No.191. June 2023

THE PETWORTH SOCIETY *magazine*

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ABOVE
Not what at first it seems. A blocked window which has been rendered and and painted to produce a convincing trompe l'oeil deception in Station Road, Petworth. See 'Daylight robbery' on page 38.

FRONT AND BACK COVERS
August should be a good time for a late crop of hay but this picture is a reminder that what the Met Office now refers to as 'extreme weather events', although becoming more frequent, are nothing new. George Garland's original caption to this photograph is 'Hay wagons submerged, Stopham Bridge, 13 August 1960.'

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, anwhere 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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EDITORIAL

Andrew Loukes

Along with its daffodils and bluebells, Spring is also marked in Petworth by the annual reopening of our much-treasured heritage sites: Coultershaw and the Petworth Cottage Museum. It is fitting, therefore, that stalwart volunteers from each – Tony Sneller (Coultershaw) and Andrew Howard (the Museum) – have contributed related pieces to this issue. Meanwhile, my own Picture Note not only serves as an additional illustration to Tony's bicentenary commemoration of William Cobbett's ride through Petworth but also demonstrates how works of art can add richness to our understanding of the past; similarly, the value of archival material is clear when we follow Andrew's researches into the former residents of 346 High Street.

Although the link between Petworth and the battlefield at Waterloo may not be an obvious one, the latest in a series of conversations between Lady Egremont and Roger Wootton reveals the extraordinary story of how a very special connection lives on. The great cost of the Napoleonic Wars behind that narrative was inevitably met at the time by drastic rises in levies such as the window tax, whose wider history and impact is explored by Paul de Zulueta. His article is guaranteed to make 'window peepers' of us all.

Recollections of more recent times come from lifelong Byworth resident Ray Hunt, who shares his valuable memories with Jonathan Newdick in an interview which, among a wealth of other reflections, makes us wish that the village bakery was still there. In Petworth, an example from his postcard collection prompts a personal memory from Henry Wakeford which may chime with others.

While I missed both of the Spring walks described in the Chairman's Notes, her evocative accounts of each have inspired the forthcoming inclusion of more on the history of both Stag Park Farm and the Gog Lodges in future issues. In the meantime, readers with an interest in these sites might care to look back at previous magazines featuring interviews with John Giffin (Nos.175 and 177) and Tim Myerscough-Walker (Nos.176 and 179), plus Shaun Cooper's article on Gog and Magog (No.179), all available online at petworthsociety.co.uk for those who don't have printed copies.

As ever, your articles and letters are very welcome. Likewise, if you have memories or images for these pages we would be delighted to hear from you.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Alexandra Soskin

As I write, Spring is stuttering into life, with some lovely warm and sunny days over the Easter weekend – but generally still cold. Hedgerows are coming to life and the daffodil displays have been stunning.

To greet the Spring, we ventured out on two splendid walks in April. Gerald Gresham-Cooke once again led us into Petworth Park. This time, by kind permission of Lord Egremont, Helen Whitby, Farm Secretary, unlocked Shepherd's Lodge Gate and we ambled agreeably into the private woods beyond. The quiet, burgeoning woodland was delightful. Further on we passed the fishing ponds and entered Stag Park Farm, which offers some quintessentially Sussex countryside and views.

It was lambing season, but Scott Bushby, Farm Manager of Stag Park Farm, kindly broke off to talk to us in the lambing shed. We learned about the Spotted-face North Country Mule and Black-faced Suffolk crossed with North Country Mule sheep, and the terminal sire pedigree South Downs bred by Lady Egremont. John Giffin, a Director of Leconfield Farms Ltd., showed us some fascinating old maps and recounted the history of the farm. Apart from moving the farmhouse in the eighteenth century, the farming land itself has changed very little indeed since then, and all the old hedges have remained intact. John talked about the herd of Sussex cattle, quiet animals that 'thrive on very little' and thought to be one of the oldest cattle breeds in the world. John has been to South Africa and Texas among other places to introduce the breed, with particular success in the former. We then retraced our steps, enjoying those glorious views in reverse. We arrived back in the park in time for everyone to disperse to watch The Grand National!

