

185. December 2021

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY  
*Magazine*

No. 185. December 2021



*winon*

*Gog Lodges. Christmas day  
1938*

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After harvest. Straw bales awaiting collection..A photograph taken by Jonathan Newdick near Sokenholes in August 2016. One of an increasing set of contemporary photographs depicting life in and around Petworth. See 'Petworth now' on page 12.

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**FRONT AND BACK COVERS**

'Gog Lodges. Christmas Day 1938': An enlargement of a stereoscope card, the original of which measures 42 x 88 mm. It was photographed by Mr F. H. L. Turner; manager of the Petworth branch of the Westminster Bank.

Petworth Society Magazine No. 185 |

## 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

After the lifting of most pandemic restrictions in July, we were able to start activities again. In August we re-launched the book sales, which, as Miles talks about in his Editorial, turned out to be a record day. The September and October sales followed. It was very good to see the book sales had lost none of their popularity.

We are, however, reviewing the number of book sales the Society holds each year. Each sale is a considerable undertaking and, after more than twenty years, Miles has, understandably, expressed the wish to modify their frequency. So, after the 11 December 2021 sale, the next one will be held on Saturday 12 March 2022. In the March edition of this magazine we will give you an update on the sale schedule for the rest of 2022.

Following the restart of the book sales, we also held our first ticketed event. Entitled 'Tales & Tour' at Petworth House, the 'Tales' were delivered in the Battery House, a fascinating building set inside the Cowyard. It was in this building that, in the early twentieth century, diesel engines generated electricity for both Petworth House and also for the town.

Three expert Petworth House guides gave talks about the people who lived and worked at the House as well as some history about the Percy family and the personal history behind the purchase of some of the great art collection.

Maureen Truss brought to life the lives, duties – and multiple uniforms – of the servants, drawing on the valuable oral histories captured by Peter Jerrome in this magazine over the years. Kathy Hall described how the 2nd Earl of Egremont, as a young man, as well as steeping himself in art while on his Grand Tour, also developed a fondness for female company – and food! Bob France rounded off with a spirited account of the extraordinary life of Lady Bette Percy. Thrice married by the age of 15, Lady Bette was the last of the Percy family at Petworth House and it was her third husband, the 6th Duke of Somerset who turned the early manorial Petworth House into the grand house you see today.

After the 'Tales' came the 'Tour', in groups, inside Petworth House, which we had to ourselves – a great treat. To round off the evening, we returned to the Battery House for fortifying refreshments and a chat with friends and other attendees, who included a large group of members of the Rottingdean Heritage Society. The event was sold out and anecdotal feedback suggests it was much enjoyed.

Now we move on to our next events: the book sales in November and December; our 'Christmas' event, to be held on 7 January 2022; and a show and talk by Miles Costello on Friday 18 January 2022. You'll find more details about the new year events, and a ticket application form, on the enclosed inserts.

May I wish you and your family a very happy Christmas and much good fortune in the New Year!

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## **EDITORIAL**

Miles Costello

As if by magic this magazine arrives at your door four times a year and I doubt that more than a few have ever given any thought as to how it gets there. If you receive it by Royal Mail then each copy has been packaged and every envelope addressed and stamped before being taken to the Post Office where it enters the mailing system. For local delivery the magazines will be put in rounds, fourteen in all, and then taken by Ian and Linda to the various distributors who will complete the process, come rain or shine to get the magazine to you. It is important to remember all of those volunteers who pack, lick, label and deliver the magazine. You are all incredibly important cogs in the machinery that is the Society. Thank you.

As you may know our Chairman has been busily engaged in creating a new website and digitising the archive, a challenging process that I cannot even begin to get my head around. Members will be able to search back issues of this magazine, pay membership fees if they so wish, buy tickets for Society events and I am sure engage in ways that we haven't even thought of yet. The website will be a huge and exciting leap forward for the Society, but at the same time I am conscious that not all members will want to use it and so it is important that you do not feel left behind as the Society embarks on this journey. Be assured that all of the usual processes will continue as before.

I am sure that many of you will have dealt with Sue Slade in one way or another over the years, whether it was to do with your membership or perhaps when attending a Petworth Society event. Sue was Treasurer and Membership Secretary

for a number of years following on from Andy Henderson. A difficult act to follow, Sue made the roles her own and developed efficiency processes that we still use now. Sadly Sue passed away at the very end of August after a relatively short illness. She and her partner Roger had for many years been keen supporters of the book sale and spent countless hours helping set up the sale and serving behind the counter. Sue was a truly lovely lady and a real friend to both myself and the Society and anything that I write here will fail to do her justice. She will be greatly missed and our commiserations go out to Roger and their extended families.

As if to continue that unfortunate theme I was saddened to hear of the death of Noah Stansmore who passed away in July at the age of 96. Noah had left the Boys School in 1939 to train as an apprentice electrician on the Leconfield Estate but returned to the school on the day of the bombing in September 1942 to help clear rubble. Two of his younger brothers had avoided death or injury as they had not attended school that day. Noah served in the West Sussex Constabulary for 31 years and had been a member of the Society for longer than I care to remember.

October saw the successful Petworth Society Tales & Tour event at Petworth House and we are now looking forward to the Society programme for the New Year. The first event is something a little different and will hopefully bring a bit of cheer to what is normally a rather gloomy period, while the second is a more traditional Society evening. Details of both can be found in the inserts which accompany this magazine.

The book sales returned in August, having been suspended for almost eighteen months. It was with a great deal of uncertainty that I had booked the Leconfield Hall for the day. Would government restrictions allow it to go ahead? Would people turn up? Well it did go ahead and the day was a huge success and by the time of opening there was a long queue through the foyer and out along the wall of the hall. It was great to see old friends and there was clearly a pent-up demand for books as it turned out to be one of our most successful sales to date. As I write this we have had the September and October sales which, like the previous one, were very well attended. Sadly the December sale is likely to be the last for a short while as we have decided to have fewer sales in the coming year. Details of the revised book sale calendar for 2022 will be available at the December book sale and in the March magazine. Books are heavy and the small group of volunteers are not getting any younger. What the public see on book sale day is just the tip of a large iceberg. Collecting, sorting and

moving books goes on all month long and the collection area is ever-expanding; the radius is now up to thirty miles and huge numbers of books are always required. Like Peter, I have enjoyed the book sales and always felt they were important as the public face of the Society, however after twenty years it will be good to not have the challenge of finding quite so many books and moving them up to the Leconfield Hall at five a.m. on a freezing January morning. Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped make the sale such a success over the years.

Heritage Weekend has been and gone and the general consensus is that once again it has been very successful. Judging from the queue that snaked down the east side of the Leconfield Hall the vintage bus tours were hugely popular and hopefully will be repeated next year. Congratulations go to the Petworth Heritage Partnership, of which the Society is a member, for organising the day.

For the second year running the November 20th fair was cancelled. These are difficult times for our ancient street fair with suggestions from some that such events are no longer relevant. The nay-sayers may be right but once a street fair is abandoned it is unlikely to be revived and who knows what the future holds? But all is not lost as it is hoped that a new committee will be formed to see how the fair can move forward and adapt to the demands of a modern world. If you have experience in event planning or feel able to offer help on the day please do get in touch.

## Do you have an interest in Petworth's local history?

Would you like to discover more about it, learn some new research skills and spend time with other like-minded members of your local community where you can explore together in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere, with tea, coffee and biscuits? If so, then our new local history group could be for you! We plan to meet twice a month and will be focusing on a range of interesting local topics, starting off with the exploration of Petworth's shops through the ages. Meetings will be held at the learning centre at Coultershaw Heritage Site with the first one on December 8th. To register your interest or for any further enquiries please contact Hilary Brookes on 07796 170183 or at [hilary@coultershaw.co.uk](mailto:hilary@coultershaw.co.uk)



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Some more on nicknames

Dear Miles,

Reading the article about nicknames [‘Poor Stinker’, *PSM* 184], led to my calling up nicknames from my school days, both as a pupil and as a teacher. I have to admit that none of the names in the article rang a bell with me, which leads me to suspect that nicknames are dying out.

I should be interested to know whether there has been any response from the younger generation(s). In my grammar school days in East Sussex, we had ‘Flooby’ Fletcher, ‘Lottie’ Letcher, ‘Jumbo’ Broome, with the big nose, ‘Pills’ Beeching, inspired by the slogan in the Beecham Pills advert, ‘Beecham’s Pills are just the thing’, ‘Turnip’ Shearer, ‘Nodge’ Godden, ‘Pixies Ears’, Goodwin, who had big ears, ‘Moggy’ Morgan, ‘Granny’ Green, and ‘Aunt Matt’, the senior mistress – all, except three, boys.

One of my college tutors (Rural Studies) tall and thin, was ‘Long Pod’ after a variety of runner bean.

When teaching at Freshwater on the Isle of Wight, I enjoyed ‘Obee’ Dyer, which I think was brilliant, arising from an R.E. lesson in which the prophet Obediah was studied.

Here in Petworth there was, and may- be still is, ‘Pongo’ West, and the senior mistress at one time was ‘Dinger’ Bell.

Of course, Christian names don’t count, neither does adding ‘y’ or ‘ie’ to a surname, even if shortened.  
Keith Thompson, Petworth.

Dear Miles,

In response to your article on nicknames in the September magazine I thought I would share the following of which I have clear childhood memories. There were ‘Bumper’ Fred Pullen who lived opposite the Black Horse at Byworth, ‘Bonny’ Bill Harwood from Tillington, and ‘Yorkie’ Jim Elliott also from Tillington. In addition, I remember my father and grandfather often talking about ‘Tatty’ Mathews, ‘Tapper’ Moore and ‘Bogey’ Baxter. There must be dozens more but I have no knowledge of their meanings or derivations.  
Chris Vincent, Petworth.

