

Stopham Bridge photographed by George Garland in about 1930. Garland's original caption reads: 'The 14th century bridge at Stopham, near Pulborough, provides copy for many artists and photographers in the course of a year'.





John Osborne Greenfield and the ‘Tales’¹

Peter Jerrome

In 1976 The Window Press published John Osborne Greenfield’s *Tales of Old Petworth*. The original, clearly a printer’s proof of some kind, appeared to be a unique copy and was, perhaps, the prize item in George Garland, the photographer’s, somewhat eclectic collection of items relating to an older Petworth. He would sometimes recall how he had chanced upon the Tales being used as a beer mat at the Angel Inn, and fearing for its future, ‘borrowed’ it. As to the date of the discovery, sometime in the early 1950s seems possible. George Garland thought the document’s sojourn at the Angel had been as short as he estimated its prospective lifespan as a beer mat might have been. He believed its previous resting place had been a local solicitor’s office. The appearance at the Angel was readily explained: it was its natural home. The writer, one John Osborne Greenfield, had been the publican there from the mid-1820s, prospering sufficiently to retire from active involvement and employ a manager. Greenfield would live in comfortable retirement nearby. George Garland always looked to make the Tales generally available, but had never done so. Now ailing, he was happy for The Window Press, newly established for this very purpose, to proceed.

It would be another sixteen years before Janet Austin, researching another matter on behalf of the Ifold Local History Group, came across what appeared to be the original published version of the Tales in the files of the Horsham based *West Sussex Times and Sussex Standard*. The Tales had appeared in the newspaper in 1891 and 1892 as weekly instalments. A comparison of the two versions immediately made clear that the text used in 1976 was incomplete. A significant portion of the original proof had been lost from George Garland’s copy; probably, given the minute typeface, a single four-page spread. There was no indication that the loss had been anything but fortuitous.

It was obvious in 1976 that the Tales were composite: Greenfield’s original recollections, committed to writing perhaps in the 1860s, being prepared for publication and supplemented some thirty years later by an unknown hand. The latter writes ‘Many of them [the Tales] having been noted down by a former owner of my house John Osborne Greenfield...’

John Osborne Greenfield was the grandson of John Greenfield, a Byworth wheelwright, whose son, also John, had married the daughter of John Osborn or Orsborn, of the Angel and taken over as mine host in the early years of the nine-

teenth century. John Osborn would succeed on his father's death in 1825. It appears from the Tales that Greenfield had been brought up by his maternal grandmother and her second husband Mr John Wild, sometime quitrent collector for several local manors. The arrangement seems to have been a happy one and it may simply have been felt that for the infant John to have been exposed to the rough and tumble of inn life was inadvisable.

If then on the very edge of town, the Angel was a significant presence. The inquest hearing concerning the mental condition of Gracchus Peachey, lord of the manor of Ebernoe, had been held there in 1812.² By 1825 the prestigious Old Blue Friendly Society had transferred to the Angel, to be followed in due course by the rapidly expanding Oddfellows. Known in reference to its late eighteenth century founding as the 'Old Blue' the former could also be known familiarly as the 'Angel' Blue – blue being the colour of the sashes and rosettes worn on the annual 'Club' day and church parade.³ In 1804, the Angel had played unwitting host to horse thieves, good reason perhaps for a young John later to be kept a little apart from the inn.

It is a curious feature of the Tales that despite what must have been his intimate experience of life at the Angel, Greenfield ignores the bustling life of the inn almost completely, including only a passing reference to a famous skimmington⁴ which from the station of the male delinquent was near to bringing the actors in it before the bench. He recalled those involved having dressed at the Angel from whence the procession started. A good fifty years on, Greenfield remains cautious about names, mentioning only Nan Nevatt and her much tried husband, a footman at Petworth House, but sparing 'Mr W' a proportioned man of fifty with a wife and family. A contemporary source⁵ identifies 'Mr W' and dates the incident to 1810. Greenfield is at his happiest perhaps with such boyhood reminiscence.

Unique as they may be, Greenfield's recollections survive only through the attention of his editor or annotator. Even without considering his likely identity, it is possible to form some idea of his method of working: obviously he has a written document or notes lying before him. We are not dealing with an oral tradition. There are extensive sections where it is reasonable to suppose that his hand is absent entirely and others where the authorship must be uncertain. Passages like that on the Charlton Hunt seem to have an antiquarian interest that may or may not consort with Greenfield's sharp early nineteenth-century Petworth focus. Judgement here simply becomes subjective.

Occasionally it is clear that an original Greenfield piece has been glossed with later reference and clarifications. So, in an account of the first Petworth Bank, Dr MacDermott, a figure from the late 1880s and early 1890s, makes an appearance, while a reference to Berry's Academy may well reflect the annotator's schooldays rather than Greenfield's. There can, however, be no doubt that the famous account of dinner at Mr Garland the tailor's, on the west side of the Market Square in

OPPOSITE 'The haunted lane'. The front cover of the second edition of *Tales of Old Petworth*. The photograph, which is of the southern end of Hungers Lane, is by Walter Kevis, c. 1900.

quintessential Greenfield, even taking into account that the detailed description of the guests suggests mature reflection rather than the reaction of a boy of ten.

A summary can be no substitute for a reading of the *Tales*. We read of the Garland dinner, the ladies sipping caraway water, the gentlemen at their gin, the coach rivalry between Eade and Robinson, rough music and strolling players. There is the election of 1820, the haunted lane, the eccentric clergyman Mr Ferryman, or Farmer Boxall's ill-considered confrontation with the witch.