Our hearty thanks go to Lord Egremont, John, Scott and Helen who enabled this special walk to happen, and to Gerald for both his initiative in creating the walk and his work making all the arrangements.

On Sunday 16th April, Miles Costello kindly upheld his annual tradition of leading the 'Gog Walk'. Although the ground was still soft after all the recent rain, the weather was fine and warmer than expected. There were wonderful views from the Sugar Knob Hill with Blackdown and the Surrey Hills in the distance. The Gog Lodges have joined the Airbnb trend and

several of the walkers were tempted to book in, if only to get a rest. After paying our respects at The Dog's Grave we walked down the lane towards Byworth passing banks of bluebells which had conveniently appeared just for the group. A refreshment stop at the Virgin Mary Spring was followed by the long trek up over the Sheepdowns back into Petworth. Two and a half healthy walking hours in convivial company; what better way to spend a Sunday afternoon?

Finally, just a reminder that March was membership renewal month. We hope all our members will want to renew, and if you haven't already done so, we've enclosed a renewal form with this magazine. Please note, we changed our bank account to the Co-op last year. So, if using BACS, the bank account details have changed.

A Southdown ewe and lambs enjoying the lush spring grass at Stag Park. The Southdown breed was developed by John Ellman at Glynde in the late 1700s, its name deriving from its ability to thrive on the herb-rich but sparse downland turf.

A history of the tenants of 346 High Street

Andrew Howard

It has long been known that Mrs. Cummings, a seamstress at Petworth House, occupied 346 High Street – what is now known as the Petworth Cottage Museum. What has not been known until now is who occupied the property in the years preceding her arrival in around 1900. Andy Loukes, in his capacity as Curator of the Egremont Collection at Petworth House, has researched the Petworth House Archive and provided the names of the tenants for the following chronology, which also includes those who followed Mrs. Cummings. Remember, property numbers are not street numbers (heaven help the postman if they were) but Leconfield Estate cottage numbers.

The cottage was first numbered 346 (Cherry Row) in 1858 when the tenant was Sarah Lucas, who paid an annual rent of £5/4s. In 1857, the cottage had previously been listed as No.336 Newgrove Street (same tenant, same rent); before this date all Estate rents are listed alphabetically by tenant, rather than by cottage. In 1859 Sarah had a rent reduction to £4/14/4*d* and the street name reverted to Newgrove Street.

The 1861 Census lists Sarah Lucas as a widow born in 1789. Her son-in-law, George Steer, a blacksmith aged 49, was a widower and the head of the household. His sons George and James, 25 and 23 years old respectively, were both bootmakers and also residents, along with their sisters Charlotte (b.1846), Fanny (b.1839) and Ellen (b.1843). Plus there was a lodger. The cottage must have been more than cramped, but then that was commonplace at the time. The 1861 Census gives the address as Back Street, although it is still listed as Newgrove Street in the Estate register, where in 1865 the street name reverts to Cherry Row and remains as such (or 'Near Cherry Row') until the 1900s.

In 1863 Steer took over from his mother-in-law as the tenant, paying the same rent. Sarah Lucas died in 1864 and was buried on 6th July, presumably in Horsham Road Cemetery; Steer continued to pay rent on the cottage up to 1885/6. The 1881 Census records that two grandchildren had joined the Steer household and again gives the address as Back Street, with William Ricketts and his family in the adjoining property which still known today as Ricketts Cottage. Confusingly, Thomas Tipper, as head of household, and his wife Jane are also shown as living at the same property address in Back Street as neighbours of

BELOW

All that remains of Thomas Tipper's original mid-nineteenth-century metal sign found in the cellar of the Cottage Museum. Now very fragile and mounted on to a wooden board, the sign raises two questions. Firstly, why take the trouble to cut the lettering into a sheet of steel if it is merely for a sign? If, as is thought, Mr. Tipper was a coal merchant, might this be a stencil for applying his name to his coal sacks? And secondly, what does 'S.S.' stand for?