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## FROM THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ARCHIVE

Air Balloon. *The Northampton Mercury*, December 1st 1783

The Air-Balloon which ascended from the Artillery-Ground on Tuesday, fell about Four o’Clock the same afternoon in a Field near Petworth in Sussex. At first it occasioned no little Alarm, but the matter being explained, the Consternation subsided, and it was taken into a Barn, and Shewed to many Hundreds of People at 1*d* each.

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## A Pitshill walk

Gerald Gresham Cooke

This beautiful walk through Tillington leads us to Pitshill House, a mini stately home. It covers a distance of 2.5 miles (1.5 hours) and begins at Tillington Village Hall, GU28 9AF, a mile from Petworth. There are no steep climbs on the walk. Wonderful views of the South Downs and changing natural flora throughout the year.

Leaving your car at the roadside by the village hall, head for the church path leading to the Grade 1 All Hallows' Church with its impressive Scots Crown surmounting the tower. Return along the church path, cross the road and turn left to the Causeway, which runs beneath the Horse Guards Inn and several feet above the road. Follow this round until it merges with Cemetery Lane and continue along this lane (west) as far as the lychgate. Pass through the lychgate into the cemetery and follow the path to the bottom (snowdrops cover this area in late winter). Turn right along the lime tree-lined path to the brick arch (1863 in memory of the Mitford family) and pass through the small wooden gate.

Cross directly over the lane on to the signed public footpath. Follow this path across the Glebe Field. At the top, through the gate there is a vineyard, continue between the two sections of vines, looking left for superb views of the Downs. Continue along this track until you meet a small tarmac lane. Cross the lane diagonally, down some steps, to an old drover's road (Willets Lane) and up the other side. Follow the track along the hedgerow, passing through a wooden gate. Immediately turn right and continue up the footpath (north) as it rises alongside another field of vines. At the top turn left heading towards Pitshill House.

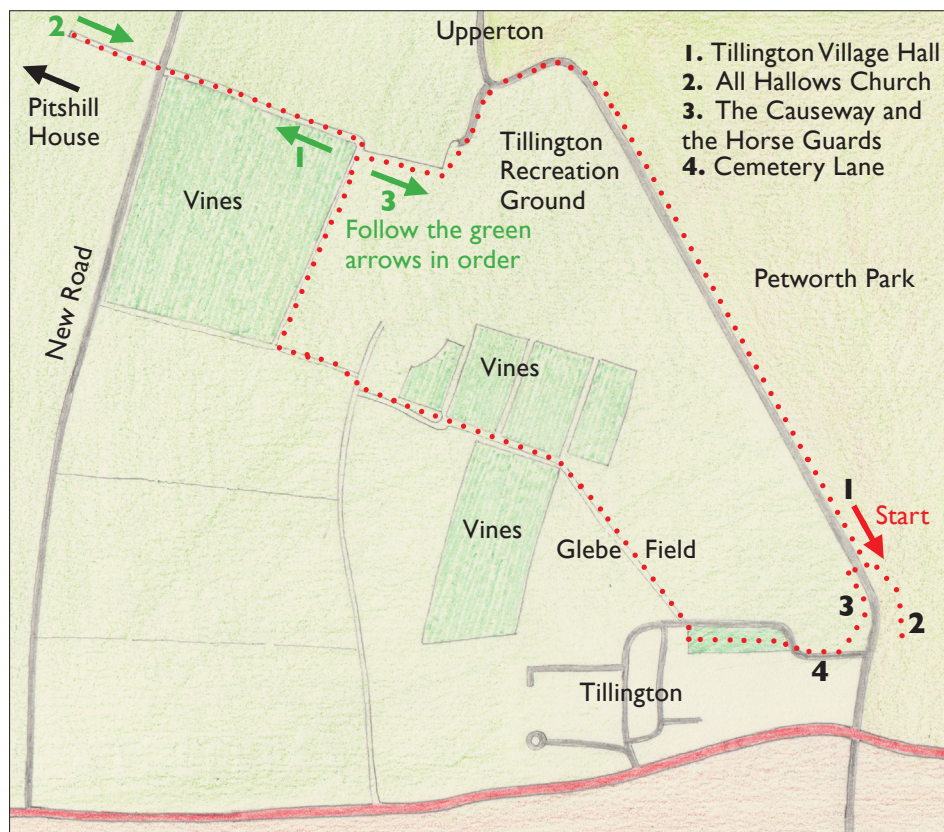
Pass through a gate at the end, crossing a road (New Road) and straight ahead with the house coming into view. Pitshill House won the prestigious 2017 Georgian Group's top architectural award, and was also awarded second prize in the 2017 Historic Houses Association Restoration Awards. It is now owned by Lila and the Hon. Charles Pearson, Lord Cowdray's half-brother. Time to pause.

Retrace your steps to the top of the vineyard to the end, but instead of turning right (south) at the end of the vineyard, go straight ahead through the exit gate. Walk along a mown grassed area between a recently planted avenue of harlequin maple trees, passing a new bungalow on your right and continue down a slight incline to the top of the old drover's road which is now surfaced with tarmac. Bear left up the hill and continue to the centre of the hamlet of Upperton.

Turn right along the main street, past the attractive cottages, as it descends

towards Petworth Park. Soon you will see on the left steps leading down to an entrance into the park. Continue along the roadside pavement until you reach Tillington Recreation Ground. Cross over to this area, taking time to explore the splendid views (lots of seats and a children's playground), or better still have a picnic.

On leaving the recreation ground return to the footpath by the side of the park wall, and descend the hill. Soon you will be able to see the church once again before arriving back at the village hall. If after 11 a.m., the Horse Guards Inn is open, except on Mondays and Tuesdays.



**BELOW** Tuscany in West Sussex. A view looking southwards towards the Downs through the vines after leaving Glebe Field towards the beginning of the walk.



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# Petworth now

Jonathan Newdick. Photographs by Jon Edgar



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For some time many of us have been concerned that the extraordinary archive of photographs taken by George Garland and his predecessor Walter Kevis is not being supplemented by contemporary pictures. We are therefore introducing to the magazine a regular feature devoted to making up the loss; the beginning was perhaps the picture of Masie and Kay in Covid garb at Tiffins tea room in the High Street on page 48 of the last issue. Considering that it is likely that more pictures are produced in an hour in 2021 than the average sixteenth-century copyholder would have seen in his lifetime, there must be dozens of photographs that could be added to the archive. We welcome any contributions.

These photographs which were taken by Jon Edgar in October this year show Nihat Polat and his wife preparing Turkish doner and shish kebabs in their 'Best Kebab van' at Hampers Common (above) and the view along the road with the illuminated van in the distance (opposite).

## ‘Father was a big man’

Miles Costello in conversation with Sybil Tilbury née Durrant

My father Percy Hounsome Durrant was born in the village of Chailey in East Sussex where his father owned a butcher’s shop. My mother Elsie died just six weeks after I was born, quite possibly from complications resulting from my birth. I had a sister just a few years older than me though we grew up hardly knowing each other. She would later marry Peter Thorn, the Byworth farmer but sadly died in middle age. Following Mother’s death we were parcelled off to various aunts, usually separately, until Father eventually married again and so his new wife Ethel became the only mother that I ever knew. I must say that I had a very happy childhood and it would only be much later that I was told that Ethel wasn’t my birth mother.

Meanwhile Grandfather, the Chailey butcher, had bought a shop in Fittleworth and another at Framfield near Uckfield for his two sons. Father was given the Fittleworth shop and so began the business of P.H. Durrant Family Butcher. Father was a big man, a typical butcher. The shop was in Devon House, Lower Street near the junction with School Lane. It is now a smart private house and there is no sign of the shop front with the two large windows either side of the door. At the rear of the shop was an office and behind that the house with our living accommodation. Down the lane which ran beside the shop was a yard with a cottage where Mr Parfoot the village blacksmith lived. Opposite his cottage was the slaughterhouse where pigs, cattle and poultry were regularly dispatched. There was also a sausage-making shed in the yard and every Monday Father would attend Pulborough market to buy stock for the shop. Fish from Grimsby was collected weekly from Fittleworth station and sold in the shop on Tuesdays. Mr Tullett was stationmaster, while his wife, who always dressed in black, would lay out the village dead.

Over the years there were several men and Saturday boys working in the shop. I recall Ernie Puttock, or is it Puttick? There were also Cecil Powell and Stanley Hamilton while among the boys I remember Norman and Nigel Goodyer. Of course we did local deliveries by bike, perhaps just as far as Hesworth. However, we soon had two vans and would go right out to Bury and Sutton, and when father purchased a shop in New Street in Petworth the delivery area would become much larger. When war broke out we, like most families, took in an evacuee. Her name was Marjorie Katon and she had come down from London. By coincidence her father was a butcher by trade and he would eventually be employed as manager of the Petworth shop. I wonder if anyone remembers Marjorie?

Yes I remember George Attrill the roadman, he was quite a character in the

**BELOW** The tiled fascia of the shop in New Street, Petworth which suggests that before becoming a butcher's, the premises was a fishmonger's. Now fronting an estate agent, the tiles remain to hint at their story.



village and my cat could often be found sitting in his wheelbarrow. During the war meat was strictly rationed although somehow Father would always manage to find a special bit for George which he collected on a Saturday.