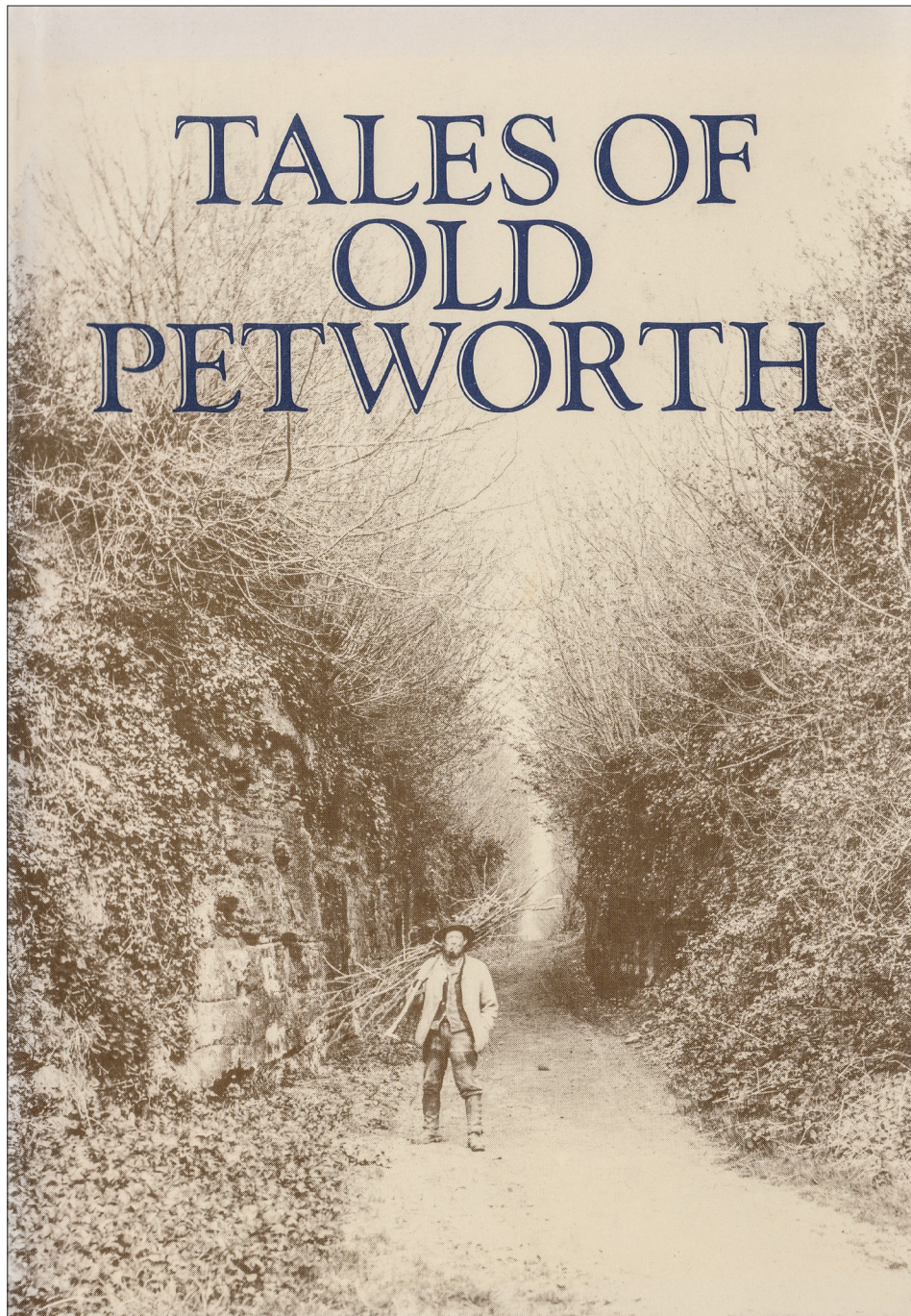
Census records make it certain that the anonymous editor is Benjamin Arnold who would take over Greenfield's old house in Angel Street. He had a printers and stationers in Middle Street that would survive well into the twentieth century, and, in different hands, as a stationers, for some years after. Presumably self-taught, and starting in business as a bootmaker, Arnold was, to judge from other newspaper pieces of his, a man of considerable, if, on occasion, somewhat pedantic learning.

The extent to which Greenfield's reminiscences mirror the Petworth in which he had grown up must be governed by the simple acknowledgement that he had no such ambition. Greenfield's Petworth would know crushing poverty, cramped conditions, wasted talent, and for some, disease and death at every corner, but, as mine host at the Angel, and, as will appear, making in 1839 an advantageous marriage, Greenfield would be a step and more above that. Petworth's fearsome House of Correction was a stern reminder of the contemporary attitudes but it finds no mention in the *Tales*. Master Greenfield makes no direct allusion to religion and indications of social unrest have to be teased out of the narrative.

If the Angel Inn was not perhaps part of the official Petworth 'establishment', it was certainly prepared to line up with the great house in the 'war of the stage-coaches'. Here Petworth divided along partisan lines – House and Rectory against the townfolk: 'Robinson's way out of Petworth was past the Angel and there the chiefs of his party would assemble together to treat him to brandy and water, sherry or anything he liked.' With such backing Robinson soon disposed of his rival Eade. It could be a scene from *The Pickwick Papers*.

Greenfield is reticent about the troubled Petworth of the 1830s. He makes no mention of Captain Swing or of Petworth Fair but he does mention the parading of effigies of men who have given offence – surprisingly perhaps the rector Thomas Sockett, but more predictably the Earl of Egremont's land agent William Tyler and his man Goatcher. For years Tyler had been the object of damaging sexual

TALES OF OLD PETWORTH



innuendo. The effigies were carried about at Egdean fair, and no doubt, elsewhere, to the accompaniment of obscene songs about Tyler. The same songs were bawled out in local taverns to such an extent that no respectable woman could venture into the street.