William Ricketts and it is difficult to reconcile three heads of household against only two properties.

In the cellar of the Museum, however, hangs a wooden name board stating 'T. Tipper S.S.' He is believed to be a coal merchant. This was discovered at the property when the Petworth Cottage Museum Trust took it over in the mid-1990s. Thomas Tipper married Jane Steel on 28th September 1842 in Petworth. They had at least five sons and one daughter and were living at Selham in 1841 and Petworth in 1851. In 1886 the tenant of No.346 became William Tipper, who appears to have been one of Thomas' sons. Prior to this, the Steers and the Tippers seem to have been joint occupants, but this is not reflected in the Estate records.

In 1890 the tenant became George Gale, who has so far proved difficult to tie down with certainty on Ancestry UK. The strong candidate is a George Gale of Ranmore in Surrey (b.1863, Midhurst), who married Fanny King (b.1866, Petworth) in Pagham on 20th March 1883. By 1891 they appear to be living at No.346, with their family comprising twins Fanny and Elizabeth (b.1887), Kate (b.1888), George (b.1889, d.1891) and Richard (b.1891). Again, it must have been crowded.

The Gales had left by 1894, when there are three tenants listed: George Summersell, Henry Greest and George Belchamber. The following year, they

split the rent as follows: Summersell, 32 weeks; Greest, three weeks; Belchamber, 16 weeks. In 1896 the tenant was Belchamber only, replaced in 1897 by Albert Goldsmith. In the following year the rent was shared, with Belchamber paying 11 weeks and Goldsmith 48 weeks. Goldsmith remained the sole tenant in 1899 for 12 weeks only and he was replaced in 1900 by Boxall (no first name given) who saw the rent increase to £5/4s, which was the same as Sarah Lucas had first paid in 1858.