I have very fond memories of Fittleworth though I was sent off to the convent at Summers Place in Billingshurst as a weekly boarder when I was nine years old. I had attended Fittleworth School until then and remember Miss MacDonald, the teacher who lived at Churchwood. We had Church on Sundays followed by Sunday School at the chapel. I believe that it was Mr DuCane who lived at Fittleworth Corner who instructed the children at Chapel.

There were several shops in the village, all of which have now gone. Picknell's and Harding's, both grocers, were fierce rivals. The former in Lower Street heading up towards the church, while Harding's was much further down and near the Swan Inn. That reminds me, the Swan was run by two sisters named the Misses Oliver. They didn't sell food in those days and it was just a traditional pub though as is well-known it was very popular with artists and had a room where the walls were covered in pictures. There was a baker in the village, was it Mr Maidment? He was in one of the cottages on the opposite side of The Fleet to the recreation ground. Mr Goodyer, the shoe repairer, lived in Greatpin Croft while Fred Goodyer operated the local taxi service from his home in Lower Street. Miss McGregor delivered milk from Stopham and Mr Cooper ran the telephone exchange at his cottage on The Fleet. We all suspected him of listening in on conversations but of course that



was just village gossip. I remember a lovely little sweet shop that was down a path between Sayers' yard and the village school. The path led down to some cottages in one of which was the shop. Being so close to the school it was very popular with the village children. Sadly it is difficult to visualise exactly where it was as both the yard and the school have gone and the area has long been developed.

Christmas parties were held in the church hall and Father would dress up as Father Christmas and hand out presents to all the village children – he would usually get to me last and pretend that he had run out of presents but of course he hadn't. Brownies and Guides were also held in the hall with Miss Lovelock in charge.

Petworth was very much part of my social life. In fact I still remember the bus service – it was a number 22. There were dances in the Iron Room and I remember Miss Whitcomb's little band. She was a relative of mine as were many of the local families. November 20th was Fair Day at Petworth and was of course very much looked forward to. Petworth was where I did much of my courting and where I met my husband. It is, like Fittleworth, a very special place to me.

Father served in the Home Guard during the war and sadly passed away the year after hostilities ended, he was just 45 and I was 11. I left the convent at 16 and home at 17. I went first to Chailey Heritage where I trained as a nurse before moving to Southlands Hospital at Shoreham. I never lived at Fittleworth again.

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## Don't judge a book by its cover

Miles Costello

I must confess to being remarkably self-righteous about books. I have a small collection of what I consider the most important ever written while the rest of the world's books are hardly worth the time of day. To me they are just small stacks of printed paper glued together, often poorly, and the vast majority have little or no value either as a commodity or as literature. I suppose that the lack of commercial value is mainly the result of the internet where it is quite possible to buy a book and have it delivered to your home the very next day for less than the price of a decent cup of coffee. It is no surprise then that the vast majority of book shops in this country have disappeared in the last twenty years. Why pay for the upkeep of a shop when you can lose money just as easily online?

I must have picked up the book on my almost daily round of collections for the book sale but it was not until later when I was sorting that I first noticed it. It was the cover that initially caught my attention which isn't surprising as the clever use of colours was clearly designed to draw in the eye – however a nice cover does not necessarily equate to a good read. Nevertheless I added *The Diary of a Bookseller* to

my ever growing pile of books that I would probably never read, though in this case I did.

Set in Wigtown, a small community of little more than 1,000 inhabitants on the west coast of Scotland, the less than creatively named The Book Shop claims to be the largest of its kind in Scotland and with over 100,000 books on a mile of shelving it would be boorish to dispute the claim. A rambling building on several floors, it has open fires, winding corridors, and is open house to many of the lunatic fringe who tend to inhabit bookshops in this country, and those are just the staff. Shaun the author is both brutally honest and yet uncompromisingly rude about both his employees and long-suffering customers. Such is his petulance one wonders why he chose to become a bookseller in the first place. Not satisfied in offending his staff and customers he has taken on a masochistic battle with Amazon the online bookseller who he hates with venom and yet is realistic enough to know that he cannot beat them.

Shaun Bythell came up with the idea of keeping a diary over a year in which he records daily how many customers he gets in, his takings – often pitiful, and any other less than noteworthy occurrences. Many of the entries refer to the ski suit wearing, rubbish skip foraging hippy Nicky the Jehovah's Witness shop assistant with whom Bythell has a love-hate relationship and who has a policy of ignoring all of her employer's instructions. Besides hippy Nicky there is a revolving door of casual workers who staff the shop often in return for a bed for the night. These itinerant employees appear only slightly less deranged than some of the regular customers, one of who is the unfortunately named Smelly Kelly, who has a long standing, but unrequited crush on hippy Nicky. Bythell rarely seems welcoming and customers are hardly tolerated and those that do cross the threshold can expect to have their shortcomings perpetuated in print. Even regular customers, the bread and butter of any bookshop, are ruthlessly disparaged by the acidic author and one can only hope that the poor Mr Deacon if indeed he does exist fails to recognise himself in the book. Despite his less than charming nature Bythell seems surprisingly adventurous when buying stock and is prepared to travel considerable distances to purchase books. Remote provincial auction houses and semi-derelict country mansions appear to be a sanctuary for the author and his frequent trips away must be a relief to both his staff and customers.

The book is funny and witty, something not always easy to accomplish when written as a journal. It can be slightly repetitive but so is daily life, especially working in a shop. Put down your Solzhenitsyn or Joyce, pack away your e-reader and waste a couple of hours enjoying the light relief that this rollicking little book offers. If nothing else you will never again enter a bookshop without wondering what the owner may be thinking of you.

## ‘Got any gum chum?’

Miles Costello in conversation with Ken Temple

I have no idea why my parents moved to Tillington though it may have been the availability of rented homes at the time. Anyway for whatever reason they arrived at Westside the double row of bungalows built and owned by Mr Leazell the local builder. I say my parents but in fact there were four all together, Mum, Dad, Uncle Dick Searle and his daughter Lena. Dick wasn't an uncle at all but for want of a more appropriate title he was always known that way.

Mum, Dad and Uncle Dick had worked together for a Jewish heiress in Brighton. It was a large house where Mum had been housekeeper, Dad gardener and Dick the chauffeur. Dick had been widowed when his wife died of T.B. at just 21 and he was left with a very young daughter to bring up. I would guess that the Jewish lady may have passed away and the three of them needed a new position and while they looked for one they decided to stay together and that is the way it remained, at least until Dick passed away some years later.

This would have been 1934 and just two years later I was born and my brother Brian another six years after. Meanwhile Mum, Dad and Dick had left Westside and taken up home in Rosemary Lane in Petworth opposite what was then the police station. Our house was named Fairfields and belonged to a Mr Purser. The building stood between the narrow alley that runs down the side of the former White Hart pub and the then infants school which is now the public library. Yes I remember the pub but I must have been very young when it closed. The house was split into three, with us, Mr Purser and Mr and Mrs Simmonds all sharing it. Mum worked for a long time for Mrs Knight at The Old Square Tavern but living so close to the police station she would occasionally be called upon to act as a wardress, for when a woman was arrested and locked up Mum would be called upon to sit with her overnight as in those days there were no female police officers. Dad meanwhile worked for the county council and Uncle Dick became an AA Scout. His area, which he covered on a motorbike and sidecar, was from Upwaltham to Bury and on busy weekends he could be seen doing point duty on Red Lion corner in the town.

War came and while I started at the infants school Dad and Uncle Dick both joined up and both were invalided out, Dad from the Royal Artillery with serious stomach problems and Dick from the Royal Air Force with bronchitis which eventually killed him. Like most families in the town we were soon allocated a couple of evacuees who had come down from London; they were brothers Freddy

and Richard Wright but I think that Mum struggled with them and they were eventually moved on. I don't recall them being replaced.

One day in the autumn of 1942 we had been visiting relatives at Brighton and coming home on the bus the conductress informed us that Petworth Boys School had been bombed. It was obviously a great shock and I remember in particular the funeral when the coffins were carried on army lorries down North Street to the Horsham Road cemetery. I was still quite young and fortunately at the infants school but I knew some of the children who died even though they were older than me. On another occasion we were on the bus when some Canadian soldiers, who had far too much to drink, began firing pistols out of the window. I suppose that incident wasn't especially unusual at the time as there were lots of both Canadian and American soldiers around the town. They would often go into the nearby Club Room which was next to the White Hart or to the Iron Room in Market Square where dances and entertainments were held. They would invariably get drunk and fights would break out between white and black soldiers. It became so bad that with the help of the Military Police a strict rule was bought in that white and black soldiers would be given town leave on alternate weekends to try to keep the peace, which it did for a while. Of course being so young none of this really concerned me and my priority, like most of my friends, was to chase the American army lorries through the town shouting 'Got any gum chum', more in hope than expectation.

Of course the infants school was very convenient as it was more or less next door to our house though it didn't make me like it any the more and I would often play truant and sneak home and hide in the chicken run in the garden. With the Boys School gone and having left the infants I started lessons in the Iron Room with Mr Mickleburgh. He had come down from London with the evacuees and when Mr Stevenson was killed in the bombing he took over as head teacher. He was a nice but very strict man and when he was angry his face would go as black as thunder. There were also Mr Salisbury and Mr Hall. We weren't in the Iron Room long before moving over to Culvercroft in Pound Street.