A curious and unexplained feature of the Tales is an extract with reminiscences of life in Scotland and the border country. Nothing otherwise suggests that either Greenfield or Arnold had ever occasion to leave the town, although one or other had clearly lived for a time as a boy in a neighbouring village.

Recollection of the third Earl of Egremont who died in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession, seems suffused with the roeate glow of happy and, one might almost say, intimate memory. Unquestionably, this must reflect Greenfield himself rather than the much younger Benjamin Arnold. Further, while the Petworth celebrations for the election of 1820 or the Earl's birthday celebrations a decade and more later were very public events, there seems a familiarity with the great house that is perhaps unexpected. At the very least the writer is unusually well-informed. He has an insider's knowledge of the great balls at Christmas time and seems privy at first or second hand to conversations between the Earl and his grandchildren.

This awareness of events at the great house may be explained by Greenfield's marriage in 1839 to Garland Halliday Sharp, his senior by a decade and in latter days, the Earl's inseparable servant and companion. Lady's maid in succession to two daughters of the Earl, Garland Sharp could look back on some thirty years' service to the family, of late years exclusively with his lordship. Testifying in court she recalled,⁶ 'I never left his room: everything was brought to me that I wanted and I never left it night or day.' Towards the end his lordship would suffer no one but Garland to be with him. Congruent with his lordship's somewhat random generosity Garland was not paid a regular wage but had money deposited at irregular intervals into a London account in her name. The huge sum of £10,000 is mentioned, and significantly, was in no way challenged by the family, rather supplemented in 1838 by a valuable engraved plaque commemorating her hers in service. Some idea of Garland's ubiquity is given by a story⁷ related years later by Madame de Gilibert, one of the Earl's grandchildren. She tells how, cheese being forbidden the children, his lordship would secrete a fine Stilton in a drawer in his room. All were partaking of this when Garland rapped for admission. Cheese and children disappeared under the table and his lordship

resumed a reading posture. Garland retired and cheese and children resurfaced. It is a story that might have come from the Tales themselves.

The lost Tales as recovered in the 1990s are notable for a cluster of material concerning ‘Butter’ Ede, an old woman popularly credited with sinister powers, and reflecting the memories of Greenfield’s mother-in-law Mrs Sharp.⁸ She recalls, among other things, how in her day the children would deter the old woman from making her way into the town through their playground, the churchyard, by lacing two sticks, two pieces of straw or even two pins, in the form of a cross to deter her from coming through and compel her to take an alternative route. Mrs Sharp also deflates the notion that a horse’s heart can ward off the old woman’s wiles, while her account of the alleged witch’s funeral seems more than a little tongue in cheek. Clearly she had direct experience of late eighteenth-century Petworth. The following story introduced by Benjamin Arnold is Greenfield’s own but reflects his characterful mother-in-law.

In the room in which Mr Greenfield was, and I am at this present time, scribbling away, Mrs Sharp, his wife’s mother, lived and slept for the last ten years of her life – she died in it, too, in her 95th year. She told us, says Mr Greenfield, of a strange occurrence which happened to her some five or six years before her death. She said one night, her daughter Garland had, as was her constant custom, been into her room and lighted her rush candle, for the old lady burnt a candle all night, winter and summer, then bidden her goodnight, and gone to her room. ‘Well’, she said, ‘the rush-light seemed to burn very dimly, and I feared it was going out, so I raised myself up in bed to look more closely at it, when I thought I saw the curtain at the bottom of my little French bed move gently; I did not hear the door open, so I thought, why it can’t be Garland for she had hardly left the room; I could not see the door; then again I said to myself, it must be her, what can she want? Then I called twice, “Garland, Garland” – but no one answered. The curtain was then drawn aside, and I saw my poor son George that I had not seen since he and I parted in anger nearly thirty years before. There was the same face, but older, and oh! so pale. His hair too was thinner and greyer, but I knew my poor boy again. He looked at me very kindly but so sadly. I said, “George, George, what can you want here?” for I was not in the least afraid of him. I

was awe-struck certainly, for he was dead, and I had no doubt that was the moment of his death, a quarter past ten. And then he vanished slowly away. And so it was; for, not the next morning but the morning after, came a letter from his daughter, informing me that her father had dropped down dead in the street in Piccadilly, as he was returning home at a quarter after ten on the night that he appeared to me.' As there was light in her room, Mrs sharp looked at the watch hanging at the head of the bed, and also at the timepiece on her chimney, so she could not be mistaken, neither could she have been dreaming for she had not had time to fall asleep, as Mrs Greenfield had not left the room more than a few minutes. After Mrs Greenfield had finished reading the letter to her mother, the poor old woman said, 'Ah! Garland, child, you see my boy's spirit could not leave this world before he had come to seek forgiveness from his old mother who had forgiven him years and years before, and had he laid upon a bed of sickness, no doubt he would have written, or sent a message of kindness; and sorrow for his long forgetfulness of me; for I have never forgotten, and have never ceased to love him. Oh! I am so glad I have seen him, for he looked at me so fondly as he did when he was a young lad. Poor boy, poor George! Well, it can't be many years before I go the same journey, so God's will be done'.

John Osborn Greenfield died suddenly in 1869, leaving his memoirs of the Petworth of his youth to be preserved, edited and supplemented by Benjamin Arnold.