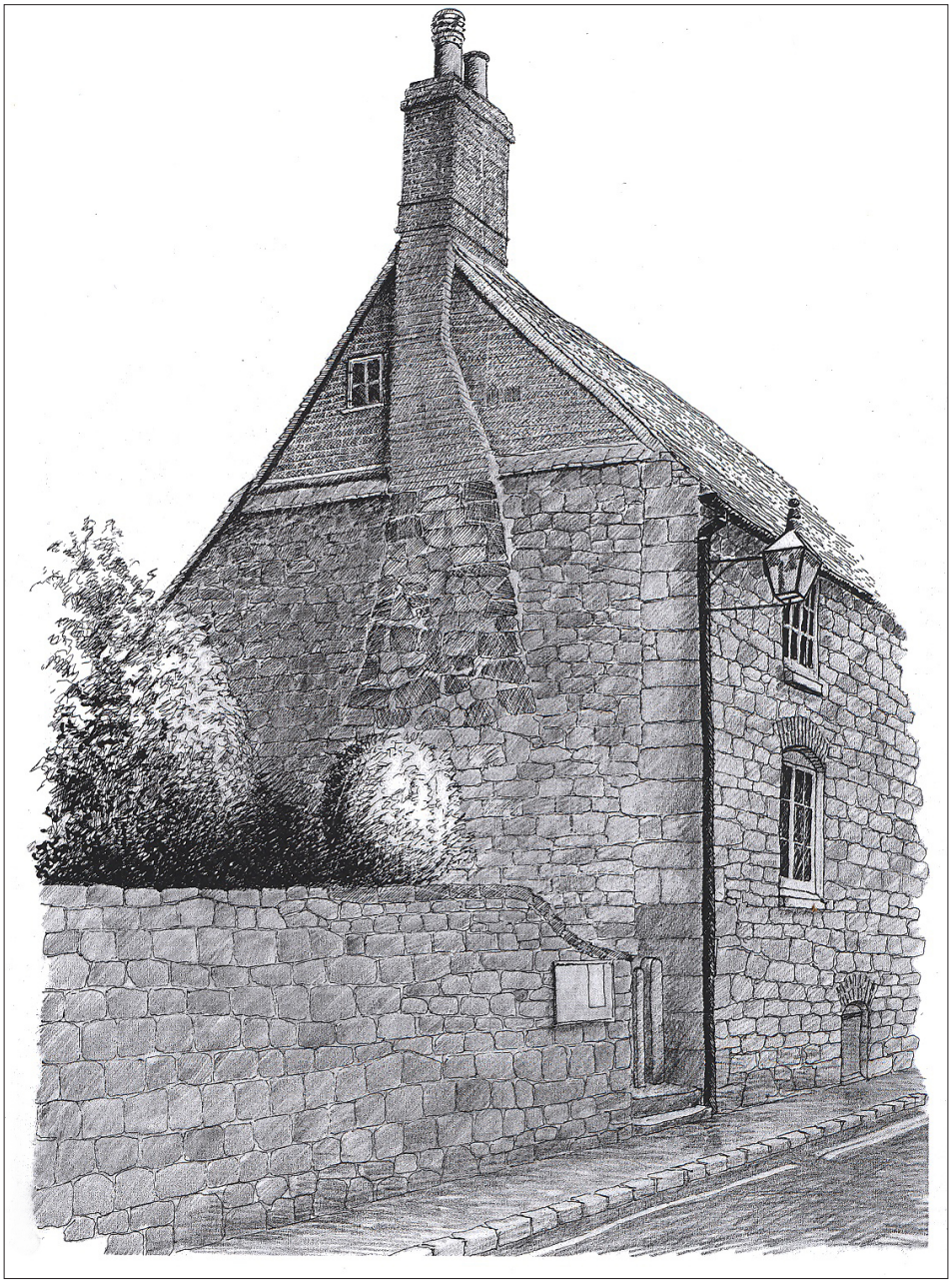
In 1901 Mrs. Cummings is listed as the tenant for the first time, paying rent for 33 weeks at two shillings per week (or £5/4s p.a.). In 1930 she paid the same rent for 24 weeks, with James Keys paying the remaining 26 weeks. By this time the address is listed as High Street and in 1931 the tenant became G. Jeffreys, who saw the rent rise to three shillings per week (or £7/16s p.a.) In 1946 the rent was split with G. Whitington, who is listed as the sole tenant from 1947 to 1958.

In 1959 J. Slee, a plumber with the Leconfield Estate Building Department, moved in with his wife and from 1960 was the sole and final tenant.

OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

The name used for the road on which No.346 sits changed constantly until it became fixed as High Street in the twentieth century. Researching Ancestry UK, and via that the parish registers at the West Sussex Records Office, raises rather more questions than answers. For starters, not only is Lucas a common surname, but where only a surname is listed then it is nearly impossible to identify any personal details. Then there are records for several people called Sarah or George Lucas. Steer is also a common surname. Do these names still feature locally today? Your author would love to know.

Tracking known occupants from Census records reveals one common factor, and that is how overcrowded No.346 often was, no doubt a normal feature of life everywhere. Some years ago I surveyed the 1901 Census for Petworth, and that revealed a total population not very different to today's, in a considerably smaller town than now. It also revealed very different proportions in age ranges. There was a single nonagenarian, a lady of ninety living in the Workhouse, and only very small numbers of octogenarians.



A drawing made by Jonathan Newdick in 2006 of 346 High Street, now the Petworth Cottage Museum.
Ink and pencil on tracing paper, 30 x 21.5 cm., private collection.

There were septuagenarians aplenty, and lots and lots of children!