Like most kids I had a Saturday job before leaving school and it was at Olders grocery store in Angel Street. One of my jobs was to deliver orders and I used to cycle out as far as Mr and Mrs Blunden at Snow Hill in the Park. One day I was pedalling through the Park when I hit a bump and most of the groceries fell out of the basket. In those days most items were weighed up in the shop and wrapped in

small paper bags. I scooped up as much as I could but I had lost a lot of sugar from a bag that had split open. Anyway, I eventually turned up with the groceries and thankfully Mrs Blunden was very understanding. On another occasion I was out in the garage where there was a large tank of paraffin. When a customer wanted some my job was to take their container and fill it from the tank. Anyway, on this particular occasion I was filling a can which had a long narrow nozzle when the key which operated the tap on the tank fell off and into the can. Of course I couldn't turn off the tap or retrieve the key as it was inside the can. My only alternative was to empty the can on to the floor of the garage and shake the key out while in the meantime paraffin was pouring out of the tank. I am not sure if it was this occasion or another but it seems likely that Mr Bamfield, the shop manager, eventually decided that my career path led elsewhere.

When I was sixteen I joined the Royal Observer Corps which was very popular at the time. We used to train at the Armory in Midhurst Road where we would learn aircraft recognition and such like. Just up the road and opposite the Cricket Lodge there was what was known as an outpost where observers would quite often



The Mitford Estate barn at Dene Dip with its ancient hayrick ladder, from which Ken Temple's business, K. J. Temple and Sons, operates. A pencil drawing by Jonathan Newdick. Private collection.

spend the night and keep watch for hostile aircraft. The outpost had a fire and was a proper building though I don't know what became of it.

I had left school at fifteen and got a job on Bryders, the local builders as a plumber's mate with Jack Holloway. Jack was a lovely man and taught me everything he knew; neither of us had any formal training as everything was learnt on the job. The yard was at Tillington and I would cycle in each day then we might cycle out to the job perhaps as far as Sutton or Fittleworth. Jack and I did a lot of lead work on the roof of Petworth House, which was a big job and took about seven months to complete. I never got involved with the funeral side of the business; I guess I was too short to be a coffin bearer or indeed a grave digger. I left Bryders after eight years during which time I picked up a great deal especially from Jack.

Eventually I decided to go out on my own and after a short while went into partnership with Stan Madgwick who besides being a plumber like me was also a handy carpenter. The business became Madgwick and Temple on the toss of a coin; if I had won it would have been the other way round. Stan was a remarkably clever man and a talented artist; in fact he would display and sell his paintings at The Dairy in East Street. Stan and I did a lot of maintenance and minor works on council houses, libraries, police houses and schools. We had a workshop in the High Street and later an office and store in North Street which belonged to Mr Lezell for who we did a lot of work.

When Stan and I eventually parted company he kept the yard in the High Street while I kept the office in North Street which I bought from Mr Lezell. I continued with my building works for some time when I was tipped a wink that the Pitshill Estate was going to let out their yard at Dene Dip. I approached King and Chasemore who were the Pitshill agents and they agreed to let the yard to me. I was very fortunate as it was to all intents and purposes a fully equipped estate yard with the necessary workshops and infrastructure. The firm has been at Dene Dip ever since and though I have now retired my son continues with the business. We still do a lot of work for the Mitford Estate as well as other jobs throughout the district. One I particularly remember was The Hermitage in East Street. It is down a narrow drive beside Stringers Hall and opposite the Royal Mail sorting office. The large house had stood empty for some time and was completely derelict. We did the work for Joan Aiken the children's author who moved in when we had completed it. It was a big job by our standards.

My wife and I are shortly leaving Petworth to move to a bungalow at Pagham and are looking forward to a new adventure. We have lived at Hampers Green all our married life and I have never lived anywhere other than Petworth. We can't pretend that the town hasn't changed, it has but then life itself has changed. We will miss Petworth and our friends but I am sure that we will visit occasionally and we are taking some wonderful memories with us.

## Three historic keys and their labels



### BELOW AND LEFT

A cellar key once belonging to one Robert Blagden.

Its label, dated February 28th 1825 (or 1885) lists '10 Doz Port. 5 Doz Claret' and written indistinctly in pencil: '[?] was given to [?] for a party 1886'.

The label is a re-used business card once belonging to Mrs Thomas Turner, 36 Harley Street W, and Hilliers, Petworth. If she, or much more likely her husband, was a physician as the London



address suggests it seems incongruous or sinister that the card is black-bordered. Hilliers is half a mile out of Petworth on the Horsham road.

**RIGHT**

The key to the Bognor Grove water tank. The hand-made wooden tag is undated.

**BELOW**

The key to Shopham Bridge sand pit gate, September 1921. Its label is part of a post card.





## A work in progress at Lord's Piece

Jon Edgar goes back to a boulder of oak

After discarding most social media during the lock-down as a way of getting back to the basics of making new work, I had the possibility of working on a large block of wood as the result of safety work on a five-centuries-old oak in Barlavington. I wanted to rely on goodwill to create a new sculpture, making something locally to mark our time living in Fittleworth; sited somewhere I could walk or cycle to when I wanted to carve. One plan for my closest common came to nothing, but Lord's Piece was somewhere which I was drawn to as its particular heathland management keeps views open. Its northernmost fringe is also, remarkably, still within my home parish. As my blocks are worked on site and are not pre-planned, having walkers passing by directly influences the developing sculpture. Most of my large public works are limestone, but returning to a small 'boulder' of oak marks a change and a material that immediately sits comfortably in the landscape.

A journal site (<https://lordspiece.wordpress.com>) documents the working process, thoughts of the artist and future work dates, but will keep imagery ambiguous so those who wish to visit can savour what they find without feeling they have seen it all already. Jon's aim is to visit every two weeks, so progress is slow enough to involve as many people as possible through the carving process which will go on until Autumn 2022. **BELOW** The block in the early stages. Photograph by Anne Purkiss.



## After all these years

Gordon Stevenson goes back on the buses

As the son of a bus conductor, the job was always in the blood. My childhood tricycle was a bus and my local geography was learned from last year's timetables. In the summer of 1967, between school and university, I got to be a Pulborough-based conductor, working on the 22 between Petworth and Brighton and, on some Tuesdays and Saturdays, the 163 from Petworth to Bignor. My first sight of Burton Mill and pond was on my first 163.

Before the war, this route terminated at Sutton. After the war it extended to Bignor, and on some rare summer journeys continued to Bury with connections to Arundel. In the mid-1960s it ran via Fittleworth and Coates rather than Heath End, but in 1967 one regular passenger from Coates had to walk the mile to her nearest stop at Coates crossroads. My busiest trip from Bignor to Petworth was the Saturday of Pulborough Carnival, when I took nearly a pound. Everyone changed buses with the crew at Petworth to the Pulborough-bound 22, and I got to take all their fares again.

Fast forward to Petworth Heritage Weekend in September 2021. I get to conduct the vintage bus from Petworth to Coultershaw, Burton Mill and Coates crossroads, and once again cry 'Hold tight!', 'Any more fares? – sorry, donations', 'Coultershaw!', 'Burton Mill!', 'Middle of Nowhere!' (Coates crossroads). I have



persuaded Amberley Museum to lend me some kit: a Southdown overcoat and peaked hat, bell-punch machine and money bag. I have made a supply of pre-printed tickets based on some period Southdown tickets with a timeless advert on the back. The tickets are mainly for the children. Do they still stick things in diaries and scrapbooks or just scan them into their phones? For this special



service I have been given the task of devising the timetable and have planned five round-trips between 10.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. The bus turns up on time in the square. I crank the numbers to 163, remembering to read them backwards from inside the screen boxes.

‘Bus’ is short for ‘omnibus’ (for everyone). ‘Omnibus’ is short for ‘voitures omnibus’ (cars for everyone). Our voiture is certainly omnibus – everyone wants to ride and to ride on the open top deck of the 1964 Southdown ‘Queen Mary’. These buses had attachable tops for winter use and on my induction day in 1967 I remember seeing a great pile of their tops at Southdown’s Portslade works. The bus does not seem old to me because it was quite new in 1967 and its paintwork is as good as new. In the 1960s it would have worked on scenic summer routes like the 102 from Arundel to Devil’s Dyke and indeed I have a book with a photograph of 409 DCD, this very one, standing outside Brighton Pool Valley with 102 in the rear screen. My dad had worked on route 102 and may have worked on this very one. Gerald, the driver provided by Stagecoach, has done his homework on Google Earth – in 1967 I had to direct one or two relief drivers who didn’t know the 163 route. Incredibly my timetable works – no rush, no undue hanging around.

All too soon it’s over. Gerald has turned the bus round fifteen times, and around 200 passengers have travelled each way on our five round-trips. They seemed to enjoy it despite the trees brushing their hair. Gerald takes 409 DCD back to Chichester before going home to Salisbury. Buses are in his blood too – he’ll be taking another one to the King Alfred bus event in Winchester tomorrow.

Gordon’s father’s memories of 37 years’ service with Southdown can be found online at [www.southgrovebooks.co.uk](http://www.southgrovebooks.co.uk)

**OPPOSITE**

Both sides of the pre-printed tickets for the Petworth Heritage Weekend journey. They are based on some period Southdown tickets with an advertisement on the back which remains unexpectedly relevant today.

**BELOW**

The 1964 Southdown 'Queen Mary' waiting outside the Leocnfield Hall for its role in the Petworth Heritage Weekend in September 2021. The A-board on the far right indicates that it is also a Petworth Society book sale day.



Petworth Society Magazine No. 185 27

# Of moles and chainsaws

David Cole

Algie Moss, long-term farmer of Westland Farm at Fox Hill was a rustic country gentleman and a great character, in fact he was a modest and kindly man with a great sense of humour and he would be amazed to hear that anyone would be interested in his life and doing.