1. John Osborne Greenfield and the 'Tales' reprinted from Peter Jerrome, *Petworth Through the Looking Glass*, Window Press, 2019.
2. Peter Jerrome, *Not all Sunshine Hear – History of Ebernoe*, Window Press, 1996, page 84.
3. *PSM* 17 (September 1979). PHA 6315/6.
4. A rustic procession mocking a nagging wife or unfaithful husband.
5. Peter Jerrome, *Petworth. From 1660 to the Present Day*, Window Press, 2006, pages 75-6.
6. For Garland Sharp's role in the Third Earl of Egremont's last years. See *Carew against Burrell, Bt. and others*, London 1841.
7. A.M.W. Stirling, *Life's Little Day*, Thornton Butterworth, 1924. (Second edition 1925). conveniently reproduced in *PSM* 146. (December 2011) page 30.
8. See *PSM* 62 (December 1990) pages 42-4.

Cribbage by candlelight

Don Simpson in conversation with Miles Costello

My grandparents William and Mary Simpson lived at Grinsteeds, a smallholding on the London Road just a couple of miles north of Petworth, where they raised eight children all of whom had left home by the time that I was born in 1929. There was Elsie the eldest followed by Gwen, Geoff, Maud, Molly my mother, Agnes, Ralph and Win, the last two being twins and Win would later become Mrs Wadsworth whose recollections have appeared previously in this magazine. Molly had been working away from home in service at Eastbourne and then Midhurst when she became pregnant and moved back to Grinsteeds where I was born. The smallholding at that time was just three acres of meadow and a large garden with two wells. The lower well was close to the house while the other was further away and up a steep slope which became rather slippery when wet and especially difficult when carrying two large pails of water. Unfortunately the upper well had the best water and so got used more often. The house was really quite small with just one living room where the cooking was done over a large fireplace, and a scullery. Upstairs there were two bedrooms, not much when you consider that William and Mary bought up eight children there. Of course there was no electricity and so candles or lamps were the only light after dark. I learnt to play cribbage by candlelight and it put me in good stead later in life as mental arithmetic would turn out to be important in my chosen career. It was Mary's twin sister Martha who gave Grinsteeds to my grandparents; she had done well for herself and bought the place for £120 in 1921, a not inconsiderable sum.

One of my earliest memories of Grinsteeds is of being sent out into the field with a stick and tin can to keep the crows and jackdaws off the young chicks. My grandparents kept several hundred chickens and it was important that the young birds were protected. I would have been about four years old then. Of course Grinsteeds was at the time a tiny enclave surrounded by Leconfield properties, to the south was Limbo Farm while to the north Scrases Hill and Osiers, and across the road was the Pheasant Copse. Maurice Balchin had Limbo Farm while his brother Toby ran a haulage business. When walking to and from school we would look out for his lorry in the hope of getting a lift. Another Balchin brother was Percy who despite being severely disabled and with both of his legs in calipers operated a taxi service. I would sometimes accompany him delivering Sunday papers around Ebernoe. Besides the taxi Percy did boot repairs in Petworth and even turned his hand to mending baseballs for the American troops who were stationed in the

Pheasant Copse for which he was paid a few pence each.

Along the roadside was the common and I clearly remember on one occasion the hunt chasing a fox along it when two followers jumped over a gate and into our field. Lord Leconfield saw this and was furious at the riders and bellowed at them never to go on to private property again. Needless to say they were sent home in disgrace. This incident scared the life out of me as I was quite young and his Lordship was a large man with a stentorian voice.

Grandfather was a very calm man. He was great with animals though sadly not much of a businessman. He had been a farmworker before moving to Grinsteads and had worked on many local farms. I believe that his family came from Graffham while my grandmother's were from Minstead in the New Forest where her father, a blacksmith, owned a forge and some other property. Grandmother was of a similar nature to Grandfather and very hard working, though I suppose that you had to be in those days just to survive.

From Grinsteads I would walk to Petworth Infants School along the London Road joining up with other children along the way until there were quite a bunch of us as we got to Petworth. Unfortunately I missed a lot of schooling as I seemed to be afflicted with so many childhood ailments and by the time that I got to the North Street Boys School I had been struck down with rheumatic fever and was off school for many months with Dr Ball coming out sometimes twice a day from Petworth to check on me.

In 1940 Mother and I moved to Chillinghurst in Stag Park. There were three cottages which had been created from the original large farmhouse. Chillinghurst is remote even now though it has long been derelict, but in those days without transport it was in a world of its own. All deliveries were left with Mr and Mrs Hunt at Hoads Common lodges and it was not uncommon to find me cycling home piled high with groceries, and on one occasion a set of sweep brushes tied across the handlebars of my bike. Of course in bad weather getting out of Chillinghurst could be tricky, after heavy rain or snow the tracks became almost impassable and even more so in the winter of 1947 when the farm road was completely blocked by drifts higher than I was, and so to get into Petworth I had to walk across the fields, where it was slightly more sheltered, carrying my bicycle across my back.

I liked living at Chillinghurst even though it was hard. My uncle Geoff Simpson lived in one of the neighbouring cottages and the Ellks family in another. Uncle Geoff was, I suppose, the last farmworker to live at Chillinghurst as it was by then run from nearby Stag Park farm where Mr Scrivens was manager. The toilet to the cottages was in the garden and of course like Grinsteads there was no electricity or water though after some time a connection was made to the water supply which fed the farmyard. Clearly the animals had been more important than the residents. As mother didn't work for the Leconfield Estate a part of the agreement in renting

a cottage at Chillinghurst was that we looked after the fifteen to twenty heifers which were overwintered in the yard, feeding, watering and cleaning them out daily. Eventually my grandparents left Grinsteeds and came to live with us and remained until they passed away. I do remember mother pushing grandfather in a wheelchair from Chillinghurst to Ebernoe to watch cricket. No mean feat as it was quite a distance and mainly over really poor farm tracks.