One name stands out. I have not yet established whether or where he fits in, but on 11th January 1820 one George Lucas, born 1796, was convicted of a crime in Petworth Court, presumably held in the Leconfield Hall, and sentenced to transportation, which actually did not happen until February 1824. While he awaited transportation he lived aboard HMS *Leviathan*, a ship of the line that had served alongside *Victory* at Trafalgar. It served as a hulk from 1817 to 1844, when it was broken up. The journey would have lasted five months and conditions would have been extremely bad. Very few convicts ever returned once their sentence was complete. So, if he survived life on board the hulk, followed by an appalling five months voyage to Australia then he would have achieved more than very many did.

And yet, there is a George Lucas born in Petworth in 1796, who was living at World's End in 1841. Who knows? He was born in Petworth and worked as a bricklayer. His daughter Sarah had been born in Petworth in 1831. Confusion arises further when the St Mary's Petworth Marriage Register is consulted which reveals marriages for three people called George Lucas, in 1840, 1845 and 1846. Plus, there is a George Lucas who was baptized on 24th August 1794. There were at least three further Lucas families in Petworth in the 1790s.

Living at World's End, just beyond the modern-day entrance to the doctors' surgery, in the 1851 Census is George Steer (b.1803) and his wife Charlotte, née Lucas, (b.1805), with their children George (b.1825), James (b.1828), Emily (b.1843) Charlotte (b.1846), Fanny (b.1849), and Sarah Lucas, a widow born in Tillington in 1789. It seems it was this family group who soon after moved down the road together to No.346. Next to them at World's End was George Lucas, a widower (b.1796), with his brother Richard (b.1789), and George's children Emily (b.1826), Fanny (b.1829), Sarah (b.1831) and his grand-daughter Catherine B. Lucas (b.1851).

In Orchard Place (somewhere nearby?) is living George Lucas, a carpenter (b.1813), his wife Hannah (b.1814), and their children Mary (b.1838), Hannah (b.1840), Catherine (b.1846) and Lucy (b.1849).

Unless otherwise stated all were born in Petworth.

Cobbett rides Petworth way

The bicentenary of William Cobbett's journey through Petworth in August 1823. Tony Sneller, with help from the Coultershaw Research Team

William Cobbett does not tell us what time he left Horsham, but he arrived in Billingshurst for breakfast at seven a.m. on Friday 1st August 1823. After 'a very nice breakfast, in a very neat little parlour of a very decent public-house', Cobbett mounted his horse again, and arrived in Petworth at ten a.m. What he did that day we know not, nor where he stayed for the night, but he did not leave Petworth until the next morning.

William Cobbett was born in Farnham, Surrey, in 1763. He was a farmer, journalist and radical reformer with an interest in agricultural development and a deep concern for rural poverty (see www.williamcobbett.co.uk). He started his rides around southern England in 1822. As he travelled he observed the conditions of life in the country and farming practices at this time of agricultural upheaval. He was an anti-Corn Law campaigner and social reformer. His final ride was in Wiltshire in 1826. The copy of his famous *Rural Rides* I have to hand was published by Cambridge University Press in 1922 as part of their collection of 'English Literature for Schools' (also available at www.visionofbritain.org.uk/travellers/Cobbett/12#). The issues covered by Cobbett would have provided a rich and adaptable source across the curriculum.

For someone who describes so much in such depth, Cobbett can remain equally silent on details, and gaps in time are left open. Chronological consistency was also not a strong point as he skips around topics rather than keeping to the itinerary of his journey. In his travelling south from Petworth he had already arrived at Duncton before he mentions the box hedge in Pound Street, Petworth:

> Talking of hedges reminds me of having seen a box-hedge, just as I came out of Petworth, more than twelve feet broad, and about fifteen feet high. I dare say it is several centuries old. I think it is about forty yards long. It is a great curiosity.