Algie was an old-fashioned farmer, he milked the house-cow by hand sitting on a three-legged stool, cut his corn with a binder, stooked the sheaves in the fields and threshed the corn with a great machine powered by whirling belts. In about 1970 it was decided that it would be in his landlord's interest if Algie were to retire, and the farm was to be gentrified and sold and so it was.

As part of his tenancy settlement Algie was moved to Whites Green as my next-door neighbour and the next few years were a complete delight. The house at Whites Green into which Algie moved was, in the 1600s, owned by a Mr Thomas White, hence Whites Green, always written without the apostrophe, where the fourteen-mile-long Petworth Park wall does an inexplicable dog-leg around the tiny area of common land of just five and three quarter acres.

Algie and I enjoyed weekly sessions in his parlour with slabs of strong cheese and jars of homemade pickled onions, the latter provided by me, washed down with plenty of Guinness, supplied by Algie. We watched television game shows on the huge-screened TVs which he bought second-hand and cheaply, all demonstrating the most appalling colour, contrast and sound. Both Algie and I would rock with laughter at the serious bits and mock the contestants when they got things wrong.

Algie's diet would have health enthusiasts tearing their hair out. Lots of meat and fish, bread but no vegetables, all fried in the huge black frying pan with infrequent fat changes. I must admit that mackerel flavoured rump steak is probably an acquired taste. Algie burnt wood to keep himself warm through the winter and dragged huge branches, found beside the road, back to his cottage, tied with an old rope to the rear bumper of one of his ancient Jaguars. The branches would be cut to size using a venerable chainsaw brought from the

**OPPOSITE** Sneezewort, *Achillea ptarmica* and other flowers and grasses on Whites Green which is now a precious example of unimproved pasture. Photograph by David Cole. The perfume of sneezewort is supposed to induce sneezing but in the past the herb was chiefly employed as a relief for toothache. Its bitter-tasting leaves have sometimes been used in salads although as they are poisonous to horses and cattle they are probably best avoided.



farm with a petrol engine the size of a motorbike. Well into his eighties, I would sometimes catch him standing on top of his woodpile, roaring chainsaw in hand with the chain bar passing between his wellie-booted feet. My own sons have banned me from such devices but needs must when the Devil drives.

Above all Algie had a hatred of moles and one day soon after he moved in I noticed a figure wearing striped pyjama trousers and a long sports jacket standing motionless on his lawn at six o'clock in the morning. BANG !! And his trusty Winchester .410 shotgun saw off another of his enemies – later I heard a raucous noise from his garden and found Algie sawing the end off his shotgun because he had dipped the tip of the barrel into the soil and exploded it. That gun lived in my gun cupboard after his death until I decided that old age and guns were not a good idea and surrendered my shotgun certificate and firearms licence.

They threw away the mould when Algie went and I still miss him. Next time remind me to tell you about Algie's bowler hat and the giant spider, and why he never slept in the cold bedroom at the east end of the house.

As the only freeholder on the common I continue to maintain the green as best I can which, thanks to an annual cut and clear, boasts an amazing wildflower meadow. I have done so for more than twenty years, but I'm eighty years old this year and not sure what the future holds. The common is always worth a trip out in the summer for the sneezewort flush if you miss the spring orchids – you'll find Whites Green on the boundary between Tillington and Lurgashall parishes – and both parishes try to look after our souls. (O.S. grid 494700,125100. Post code GU28 9BD).

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## Phillip Potter – Clerk of Works

Max Egremont. Introduction by Miles Costello

Petworth has a long tradition of Clerks of Works, or CoWs as the title has unfortunately been abbreviated to, stretching at least as far back as the sixteenth century. Usually skilled tradesmen, they followed in the footsteps of Geoffrey Chaucer who once held that position at Windsor Castle, and, while they laboured silently behind the scenes, each one left his mark on history. Every Leconfield property that is maintained or renovated at Petworth not only bears the distinctive muddy brown livery but also the handprint of the Clerk of Works and we really shouldn't underestimate the importance of such managers to the great landed estates.

During part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was the remarkably versatile Upton family who provided the district with agents, surveyors and clerks

of works. Henry Upton dominated both the Estate and the town for many years and was a significant property owner in his own right. A little later the redoubtable Mr. Sutton took on the challenging role. It was Sutton, we are led to believe, who is the character portrayed in a photograph by Walter Kevis performing acrobatics on the much-lamented steeple of St. Mary's Church. A practice not to be recommended and in any case no longer possible. Between the wars the much less flamboyant Arthur Godsolve would keep the ship steady and on course through choppy waters. More recently the inimitable Roger Wootton stepped forward and guided the Estate Works Department into the new millennium.

Phillip Potter chose to continue this fine tradition of tradesmen-managers at Petworth and though he was here just a short time it seems appropriate that we record in the words of his employer the contribution he made to the Estate and to the town.

The following paragraphs are from part of a eulogy given by Lord Egremont at Phillip's funeral on 27th April at St. Mary's Church.

To be Clerk of the Works on the Leconfield Estate is a demanding and hard job. It involves the care of over 260 cottages, of many farm buildings and barns, of historic houses and gardens and the supervision of a team of some fifteen people and many subcontractors. Phillip Potter saw all this as an exciting challenge when he came to Petworth six years ago. He was fortunate to have had a remarkable predecessor in Roger Wootton and it is a tribute to them both how well these two determined individuals got on. Roger felt that he had a fine successor. They even shared a birthday, although of course far apart in age.

Phillip came well-prepared for the job, being a person of discipline and energy. Born in 1960, he had grown up in a military atmosphere. His father was a soldier in the Blues and Royals regiment of the Household Cavalry and members of the royal family were often in evidence. An early memory of Phillip's was of being sworn at by the Duke of Edinburgh for getting in the way of the ducal carriage. Apparently, that day some new and pungent words were added to the little boy's vocabulary. Luckily Phillip seemed to have forgotten or buried them by the time he came to us.

Construction and surveying and the building industry formed the background to Phillip's life, in Hertfordshire, then as part of a multi-national team in the Libyan desert oil and gas fields (where he spent his 21st birthday), then at Knebworth House near Stevenage where he and Amanda had a very good relationship with the Lytton-Cobbold family. At Knebworth, the work involved cottages and buildings and events such as concerts and functions in the park and mansion. At Knebworth, Phillip first experienced the distinctive atmosphere of an



historic family estate. Less to his taste were the evening classes in economics which he needed for a further qualification in Building Studies. From 1990 until 1998, he was surveyor and Clerk of the Works at the South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare Trust.

By 1998, Phillip, his wife Amanda, and son Jordan, who had been born in 1993, wanted a new challenge. This involved a move to Oundle School, to be Clerk of the Works, responsible for a large area of historic buildings, some of which dated from the seventeenth century. Phillip remained there for some 22 years. In 2015, he decided to exchange coping with eccentric school teachers and obstreperous teenagers for the Leconfield Estate. I am not sure that he found Sussex landowners – their families, their agents and their tenants – any easier.

However, we certainly took to Phillip. We appreciated his calm and sensible way of looking at life, his skill and his tact, his sensitivity and his gentleness, his immaculate appearance and courtesy, his enthusiasm, his determination and his ability to inspire loyalty. From the moment that they moved into a house on Grove street with their ten-year-old black Labrador Kiwi, Phillip and Amanda let us warm to them. They made many friends in and around Petworth.

Phillip followed his hobbies of shooting and history, fascinated to find during the restoration of a pond in Petworth Park a mortar bomb left over from the Canadian troops in the second world war. The cottage repair programme took on a spurt; he supervised work on the Gog Lodges. He was tireless during our son George's wedding to Cruz Maria, saying to a feeble provider of tents that 'Those bloody wigwams are going up even if I have to put them all up myself!' Phillip quickly became a Leconfield and a Sussex man. He took part in Leconfield cricket matches and walked with Jordan and Amanda across the South Downs. When supervising his team, he came to understand the saying 'Sussex won't be druv.'

Phillip has left us much too soon. Our sympathies go to Amanda and to Jordan; I know what a close family they are. We will always be grateful for what he did for my family and for the Leconfield Estate. Because of this, and because of his delightful character, Phillip Potter will remain deep not only in our thoughts but in our hearts as well.

# Plot toffee

Margaret Yao

Way back in 2001 I corresponded for a short while with Margaret Yao who at the time was living in Swaziland. Margaret is the daughter of Norman Green the one-time Petworth Sanitary Inspector. The Green family lived at 20 Station Road but by the time of our correspondence they had dispersed and none of them remained local. Margaret has recently been back in touch and has sent some random recollections related to her by her brother Peter. (Ed.)

## The Post Office

Yes it was on the street that came down from the church towards New Street, on the right hand side. The public part was fairly small, but there was a bigger section which I suppose were offices. Almost opposite was a chemists and further down near the corner of New Street there was a grocers. I remember going into the back of the shop late in the year with Mum and watching powdered almonds being taken out of a large bin. It may well have been rationed at the time and certainly it was treated like gold. Mum made almond paste from it and I can still taste it. Turn right down New Street and the library was there on the right. Small but a treasure house, I can picture going there on a wet winter's evening to change my books. Inside it would be warm and muggy because of all the wet coats and with that special library smell. The children's section was behind the checkout desk, just two cases, and at times I thought I'd read every book.