As time went on mother got a job at Petworth as a postwoman; she would cycle in to town each morning to start at the post office by six a.m. sorting her round before heading off at 7 o'clock to Byworth and Strood and so on. There was another postwoman Nellie Peacock who lived in North Street and did Tillington and Upperton right out to River Common. At Christmas times their bicycles would be so loaded that they would often have to push rather than ride them. After my grandparents' death mother moved to Kentfield Lodge on the London Road, this was less remote but still a good distance from Petworth.

FROM THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE

Deaths by Fire Damp, In a Well. *The Chelmsford Chronicle*, September the 8th, 1837

On Wednesday last, Benjamin Burgess, of Petworth, well-digger and his assistant John Newman, met with their death under the following melancholy circumstances: The deceased men were engaged in sinking a well at Hawkhurst, near Petworth and having got to a great depth, nearly 100 feet, they were endeavouring to find water by boring, when a escape of fire damp occurred so suddenly as to deprive them of their existence. Their companions at the mouth of the well, not hearing them at work, were alarmed, and one of the workmen (Stevens) volunteered to go down and ascertain what had happened. He had descended in the usual manner, with a rope fastened round his thigh, to a considerable distance, when those at the top found a sudden jerk of the rope, and, fearing that something had occurred to Stevens also, immediately drew it up, and found that he had let go his hold, and was hanging with his head downwards in a state of suffocation, and was not restored for a considerable time. A lighted candle was then let down the well, which ignited the gas, and caused so violent an explosion at the mouth, as to nearly knock down one of the bystanders, and to singe his eyebrows. The bodies were got out by means of grappling irons, and found quite dead.

Firedamp is flammable gas, usually methane, found in coal mines. It is typically found in areas where the coal is bituminous. The gas accumulates in pockets in the coal and adjacent strata and when they are penetrated the release can trigger explosions. In the light of current thinking on the burning of coal, if there is coal far below Hawkhurst it is without doubt better that it remains there.

A soldier's fatal accident

Steven Elliott

One member of a group of soldiers enjoying an evening in the Welldiggers at Low Heath, on the evening of the 13th of August 1942 would not have suspected that he would be fatally injured on his way back to barracks. Moreover, none of the men in the pub would have known that an event less than a week later on the 19th of August 1942 would be so disastrous. Private Wallis, and a fellow soldier, strangers to the area, left the pub in the absolute darkness of the black-out. They climbed over a fence at the edge of a field behind the pub and fell down a steep bank at 'The Hollow' and on to the lane that ran from the Low Heath to Byworth. They were both knocked unconscious and lay at the foot of the bank for much of the following day. Even worse, Private Wallis suffered an injury that proved to be fatal.

Elsewhere, on the other side of the English Channel a far greater tragedy would soon take place. Of 6,086 men, predominantly Canadian, who were landed during an amphibious attack on the coast of German-held northern France, in Operation Jubilee, 3,623 would be killed, wounded or captured. The attack, later known as the Dieppe Raid¹, was sadly remembered by the people of Petworth as so many Canadians were stationed in the area.

The local tragedy became the subject of a Coroner's Inquest and the occurrence was much discussed in the town, probably with the benefit of an eye-witness account from Bert Sopp, who was a regular in the Welldiggers. The greater tragedy of the Dieppe Raid would be mourned on a national scale and became part of the history of World War II.

The following article was transcribed from the *West Sussex Gazette*, Thursday the 27th of August 1942.²

Soldier's fatal fall near the Welldiggers Inn

It was revealed to the Deputy Coroner at Horsham, that two overseas soldiers whilst, presumably, taking a short-cut in the black-out, fell more than 20 feet down an embankment to a lane and lay injured and helpless for 14 hours before receiving assistance. One of them Pte. W. J. Wallis (40), died from a fracture of the spine nearly four days after the occurrence. Capt. K. Morris said that a military enquiry had been held. Staff Sergt. M. Binder said that at 9.30 on August 13 he saw the deceased standing in the road near the Welldiggers Inn, Petworth and Wallis said he was waiting for other fellows. In the witness's opinion, he was quite sober. Cpl. A.

Uriew said that shortly after closing time at the inn, Wallis and another soldier were in the lobby and the witness asked if they were going 'home' with the other fellows. It was not necessary for the men to leave the road to get back to camp. The deceased seemed quite sober.

Albert Victor Sopp, farm labourer, Gog Lodges, Petworth, said that at 7 a.m. on August 14, he was cycling along the lane through what is known as 'the cut', a road leading from the Welldiggers Inn, and saw two soldiers lying on either side of the lane at the foot of the high bank. He stopped and saw they were breathing heavily, but thought they were all right. He saw some bottles there and thought they had had 'a drop' and were sleeping it off. He added that he went to the farm to see some cattle and, looking back, saw only one of the men. This made him think all the more that they were 'just getting over the night before'. About 9 o'clock he went that way again and found the men still there, but then both were lying on one side of the road sleeping heavily. One was at the foot of the 20-ft high bank at the top of which was a 4ft wire netting fence bordering a field. Replying to the Coroner, the witness said 'I would have paid more attention to them if I had not seen the bottles there. I did not attempt to speak to them as I thought they were sleeping it off'.

George Arthur West, miller, Shopham, said that he came upon the men when he was cycling in the direction of the Welldiggers at 9 o'clock. He just thought they were asleep from the night before. Nothing he saw led him to think they were injured. 'I saw some blood in the lane, but did not take much notice of it'. When he returned at 12.30 the men were still there and one asked him to go and get help, as he could not move. The witness fetched two soldiers. Maj. J. G. Shannon, RCAMC said the deceased was admitted to hospital about 4 p.m. with a severe dislocation of the spine. An operation was performed, but although the deceased's condition was favourable for the first 24 hours, he died at 3.30 a.m. August 18. The injuries were consistent with a fall from a height. The Coroner said there was no suggestion that the men were worse for drink when they left the inn. Instead of taking the road usually taken by troops, they appeared to have changed their minds as, according to a statement made by the deceased to an officer (not at the inquest), their intention was to call on a friend to get a cup of tea, and on the way when getting over a fence, they fell 20 to 30 feet below to the road. A verdict of misadventure was recorded.