The hedge is still a well-known feature in Pound Street, although it has certainly taken a battering over time, as Peter Jerrome comments in *Tread Lightly Here* (1990), '…from decades of traffic fumes but, particularly if it be Cobbett's

hedge, from the passage of time.' Peter acknowledges that the hedge may have been replanted in the last 200 years, but either way, it is still impressive. In recent years it has been rather neglected and care is needed to ensure that this centuries-old feature remains part of the Petworth landscape and heritage.

Cobbett had earlier noted that: 'Before I came to this point [Duncton], I crossed the Arun and its canal again; and here was another place of deposit for timber, lime, coals, and other things.' This is obviously a reference to Coultershaw with the River Rother being called the Arun. In 1794 the Rother had been made navigable and Coultershaw was the biggest wharf between the Arun and Midhurst. In his book *London's Lost Route to Midhurst: The Earl of Egremont's Navigation* (1995), P.A.L. Vine tells us that 1,683 tons of coal were brought to Coultershaw in 1820. Thomas Ovington, the under-wharfinger, was paid tuppence a time for recording the 619 barges that passed through that year.

Cobbett quotes Gilbert White, another of history's great chroniclers of nature and the English countryside around the turn of the nineteenth century:

White, in his history of Selborne, mentions a hill, which is one of the

'. . .more than twelve feet broad, and about fifteen feet high'. The box hedge which so impressed Cobbett is seen here to the right of the figure in the road and above the stone wall. A reproduction from an early post card.

> Hindhead group, from which two springs (one on each side of the hill) send water into the two seas: the Atlantic and the German Ocean! This is big talk; but it is a fact. One of the streams becomes the Arun, which falls into the Channel; and the other, after winding along amongst the hills and hillocks between Hindhead and Godalming, goes into the river Wey, which falls into the Thames at Weybridge.

White himself describes a fine spring called 'Well-head' and says:

> This breaks out of some high grounds joining to Nore Hill, a noble chalk promontory, remarkable for sending forth two into two different seas. The one to the south becomes a branch of the Arun: the other to the north.

One thing that is notable in reading Cobbett is that the place names used do not always align with the names we know today and what White referred to as Nore Hill is now known as Noar Hill. Another rather disconcerting example of the use of names is in his description of Duncton:

> I got off from Petworth without baiting my horse, thinking that the weather looked suspicious, and that St. Swithin meant to treat me to a dose. I had no greatcoat, nor any means of changing my clothes. The hooping-cough made me anxious; but I had fixed on going along the South Downs from Donnington Hill down to Lavant, and then to go on the flat to the south foot of Portsdown Hill, and to reach Fareham to-night. Two men, whom I met soon after I set off, assured me that it would not rain. I came on to Donnington, which lies at the foot of that part of the South Downs which I had to go up.

As he continues it is obvious that Cobbett is referring to Duncton – but he uses yet another name:

> The village of Donton lies at the foot of one of these great chalk ridges, which are called the South Downs. The ridge, in this place, is, I think, about three-fourths of a mile high, by the high road, which is obliged to go twisting about, in order to get to the top of it.

Why this confusion? Judith Glover helps us in her book *Sussex Place-names, their Origins and Meanings* (1997) when discussing Duncton:

> Some of our earliest Saxon settlers were obviously more notable than others. Quite a number were tribal leaders; but for the majority, their only testimonial is the isolated names of farms and woods. Dunneca, the Saxon responsible for the existence of Duncton, was probably of the notable variety. He was wealthy enough to own two farmsteads, one here [Duncton] and another just south of Chichester at Donnington, both sites being of sufficient importance to appear in the Domesday Book.

Glover goes on to explain the evolution of the names from Dunneca:

> Duncton – In the Domesday survey in 1086 was Donechitone, in 1261 it was Doneketon and by 1641 it had become Downcton.
> Donnington – In 966 it was Dunketone, in 1086 Cloninctune, Doneketon in 1275 and Doughton (alias Donnyngton in 1558).