## Bonfire Night and plot toffee

My memories of fireworks nights are multiple. One year there was a bonfire in the field at the end of Sadler's Yard, and for some reason I collected the burnt-out firework cases and put them in my pocket. Well, one of them clearly wasn't completely out and it melted the Rayon lining to my coat. Mum was mad at me. I also remember having some plot toffee in my other pocket. One year there was a big bonfire on the gravel circle by the council houses the other side of Station Road where the Savage boys lived.

## Washington Copse and the swing bridge

I knew the copse behind Station Road very well, just a beautiful sea of bluebells in the spring though I didn't know that it was called Washington Copse. Was Hungers Lane the path down from Petworth Park to the swing bridge? It had

stories of headless horsemen and there were stinging nettles higher than I was. Just at the bottom end of the lane there was a cottage high up on the bank which was difficult to see, and where we were told a recluse lived. Sometimes we would hear a dog barking and we would always rush past. The swing bridge was really great fun as its boards had become rather rotten and if a person at one end jumped when someone was just about in the middle it would cause the bridge to bounce up and down and everyone would laugh. I think that there was a sign up to say no swimming because there had been a polio outbreak.

Do you remember the dam? It was there to divert water to the mill, and had a flat surface about two feet wide which only had an inch or so of water, or none at all in the summer, and you could run across it. The widening below the dam was used as a swimming hole. There was a rowing boat, owned by someone who lived just upstream of the mill, and we would borrow it and row up to the swing bridge. We would maroon a couple on the bridge, and two others in the boat would attack it, all using mud balls as ammunition. We got into trouble one time as we left the dinghy dirty! My last memory of the area was a Scouts-wide game, where we were driven round Petworth to disorient us, then taken out into the country and marooned in the dark to make our way back home. We had no idea where we were until we suddenly heard and recognised the roar of the mill – then we knew the way home – until then I think our idea was that we were north of Hampers Green, and the hill to the south of us was Petworth, when in fact it was the hill behind the railway station

### New Grove and The Gog

The barn where the cubs met was over on the lane that went south from the High Street. It was part of a big house, but was ideal as a place for wide games as the Sheepdowns was just a few hundred yards away. We would hide in the bracken on the Downs and try to crawl up to the flag without being caught. I'd forgotten the name of New Grove. Our meeting spot was a room upstairs, dusty and probably totally unsafe. When you had thirty boys hopping across the floor (the aim was for the one starter in the middle to knock the others down, then they joined the middle and it got harder and harder to hop across), the room would shake. Good memories, I never felt the same about the new scout hut, it just wasn't the same.

We used to go riding our bikes in the Gog, there was one racetrack we created that was used often, but it was a bit of a climb to get there – uphill whichever way you went. There was Gog and Magog at the entrance from the hills, and the Sugar Loafs, two rounded copses of evergreens. By bike we used the road towards Fittleworth as far as the Welldiggers Arms, and then took a little road that ran up past the Gog and on to Fox Hill.

# Random Papers

Constance Leconfield

There are varying degrees of scarcity when collecting Petworth books and *Random Papers* by Constance Leconfield is certainly in the upper half of any list. Published privately in 1938 it was printed at the Grange Press in Southwick in December of that year. A collection of essays assembled to celebrate Lady Leconfield's 'ninety-third Christmas'; the following article had originally been written for the *Petworth Parish Magazine* of May, 1931. Apart from giving us a useful description of the parish church before the great changes made during the rearranging of the interior early in the twentieth century the author looks back to a Petworth of some six decades earlier, and much as we do today, she appears to be reflecting on a slower and friendlier town, while at the same time conceding that little had changed during that period. I do wonder if we were now to look back over a similar period we could say the same. (Ed.)

## Petworth

There are still some living who remember Petworth as it was when I first saw it sixty years ago, and they will say, like me, that the dear old place remains much the same, in spite of the march of time. On the way from the station we do indeed note changes: first the changes in Coultershaw Mill, then new buildings on either side of the road, but when we get into Pound Street we feel more at home, the houses looking like old friends – until we reach the new garage belonging to the Swan Inn, and see the new gates leading up to Petworth House. In 1867 we turned left through what was then called Chandler's Lodge, the carriage drive leading straight into the park, for the main entrance to the house was through the Marble Hall, and the carriage drive led up to it. The usual entrance, however, was at the back of the house, and opened into a passage leading from the grand stairs on one side to the offices on the other, and which stood rather further back than the present Arcade. The tennis court in those days was next to the house, standing at right angles to the North gallery, and shutting out the pleasure ground, and the fountain, now on the South Green, stood between the house and the offices.

I wonder how many can remember or can recall the kennels as they then stood, close to the Turkey Lodge, and abutting on the garden wall, or who can remember when that same wall enclosed the whole garden and reached down

to where the tennis court now stands. Then Church Street as it was then, the churchyard surrounded by houses, leaving open only the gateway leading to the south door of the church. It is difficult to realise that, in the space close to the Church Lodge, where two rhododendron bushes now grow, there once stood Mr. Bryant's (the stationer) shop, and only a few yards away, on the other side of the entrance to the church, were two more houses, Mr. Morgan's, the chemist being one. The War Memorial now occupies part of the site. The houses still standing in Church Street have mostly undergone alterations, not always, I fear, for the better, while the church itself, though outwardly unchanged, would hardly be recognised by young people if they beheld it as it was in the 'sixties and 'seventies. It was not alone of its kind, rather it was typical of most country churches in those days, and Mr. Henry Sockett, Rector of Sutton, who remembered it in his childhood, told me how greatly it had been improved since then, the old-fashioned high, square pews having been removed and replaced by open seats.

Be that as it may, the church in those days looked very different to what it does now. The pulpit stood a little way down the nave, underneath the tablet to Mr. Klanert's memory and the seats were made to face it, so that those nearest to the chancel on the pulpit side had their backs turned to the altar. The organ and choir were in the chancel, the organ blocking up one of the arches leading to St. Thomas's Chapel, the men singers in front of the organ, the ladies on the other side, backed by the Rectory pew. There was no altar screen, and St. Thomas's Chapel stood empty save for the monuments and the statue of Lord Egremont in the centre. A large gallery ran round three sides of the nave, with a smaller gallery high up at the west end, in which sat the schoolchildren. The walls were drab coloured, the galleries painted in imitation oak, and decorated at Christmas with a text, the letters cut out in white on a crimson background, edged with holly – a real labour of love which few would be willing to undertake now.

The pulpit was one known as a three-decker, Mattins and Litany being said at a desk in the centre, whilst at the foot sat the Clerk, who led the responses. A move was made to the altar for the Ante-Communion service during the singing of a hymn, the sermon followed the creed and, except on the first Sunday in the month, this concluded the morning service. A surplice choir was not thought of in those days and there was little music, only the canticles, the Gloria, and three hymns being sung. I do not remember the hymn book being first used, but Church Hymns was introduced in the 'seventies and was received by some with suspicion. 'Those Amens are creepy things,' said an old friend of ours when she saw the book; she feared that we were moving on. We have moved on and are thankful for it.

How much comes back to us when we remember the church then. Mr. Holland in the pulpit in the black gown then almost always worn by the preacher, Mr. Arnold sitting beneath, Mrs. Holland and her family in the chancel, the well-known faces in the choir, the galleries, and the pews, more than one can name here, but never forgotten. Their memory lives with us, too, as we leave the church, seeing the streets in which they lived which now know them no more.

We miss also old customs now died out, the church bell which rang every evening at eight o'clock, known as the curfew, but which recalled the Angelus, starting, as it did, with three times three strokes. Another bell, too, which came to an end before my time, was known as the shoemaker's bell, and was rung every morning at six o'clock, but this roused too many from their slumbers and was given up many years ago.

One last word about shoemakers. Does anyone remember what my children called the 'wooden-legged' house in North Street, the upper storey of which, supported by wooden posts, stretched over the path into a garden? At an open window, over this doorway, a shoemaker used to sit, plying his trade. I can see him now as I write.

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## The Loss of Petworth Spire

The June magazine was very much inclined toward the history and loss of the spire of our parish church, and as if by coincidence the following short poem, 'The Loss of Petworth Spire' lamenting the destruction has surfaced. The anonymous poem is dated 1947 and if by chance the lament has previously appeared elsewhere I can only apologise. (Ed.)

On that sad day when Petworth lost its  
spire  
There went, he said a something from  
the town;  
That needle on the Downs would point  
us higher  
Than church or house or field we here  
can own.  
We saw it distant from the southern  
plain  
Repeat the theme of spired Chichester  
Or seen from northern Blackdown's  
slopes again

It pointing stood a landmark near and  
far.  
We can but mourn the steeple that is  
gone,  
As one the exiled Jews more deeply sad  
Lamented by the streams of Babylon  
And thought they ne'er would see what  
they had had.  
We know for them another glory broke,  
The Lord can speak again who once  
hath spoke.

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## The Summer of 1976

From notes left by the late 'Jumbo' Taylor

For once and maybe only one in many lifetimes the summer we have just passed through has been one of the most memorable in so many ways for so many different people young and old alike. Starting around the second week in April with the cold light frost in the early mornings, the days were usually warm and sunny. The ground after another dry mild winter had but very little moisture in it. Ditches were already dry and even a few had cracks down through them. The Blackthorn set the pattern of things the blossom on it being out of this world, each group of trees like some giant snowball. In the old lanes it hung from both sides and gave the appearance of trees weighed down by snow. As this bloom died away so did all the other trees and shrubs in turn show themselves off. The swallows and swifts returned early as did the cuckoo. There were very many more of them this spring calling loud and often, down in the leafy blossomed woods and hedgerows. I never heard one this year that lost its voice as they so often do as time draws on, nor can I recall when they stopped.