1. Wikipedia. 2. The British Newspaper Archive.



Petworth street wells

Miles Costello

Before most houses had indoor water taps the usual supply to domestic properties was from street wells or pumps which were located in prominent positions around the town. These have all disappeared and very few of their locations were thought to have been recorded. However, the following list has recently been discovered and while most of the positions are obvious from the descriptions, a few are more problematic. I can identify fourteen locations but I am sure that it is possible to do better. We are able to date the list to after 1895 when the pump (3) which stood outside the Wheatsheaf public house in North Street was moved to the opposite side of the road to facilitate the building of the present Glebe Villas. See how well you can do. The phrase 'present position' is from the list and is not contemporary.

Positions of street wells

1. South end of Donkey Row against workhouse wall.
2. North corner of Thompson's Hospital.
3. At pump opposite the Wheatsheaf.
4. Top of North Street, position of old pump.
5. Position of present street well in East Street.
6. Pannell's Cottages.
7. Corner of Prison wall by reservoir.
8. Below Percy Row in present position.
9. Opposite Rickett's yard in present position.
10. Giles' Corner opposite the White Hart.
11. Corner of Bronham's stable opposite Mr Dawtrey's house.
12. At the conduit by chapel.
13. Corner of Damer's Bridge against Otway's stores.
14. Against Mr Murray's wall present position Pound Street.
15. Opposite Mrs Blagden's house Pound Street.
16. By the Pound.
17. Present position of conduit at entrance to Lord Leconfield's stables.
18. Lombard Street present position.

A pair of Art Nouveau finger plates

The pressed copper finger plates opposite were rescued from Bacon & Co., in Saddlers Row when it closed in 2000. The Art Nouveau style flourished between 1890 and 1910 but had largely expired by the end of the first world war: these, therefore, could probably be described as 'Edwardian'. The 'K' shoes trademark was registered in 1875, the initial 'K' being associated with Kendal where the company was based. The firm ceased trading in 2003.

Play twenty tunes

Joan Dench, part one.

Way back in 2004 and 2005 we published a series of recollections written by Joan Dench and called 'A Petworth Childhood'. Joan Herrington – as she then was – grew up in the town before migrating with her family to Australia in 1963. Her original recollections which appeared in issues 117 to 119 covered the period up to the tragic Boys School bombing in 1942 which, with the loss of her brother Bill, greatly affected her family. Joan continued to record her memories throughout her life and in 2019 put them together in a book *Play Twenty Tunes* which included the period that had earlier appeared in the magazine. Joan has kindly agreed to let us continue the story in an edited form up until she moved away from Petworth in 1950. Audrey Baker is of course the late Audrey Grimwood. (Ed.)

The war and Audrey, 1943 to August 1945.

I suppose I must always have known Audrey; that is, except for the first nine months of my life whilst I was waiting for her to be born. We weren't really aware of each other until my family moved down to Grove Lane. Even then, with Audrey living at No.12 and me at No.4, and with huge differences in our ages (which she never ceases to point out) we moved in different circles and were in different classes at school.

When the war came and dozens of evacuees came to Petworth, our schooling became a bit haphazard. We local girls and the evacuee girls took it in turn to spend half a day at school and the other half 'messaging about' in the Town Hall. Eventually, after some of the evacuees went back to London, the school amalgamated us all into large classes back at the school, with some of the evacuee teachers staying on to share the teaching with our regular teachers. One of these evacuee teachers was Mrs Bell whose reputation as a strict disciplinarian struck fear into our hearts. I still remember the day they read out the class lists and I discovered I was going to be in her class. Audrey, being so much younger, missed out for a while. When she did join us, she sat over the other side of the room and certainly didn't impress me much. There always seemed to be a lot of giggling going on and she was always 'inky' – mainly because one of her favourite tricks was to dip bits of blotting paper into the inkwell and then flick it at other girls. How she got away with that sort of behaviour in Mrs Bell's class I'll never know!

When we went back to school after the Christmas holidays in January 1943,

some of the girls had left, including Joan and Rita. There was an empty seat next to me, and to my absolute horror Mrs Bell moved Audrey Baker to sit there. Neither of us was very pleased about this as we were very different in personality. Up until then I had been a boring model student. I loved learning and was a real bookworm. Mrs Bell was an excellent teacher and, as I never pout a foot wrong, I was never in trouble. We always say that Mrs Bell sat us together hoping that some of my 'virtues' would rub off on to Audrey, but unfortunately, it backfired. Within a very short time, I was getting told off for laughing. Right up to this day, I can never hear Audrey's deep chuckle without joining in. Although we didn't realise it at the time, it really was the start of a beautiful friendship that, so far, has lasted sixty years.

Fate also took a hand in another direction. Because of the paper shortage there weren't enough comics to go round and, as we both took the *Film Fun*, the newspaperman asked us if we would share one between us. This meant that we had to see each other after school, and we were soon spending all our free time together laughing over the comic and discussing the latest adventures of 'Sylvia Starr' and 'Scoop Warren': intrepid newshounds who solved more crimes than the police could ever hope to.

Audrey grew up with two older brothers. Son was in the army and Ron in the air force and, as I spent a lot of time at Audrey's house, I shared in all the good times and bad that the family went through during those years. Ron spent time in Iceland and then India, and Son was in Burma where he suffered recurring bouts of Malaria. The family had a very anxious time when they didn't hear from Son for ages, and I remember the relief when they eventually received a letter from him.

To say that Audrey was a tomboy is putting it mildly. She led me into all sorts of adventures, most of which entailed jumping across the brook at some stage. She always did this easily, but I never mastered it and usually ended up wet and muddy. My mother wasn't particularly thrilled with my friendship with 'that Audrey Baker', especially one afternoon when a very straight-laced aunt was visiting and Audrey, seeing the living room window open, came in that way rather than knocking on the door. Audrey's family didn't know what to make of me either. I'm sure they would have preferred someone with a bit more 'go' in them.

As there were at least five Joans in the class, my nickname at school was always ‘Herring’ (short for Herrington – my maiden name) so Audrey’s brothers had great fun calling me every fishy name they could think of.

During the war the Merchant Navy suffered terrible losses, so they appealed for funds to provide emergency packs for the merchant seamen that were rescued from the sea after being torpedoed. Each pack contained basic necessities at a cost of £2 which was about half my father’s weekly wage. It was suggested that people collect ‘ship’ halfpennies as a novel way of raising the money, 960 halfpennies equalled £2. These were part of our regular currency and on the ‘tails’ side they had an image of a sailing ship, a design based on Sir Francis Drake’s *Golden Hind*. Audrey and I – with the help of our neighbours, relatives and friends – collected these for years. I well remember the first time we took a large bag of halfpennies into the bank and waited while the teller counted them; imagine doing that today! She gave us some moneybags for the next time, so that it would simplify matters. Whenever we sent off a postal order to the fund, I enclosed a formal note and started it off ‘Dear Sir’ because the letter of thanks we received was signed ‘Kirkland Bridge’. One Christmas they sent us a small gramophone record with a message of thanks from Kirkland Bridge. As our gramophone had a broken spring, the only one we could find to play it on was a very old one belonging to Audrey’s parents. To our amazement Kirkland Bridge sounded like a woman with a high-pitched voice, and from then on I always wrote ‘Dear Madam’. It was quite a long time after having had our gramophone repaired that we listened to Kirkland Bridge again and discovered he was very definitely a ‘sir’ with a deep masculine voice. We laughed about this for ages.

Another of our wartime activities was selling raffle tickets. Audrey’s mother was one of a very active group of ladies who organised the ‘Welcome Home’ fund. Their aim was to raise enough money to present a gift pack to every serviceman or woman on his or her return home at the end of the war. They held regular whist drives and begged items from local retailers to use as raffle prizes. Several times a year there was an extra big raffle, and Audrey and I always got the job



of selling as many tickets as possible beforehand, and we spent hours knocking on doors. On the whole, people were very generous although they must have become sick of us. I recall one lady who wasn't very impressed. As she opened her front door, my dog was chasing her cat across the garden, and I was trying to extricate myself from the rose bush I had fallen into when he suddenly took off! I can't remember if she bought any tickets, but I do remember they cost threepence each or five for a shilling.

Audrey and I spent a lot of time in the Regal Cinema. We couldn't go to the early session, and our mums wouldn't let us go to the late one, so we used to take our tea and go in halfway through the big film and see it round to where we came in. That is, unless the screen suddenly went deep yellow and the sound went funny which meant the air-raid siren was about to sound, and then we would take to our heels and run home as fast as possible. Our 'tea' always included an apple. With all the orchards around Petworth no-one bought apples, and I've always told my children I was 21 before I knew you could get an apple that didn't have a fat, juicy maggot in the middle of it.

Of course the cinema was always dark when we went in and finding a seat was usually a bit tricky. One night the usherette showed us in to a row and we fumbled our way from one end to the other treading on people's toes, with those behind muttering, 'Sit down.' I did – twice – on someone's lap; there was not one empty seat in that row! All through the war years, the advertisements during the intervals were always the same. We became so bored by them that we turned around and guessed the advert by the colours coming from the projector. Cadbury's was easy because it was all red; and P. C. Hazelman's was red, yellow, orange and green.

One bone of contention between us was always where we would sit. Audrey insisted on sitting right up at the front in the shilling seats, and I preferred to go further back in the one and nines. I accused her of being a hooligan, and she accused me of being a snob. Eventually we compromised by taking it in turns; not only with the seating, but also with the bad headaches we always suffered afterwards. It was years later when we were laughing about our 'mis-spent youth', that we realised the reason for this, Audrey was short sighted and I was very long sighted.

A neighbour in Grove Lane took the magazine *Picturegoer*, and we used to



ABOVE The Regal Cinema in Petworth, which in 1937 had shown 'Fire Over England' with Flore Robson, Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. A portion of the film, including the beacons being lit on the English coast, and an armour-clad Queen Elizabeth (Flora Robson) giving her speech to the surrounding soldiers at Tilbury before the Battle of Gravelines, was used in the 1939 World War II propaganda documentary 'The Lion Has Wings' which Joan and Audrey may well have seen on one of their visits to the Regal.



beg copies off her from time to time and make scrapbooks of all our favourite film stars. Audrey told me that many years later when she was in Amsterdam, she visited Anne Frank's house, and it greatly moved her to see all the same pictures up on the wall. Anne was the same age as we were.

Throughout our early teenage years, Petworth was crammed with soldiers from all over the world. The Canadians were there from early on in the war, then the British commandos, then the Americans, with various other nationalities from time to time. Unlike some of our contemporaries, Audrey and I didn't have much to do with them. We were much too occupied walking our dogs and sitting around in the fields, talking and laughing, to go to dances. I wouldn't say we didn't notice the soldiers but, what's more to the point, they didn't notice us. To say we were 'late bloomers' is rather an understatement. In fact I think we're both still waiting hopefully to 'bloom' one of these days!