By the 18th of May temperatures were already up in the 80s and we all thought that it was both the beginning and the end of one of our more recent summers. As so often we were greatly wrong and well deceived by nature. The trees without exception threw bloom as never before being weighed down by it. The birds were often gasping for moisture in the burning heat of the brilliant blue skied sunny days, as were we. The further in we went the hotter it got day and night. The streams shrivelled and dried. The ponds did likewise. So many small farm ponds and holes in the woods which had never been dry before now opened their hearts to let us see the mud, muck and rubbish that generations of humans had bestowed to their once dark and murky waters. For some it was a blessing in disguise and they were set upon by the more enthusiastic country folk who took it upon themselves to remove the filth and debris, to allow new life in an old pond.

It just went on getting drier, for most of June and July it cleaned up into and above the 90s and up to 98 in the shade on into the 100s for a few days. The bottoms of the streams and ponds groaned and split wide open in a maze of octagonal cracks three to four inches wide and often 15 inches and more deep. Anything that was once grass became parched as were the many acres of corn which ripened all too soon, the whole of the landscape resembling the African plains at their most barren. The harvest was over and done with before we had time to think, most of it being in by the first week in August.

Very many common and hedge and roadside fires arose due to the tinder dry nature of everything. No ploughing was possible and the various water companies had all imposed different degrees of restriction, though none have the practical experience to be capable of dealing with such a problem, all trying to blind us with science and becoming more confused themselves in the process.

During June and onwards lots of tree started dying, mostly birch, but as the months moved on the hazel started to go, then the beech. Although all the beech are loaded with nuts they have all been badly affected. Looking out over the woods and fields it begins to look pretty grim with many areas of brown, showing dead or dying trees. We won't really know till the spring just how bad it was, all cricket outfielders were parched brown and unfriendly to field on. The deer in the park have also been pretty hard pressed and have been fed of late with waste fruit and vegetables from various markets and warehouses, but they look reasonably well. Of course the oak trees look very well and it seems to have done them some good. They stayed green and fresh all of the time and are loaded with acorns and don't look like losing their leaves. Plenty of apples. Not many potatoes, they will be ten pence or two shillings a pound by Xmas.

The big pond in the Park dipped about two feet allowing the deer on to the islands to feed and get out to some of the rushes, but otherwise it's O.K. We pumped the Lower Pond right out in early January and removed all the fish. It then took a few months to get enough water in so that we could put fish in. It got within 30 inches of its overflow level then stopped. The trout survived reasonably well but with so little rain and such very hot weather it evaporated by some further 18 inches leaving a very large expanse of mud. About three-quarters of the area being dry and splitting open with huge cracks.

The main problem then being that a lot of the old wartime explosives came to light and some of these were dug out and taken home by the idiots of Hampers Green and the Bomb Disposal Squad were called out on several occasions. In order to cut down the possibility of the inevitable happening I decided that two of us, David Wort and myself would turn the mud over and remove what we found, passing the material on to the police or the Bomb Squad. In all we unearthed 25 mortars, 500 rounds of .303 ammunition, 80 cartridge detonators and a dozen 3-inch anti-tank mortars, some fuses from phosphorous grenades which were extremely dangerous and four grenades which had the appearance of a tin of



**BELOW** 'The big pond in the Park...About three quarters of the area being dry and splitting open with huge cracks'.



grease. In fact it was wickedly dangerous being similar to napalm and as soon as it came into contact with air it would start to burn. Had anyone come into contact with this and handled it or got it on their skin it would have burnt right through to the bone. A lot of the ammunition that we recovered was collected by the authorities the rest I discharged myself on a fire between two large logs laying parallel and together. I placed explosives in the middle and faced them out over the pond; the magnesium candles in the mortars, along with the rifle ammo made for a rather spectacular display upsetting the ducks no end. But there were no problems otherwise. In all we cleared two trailer loads of rubbish back to the tip.

Of course it now needed to rain, which it did during the second week in September first just the odd day, then rain and more rain. Soon the ponds, rivers and ditches had filled and by late November were overflowing. The rain carried on through the winter and on into the spring of 1977, and although we had another mild, damp winter it has never this year really got warm. It has of course been fairly dry again since mid-June. There is great evidence in the woods and hedgerows of the damage and death caused by last summer. Hundreds of Beech and Birch have gone. Particularly to the north of Petworth on the clay ground, worse really than the elm disease of the last few years. Now with what must be the coolest summer, in my time anyway. The wind at north and east could, if it stays there, break another record or two during the next ten months.

# Researching the power of the Rother

Hazel J. Flack

Interesting things are happening at Coultershaw. There are plans for the heritage site to become a centre of research and education for the length of the Rother valley, and while concentrating on the river itself it will also include associated industries and communities. Hazel Flack has joined the team as lead research volunteer and has brought an impressive level of expertise and experience with her. In the first of a series of occasional updates Hazel reports on the current state of the research. (Ed.)

The Coultershaw Heritage Site, which is located in the South Downs National Park on the A285, a mile and a half south of Petworth, comprises a waterwheel, an historic water pump, a state-of-the-art twenty-first century water turbine, and historic buildings around a mill pond.

A small volunteer research team, based at Coultershaw, is planning to create permanent displays for a new exhibition space in the restored south warehouse (currently a work in progress). The space will also provide room for temporary exhibitions and other activities. We would welcome more researchers to our team; see the end of this article for details.

One area of research will be focused on the power of the River Rother, and the way water has been used for centuries to power at least thirty sites including mills, furnaces and iron works. The team also hopes to research the development of transport in the Rother valley from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, and how it shaped, and was shaped by, the landscape and the local rural life along its length. We have started looking first at the development and use of water power.

The team will work closely with other heritage and local history societies, as well as the West Sussex Records Office, to investigate some of the engineering, social and built histories of these sites. What follows is a preview of some of the historical records yet to be researched in more detail:

## Maps, plans and images

Historical maps or plans of some of the sites, such as Milland, Cocking and Iping Mills, are available from the mid-seventeenth century or earlier, showing how the areas have changed over the years. Very few of the sites are in their original form, many have been converted to other uses, and several have little or no above-

ground trace of the original buildings. It is hoped that these old maps and plans, alongside glass negatives and photographs from the last two centuries, will give us some fascinating detail about how the sites would have looked when they were operational.

#### Deeds, sales particulars, inventories, and invoices

A wealth of documentation, some of it dating back two or three centuries, or even older, should give an insight into some of the early tenants, leaseholders and owners of the mills, the fixtures and fittings included on the sites, rents and so on. A notebook from 1889 has records of horses and vans at Stedham Mill, while details about a new bridge to be built at Midhurst North Mill in the nineteenth century are included in a surveyor's report and other correspondence, alongside an invoice for repairs fifty years later.

#### Personal and social histories

Diaries and letters, as well as formally recorded oral histories, will provide much of the social history of the sites, in particular the people who lived or worked at the various mills. Horace Brightwell has left some written notes about Hurst Mill from 1941, Charles Russell worked at the Hurst, Terwick and Bex Mills and was interviewed in 1978; at the same time Mrs Catt and Mrs Gwillim also give their stories from their times living at Midhurst North Mill.<sup>1</sup> Other personal histories are available from Iping and Terwick Mills, and from 1843 a letter relating to Midhurst North Mill refers to fears over an effect on trade due to the Canada Corn Bill.

#### Tragedy, crime and civil disputes

Newspaper and journal articles provide further sources, including a dispute over fixtures and fittings between tenants; an allegation of a bankrupt absconding from Hurst Mill in 1877; a woman charged with stealing wheat flour from the same mill in 1811; destruction through fire at Iping Mill; and an allegation from 1929 regarding the owner of Fittleworth Mill including a public footpath within the enclosure of his property.

A father and son from Harting, on their way home from Petersfield Market, were crushed to death by the mill wheel at Hurst Mill, after stopping to help set it going. Both Hardham and Coultershaw Mills featured in murder cases, in May and October 1861 respectively, as in both instances the murderer was finally found close to one of the mills.

#### Art

Several of the mills have been depicted by nineteenth and twentieth-century

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artists. John Constable (1776-1837) produced a delicate and atmospheric pencil sketch of Fittleworth Mill in 1834, while Ivon Hitchens (1893-1979) produced two oil paintings in his figurative/abstract style of scenes around Terwick Mill in about 1945). Other views of Fittleworth Mill and the surrounding area were produced by George Cole (1810-83) and Edward Wilkins Waite (1854-1924), and an engraving of Coster's Mill was produced by William Rainey (1852-1936).

We would welcome more volunteers to help us with some of this research. If you'd like to find out more about getting involved, please contact Tony Sneller at [tonysneller@gmail.com](mailto:tonysneller@gmail.com). To find out about visiting the Coultershaw Heritage Site, please visit <https://coultershaw.co.uk>

Hazel J. Flack, MA has joined the team at the Coultershaw Heritage Site as lead research volunteer:

1. Phyllis Catt's *A Miller's Daughter*, first published many years ago is scheduled to be re-issued in a revised edition in Spring 2022.



George Cole (1810-83) 'Fittleworth Old Mill, River Rother, Sussex', 1881, oil on canvas, 104 x 150 cm., Leicester Museums and Galleries. George Cole was born in Portsmouth and after serving an apprenticeship as a ship's painter in the Royal Navy dockyards, he taught himself to paint landscapes. With his idealised depiction of landscape he became a successful and popular painter with a London house and a small estate in Hampshire.

# The Barrington-Kennett boys

Paul de Zulueta

Basil, Victor and Aubrey Barrington-Kennett: three brothers from the parish of Tillington who gave their lives in the Great War.