One of our more memorable adventures during the war years centred on a goose. Audrey's mother needed a broody hen to sit on some eggs and Mr Dunton, up the Gog, had a broody goose. I really can't imagine how Audrey and I were nominated to go and fetch it, but we were. Mr Baker gave us a lift up there and Mr Dunton put the goose in a sack, and we set off to walk home with it. We hadn't gone far when it gave a big lurch. I dropped my end of the sack and the goose ran out into the woods. We very nervously went back to Mr Dunton and 'confessed'. I think he took it pretty well, considering; well, he didn't kill us anyway! He walked back with us to the scene of the crime and eventually by some miracle, managed to catch the poor goose; and this time he tied the ends of the sack very securely. It was now beginning to get dusky and we had a long way to walk. The goose was heavy and not exactly relaxed, but we made good progress until the next major setback. We came to a clearing, which we intended to cut across before going down Lovers Lane and out to the Sugar Lump field but, to our amazement, the clearing now had an army camp in the middle of it.

We stood and wondered how long it would take us to retrace our steps and go a much longer way home. I worried about my mum's reaction if I arrived home very late. As we stood there, though, all was dead quiet and Audrey said, 'Oh, come on; they're all asleep in their tents by now.' We got halfway across before we spotted just one soldier who was having a shave with the help of a mirror fixed to the outside of his tent. He spotted us in the mirror and shouted,



‘Hey boys, come and have a look at this: two girls with a body in a sack!’ They all came out to have a look and a good laugh while we tried to explain why we were walking miles at dusk with a broody goose in a sack. We arrived home eventually and I did get into hot water for being so late, but I can’t remember if that poor goose sat on any legs or whether she’d completely gone off the idea.

Later on that year, the police came around again to check up on our living space and tell us how many British commandos we were expected to billet. Bot Audrey’s and my family billeted a commando; ours was called Jack. He came from London where his wife was working in a factory. She came down to stay for weekends whenever she could, and she and Mum became good friends. The commando at Audrey’s was a wild, young Scotsman called Jock. He really enjoyed joining in with the fishy nicknames which didn’t worry me but, unfortunately, there was a very embarrassing spin-off from this. I was obliged to pass North House, the commandos’ HQ in North Street twice a day to go to and from work. I very rarely made it past there without a chorus of ‘Kipper’, ‘Mackerel’, ‘Codswollop’ and ‘Fishface’, to name a few. Jock had obviously passed the word around. The commandos were in Petworth for several months. From time to time, their command cancelled all leave because they were to go on manoeuvres. We always worried about them and imagined they were off carrying out raids on enemy territory. Christmas was one of these occasions and we very stupidly listened to ‘Lord Haw-Haw’ who was an Englishman broadcasting propaganda from Germany. He announced that a group of commandos had attempted to carry out a raid on the French coast, with all of them being wiped out. That certainly put a damper on our Christmas; but all was well and, as far as I can remember, they all came back to Petworth safe and sound from wherever they had been. After the war, the courts found William Joyce, alias ‘Lord Haw-Haw’, guilty of treason and executed him.

After the summer holidays in 1943, I left school as I had just had my fourteenth birthday. Over the previous two years, I had sat exams for the council scholarships and also for one called the ‘Taylor Scholarship’. Apparently I missed out each time by a few marks. The two Miss Woottons begged Mum and Dad to try and find the money to send me to Chichester High School, but there was no way they could afford it. Not only that, I didn’t want to go. It was not only the thought of losing all my good friends, I also had a real fear of going too far from home, especially to a big town which could have been a bigger target than Petworth for enemy bombers. I went to work as a daily help for Mrs Oglethorpe at Somerset Lodge. She was a very nice lady who used to talk to

OPPOSITE Lovers Lane reproduced from an early twentieth-century post card. Lovers Lane will be included in the Gog walk on April the 16th. See the events insert in this issue for details.

me a great deal. I still remember her and her words of wisdom with affection. Looking back, I feel I had a pretty good life at that time.

My spare time was taken up with helping Mum who was always busy, interacting with our extended family and having fun with Audrey, with whom I continued to spend a lot of time at the Regal Cinema.

Three events that Audrey and I were lucky enough to enjoy were as a result of the large military presence in Petworth at the time. There were often small fairs down on Hampers Common during the summer months, but one that was memorable included a roller skating rink. The locals had great fun falling about, but the Canadian soldiers were experts. No doubt they were used to ice skating. We had never seen such wonderful performer, except on the movies, and spent all our time there watching them dance and do daring acrobatics. Another time, we were out in the park when we came across some Cossack performers rehearsing their trick riding. We were absolutely amazed and watched them for ages. Why Cossacks were in Petworth I can't imagine, and can't remember many people being around, so it couldn't have been a performance. We always enjoyed shows in the Iron Room, but one that sticks in my mind was when Charlie Chester and his Stars in Battledress came to Petworth. It was an excellent show and we weren't a bit surprised at how popular Charlie Chester became later on.

All through the war, the streets of Petworth took a real battering with all the heavy traffic that had to pass through the town. The huge tanks churned up the edges of the pavements, and if they were repaired it was only a matter of time before another convoy came through. The narrow, medieval streets were never designed for this kind of traffic and huge vehicles often got stuck, sometimes for hours, trying to get around corners.

It was probably in 1943 that the American troops came to Petworth; they lived in camps near the town. The fights that broke out between white and black Americans became so bad that they had to alternate their evenings in town. American nurses also came with the troops. They were very generous; they handed out sweets (lollies) to any children they saw. We always tried to sit next to them at the pictures as they would pass some along to us. I believe the Americans gave some good children's parties but, as I had left school, I missed these.

To be continued.