I have long had an affection for English parish churches and their reassuring sense of continuity. When I first came to the hamlet of Upperton in the winter of 2017, I made a point of visiting the local church of All Hallows in Tillington. I am from a different tribe and I did not intend to worship there but I knew the church, founded in the twelfth century when the pope was its patron, would tell the story of a community and its shared memories: the parish register and its record of births, marriages and deaths; the church walls showing prominent families and, among the graves, the unsung lives of ordinary men and women of Tillington who made no great claims for themselves but, without whom, all would not be well. As I entered All Hallows one evening, I reflected on that evocative line of verse from TS Eliot's poem 'Little Gidding.'

So, while the light fails  
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.<sup>1</sup>

As I had served in the British army, I have always been drawn to remembrance plaques on parish church walls. I had three great-aunts, whom I loved a great deal, who had all been born in the 1890s and who lost their fiancées in the Great War. They, like Violet Barrington-Kennett, Basil's widow, never became engaged or married again. As I wandered around All Hallows, glancing at names and families that were, and still are, part of the fabric of Petworth and its surrounding villages, my eye caught the plaque in memory of the three sons of Brackley and Ellinor Barrington-Kennett.

I mentioned the plaque to Gerald Gresham-Cooke, a Tillington village elder and parish councilor, whom I knew to be both simpatico and knowledgeable about the local tapestry. Gerald lent me a book, *Village Boys Still* by Trevor Purnell where he recounts the lives of the 31 men from the parish of Tillington who were killed in action in the Great War. The book is both meticulous in its research and moving, an abiding salute to their memory.

It is hard today to comprehend the scale of the nation's sacrifice in the Great

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War. But, as the lasting public commitment to Remembrance Sunday and the wearing of poppies shows, the sacrifice has not been forgotten. It has become part of the nation's inherited psyche. Ellinor and Brackley Barrington-Kennett's personal sacrifice in losing three of their four sons is unimaginable.

Ellinor wrote a book in 1916 called *Four Little Brothers* about the childhood adventures of four fictional boys, Rex, Godfrey, Lionel and Humphrey. People cope with profound grief in different ways but the book was clearly Ellinor's brave attempt at coming to terms with her loss. The final page of the book makes for touching reading but, typical of its time, accepting of providence.

Since this story was written the Great War has come, and first baby Humphrey, then Rex, and then Lionel have all been called on to give their lives in action for King and Country and the cause of Honour and Truth.

### Basil

In the few years given to him, Basil Barrington-Kennett, Ellinor and Brackley's eldest son, led a life full of adventure and excitement. Basil was one of the first officers in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), the air arm of the British army, formed in 1912 and later to become the RAF in 1918. He had left Sandhurst Military Academy in 1906 and joined the Grenadier Guards, the senior regiment of infantry in the army. There is a photograph of Basil in the frock-coat of the Grenadiers in 1910. At least six-foot-three in his stockings, firm of gaze and chin, blond wavy hair and sporting the regulation (compulsory until 1916) moustache, Basil was every inch the glamorous Guards officer and a future poster boy for the RFC.

In 1909, Basil joined the Royal Aero Club, entering balloon races before enrolling in the famous Drexel Flying School in the New Forest. After £80 of lessons (some ten thousand in today's money), he gained his aviator's certificate (UK aviator No. 43) and, in 1912, won the Mortimer Singer prize for long-distance flying, travelling 249 miles 840 yards at a height of 250 feet in four hours and 51 minutes. His prize money was £500 (sixty thousand today). Basil was soon one of the most prominent aviators in the land. As James McCudden VC remarked in his book, *Flying Fury*, the RFC 'was highly disciplined and efficient, due in no small part to B-K (as he was always known in the RFC) who brought the ethos and esprit de corps of the Guards with him.'

Basil married Violet Hargreaves in January 1913. They had just 18 happy months together before the outbreak of war in August 1914 and B-K's posting to France as the principal staff officer to the RFC advance unit. He was a fine staff officer but his temperament and loyalty to the Grenadiers, now in the thick of it on the Western Front, spurred him on to return to his old regiment. Given

that the life expectancy of an infantry officer in the front line in 1915 was three weeks, Basil's decision was typically selfless. A month after his arrival, Basil's company was ordered to attack a farmhouse bristling with German machine guns. The ground was flat and there was no cover over the 600 yards they had to cross. Leading his men in the first rush, Major Basil Barrington-Kennett was killed instantly.

The official war diary of the 2nd Grenadier Guards recorded his death without emotion – 'Major Barrington-Kennett killed in action and is buried at Le Touret'.

His contemporaries, however, felt the loss keenly. Maurice Baring wrote: 'Of all the bitter losses I had to bear throughout the war, it was, without exception, this particular loss I felt the most, the taste of war turned bitter indeed. B-K, a true Christian, the most completely unselfish man I had ever met, a compound of loyalty and generosity of spirit.'

### Victor

Victor Barrington-Kennett's early life was full of promise. He was shy of manner but possessed a quiet dignity. He may not have been as glamorous as his elder brother, Basil, but he had all of his courage and selflessness. Victor was a King's Scholar at Eton, captain of cricket, an exhibitioner to Balliol College, Oxford, and started his career as a banker. After the war, there is little doubt that Victor would have made an important contribution to our national life. But like the rest of his generation of men, in the words of Wilfred Owen, 'sleep mothered them and left the twilight sad.'

Victor, inspired by Basil's exploits in the air, joined the Royal Aero Flying Club in 1911. Basil had qualified as UK aviator No. 43; Victor was now UK aviator No. 191. Victor's best friend was Denys Finch Hatton, immortalised in Karen Blixen's 1937 book *Out of Africa*, and in the 1985 film of the same name where Denys, killed in an air crash, was played by Robert Redford.

Victor joined the RFC Expeditionary Force at the war's outbreak. His squadron was in continuous action, flying B.E-8s with 20-lb bombs. Early in 1916, Victor was promoted to Squadron Commander and took the initiative to fly their one Bristol Scout to chase off enemy planes. While pursuing a hostile plane on the morning of March 13th, he was shot down by Max Immelmann, a German ace. Such was the chivalry between the two flying corps, a German aircraft dropped a note addressed to the RFC.

To the Royal Flying Corps: Flying machine with Major V. Barrington-Kennett has fallen near Serre. Pilot dead. We shall bury him in Miraumont Communal Cemetery. German Aviators March 21st, 1916.



An RAF (Royal Aircraft Factory) B E-8 similar to that flown by Victor Barrington-Kennett. A picture reproduced from a contemporary newspaper photograph.

By all accounts, Victor, who had now lost two brothers in the war, embraced the idea that he would meet his fate somewhere in the sky above.

### Aubrey

Aubrey Barrington-Kennett, the youngest son, was the first to be killed in action. Born in 1890, Aubrey went up to Oxford after Radley College. He was not a sportsman but threw his energy into the Oxford University Training Corps (OTC). After Oxford and bored by the tedium of his time in the City, Aubrey applied for a commission in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. His medical examination described him as a ‘tall, slim gentleman with sufficient teeth.’ Why ‘sufficient teeth’ was considered important in 1914 is anybody’s guess though if you watched Peter Jackson’s remarkable Great War footage painstakingly restored in colour, ‘They shall not grow old’ (BBC, 2018) where most of the men were largely toothless, you could see why this might have been important in a medical.

Aubrey was killed in action on September 19th 1914, just six weeks after Britain declared war. His death, like so many in the Great War, followed a foolhardy and doomed counter-attack across flat ground with no cover. The retreating Germans brought heavy artillery to bear against Aubrey’s regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Davies’ diary records:

Heavy shelling as we prepared to attack, Barrington-Kennett, though badly



hit, refused to allow the men to carry him to the dressing-station. When eventually brought in, he was very cheerful but in a poor state. He died after having his arm off.' A great loss as his men knew that he always put their interests first.

Today Aubrey Barrington-Kennett lies at peace in Vailly British Cemetery, close to the north bank of the River Aisne. Ellinor visited her youngest son's grave in 1922 where she wrote these words:

We laid him in the orchard's shade  
And with the peasants' kindly aid  
We decked his grave with flowers  
Fresh waking in those morning hours.

Ellinor died aged 84 in 1933 and was buried with her husband, Brackley, in Tillington Cemetery. Brackley had died in 1919, broken by the loss of his three sons. Violet never re-married and the war's immediate aftermath was troublesome. She had also lost her younger brother, Sydney, at Picardy in 1918 and her elder brother, Reginald, was badly disabled with shell-shock and physical injuries. Money was tight, although she did receive Basil's army pension of £140 a year (twenty thousand today), backdated to the day of his death in May 1915 with a gratuity of £300 (44 thousand today).

There is a photograph of Violet in the early summer of 1953 attending an RAF dinner at the Empire Test Pilots' School at Boscombe Down in Hampshire. She is donating Basil's personal flying mementoes. At her side is Air Chief Marshall Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, a friend and contemporary of Basil's in the RFC in 1914. Violet, then aged 64, looks a handsome woman with a gracious and happy demeanor. She died peacefully in 1977, aged 88, and is buried in the village churchyard in Barnsley, Gloucestershire. The inscription on her gravestone with its salute to the RAF motto reads:

In loving memory of Violet Barrington-Kennett  
1889-1977  
And of her husband Major Basil Barrington-Kennett  
Killed in action in France 1915

Per Ardua ad Astra  
[through adversity to the stars]

1. T S Eliot 'Little Gidding' from *Four Quartets* (1943), part V, lines 22-24.