Hence the two places, linked by a noble Saxon, had taken on their own identities to save confusion, but this seems to have escaped Cobbett's attention. It does, of course, have to be remembered that the Ordnance Survey had only just begun to dominate and standardise map-making, thus clarifying and bringing order to place names. What would he have made of Google Maps and Earth?

Cobbett was very impressed by the orchards at Duncton, acknowledging the impact of the topography of the landscape at this point on the Downs:

> The apple-trees at Donnington show their gratitude to the hill for its shelter; for I have seldom seen apple-trees in England so large, so fine, and, in general, so flourishing. I should like to have, or to see, an orchard of American apples under this hill. The hill, you will observe, does not shade the ground at Donnington. It slopes too much for that. But it affords complete shelter from the mischievous winds.

Before Cobbett disappeared over the Downs he said 'It is very pretty to look down upon this little village as you come winding up the hill.' He ended his ride that evening in Fareham, having sheltered from St Swithun's rain for four hours at Singleton.

Tony Sneller is a trustee at the Coultershaw Heritage Site and part of the Coultershaw Research Team, who are researching for a new exhibition space in the soon-to-be-restored south warehouse. They always welcome new members to help with this enormous task. If you are interested please email tonysneller@gmail.com

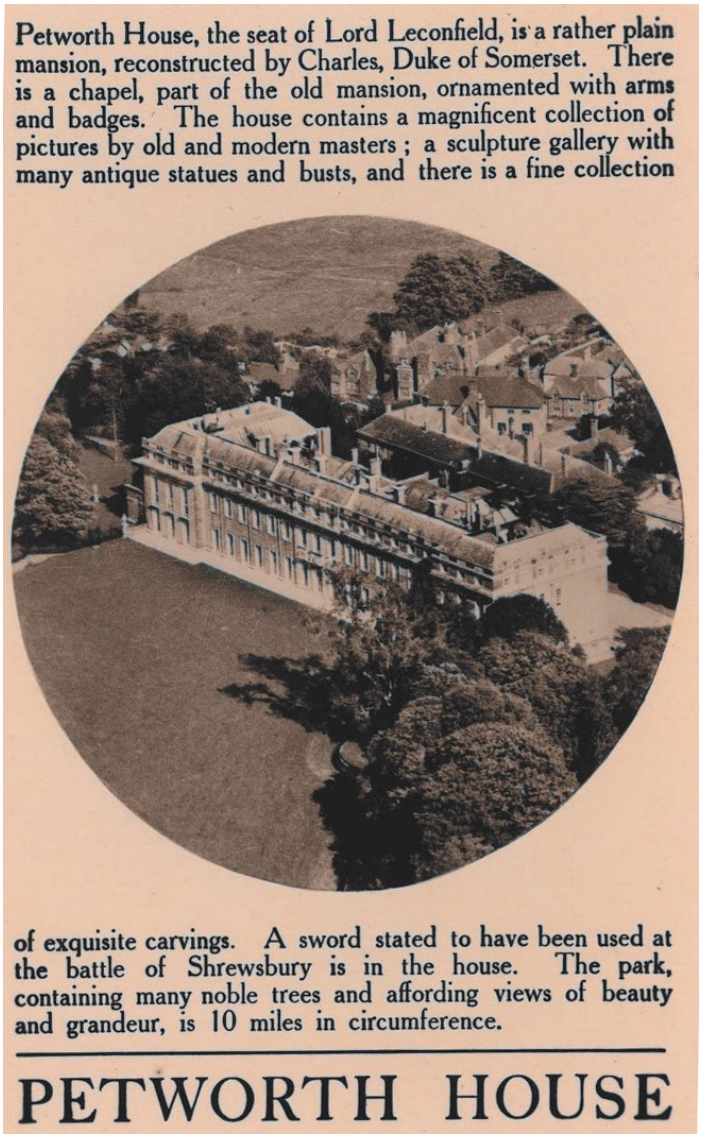
Some Petworth postcards

Henry Wakeford

For the last forty years I have been collecting vintage postcards of Petworth. They include views of the town, the house, the park and the surrounding countryside. It is not a comprehensive collection because there are many rare cards beyond my price-range. Here are two examples from my collection:

The first is of Percy Terrace and dates from around 1910. There are twelve houses in the terrace and, as is usual for Leconfield Estate terraces, they are all number 328. Each house is then given a suffix after its number, in this case A to M. The house shown is 328E, which is relevant to me as I lived there until I was seven years old. By then, I had four brothers and two sisters and a two-bedroomed house was no longer big enough.

The second card is an aerial view of Petworth House, perhaps around 1920. The wording is of interest here. It extols the contents of the house in detail, the park and noble trees and views of beauty. However, it describes the building as 'a rather plain mansion'. I doubt this was a promotional postcard, so who issued it and why? When and where was it sold? I have yet to find out.



This card perpetuates the myth of Hotspur's sword being preserved at the house, which – despite the claims of earlier antiquarian authors and travel-writers – it isn't, and, as far as we know, never has been. Ed.

‘I used to love talking to my grandmother’

Ray Hunt in conversation with Jonathan Newdick

According to Nairn and Pevsner in their *Buildings of England – Sussex* :

> The best cottages in Byworth are next to one another at a bend in the road – both of *c.*1600, both with regular timber-framing and a continuous first-floor overhang. They are Nos. 374 and 375 (Leconfield Estate numbering), and look as though they were built by the same man at the same time.

And the British Listed Buildings record states:

> Cottages. One building. c.17 or earlier timber-framed building with painted brick infilling. The first floor has curved braces and oversails on brackets. Hipped tiled roof. Casement windows. Two storeys. Three windows. Small shop window at west end of ground floor.

The cottages remain as numbers 374 and 375 and it is the right hand one of these in which we sit this morning. The mention of the ‘small shop window’ is significant.

JN. So, where should we start, Ray? I remember you from SCATS [Southern Counties Agricultural Trading Society] in the early 1970s where the Petworth Antique Market now is, but you go back a lot further than that.

RH. Oh yes. I used to love talking to my grandmother. She used to talk about her young days which fascinated me. That was when I was at Petworth infants school and and there were a lot of evacuees – they had to sort of make room for extras in the classrooms so I was only seven when I moved on to Petworth boys school and then at the age of eleven of course I sat the examination for Midhurst Grammar School. I passed that and went to Midhurst until I think it was nineteen fifty three, the coronation year. I left school at 16 but getting near to 17 because my birthday being in September I had to stay another year.

JN. Then you started work? Or did you go on to further education?

RH. Oh, no. I’d had enough. But when I left it wasn’t easy to find a job and I was unemployed for quite some time but I did odd jobs. Gardening and that sort of thing.

SCATS was my first proper job and I was there for 23 and a half years. It was 1977 I'm pretty sure, when they closed the Petworth branch and I was made redundant. We didn't have such a good trade there in the end. You see, when I went there we had a workshop for agricultural repairs which was always busy but then SCATS took over A. G. Williams which was at Billingshurst who had another a depot in Midhurst, so they cut out the one in between the other two.

My brother Don was in the council office at Newlands where the gallery now is but they moved to Chichester and then he had the early retirement offer so he took it.

I eventually went to work in Midhurst at Midhurst Granary. It's not there any more – it's now called Pets at Home or something like that. We sold animal feeds, pet food and a certain amount of horticultural bits and pieces and tools. It was started by a co-operative group of local farmers but they were brought out by a firm who were based in Kent and I said that's enough for me. After all, I'd officially retired ten years earlier but they wanted a part time worker on a Saturday and I said if you haven't got anyone I don't mind coming one day a week and I worked Saturdays for them until I was 75.

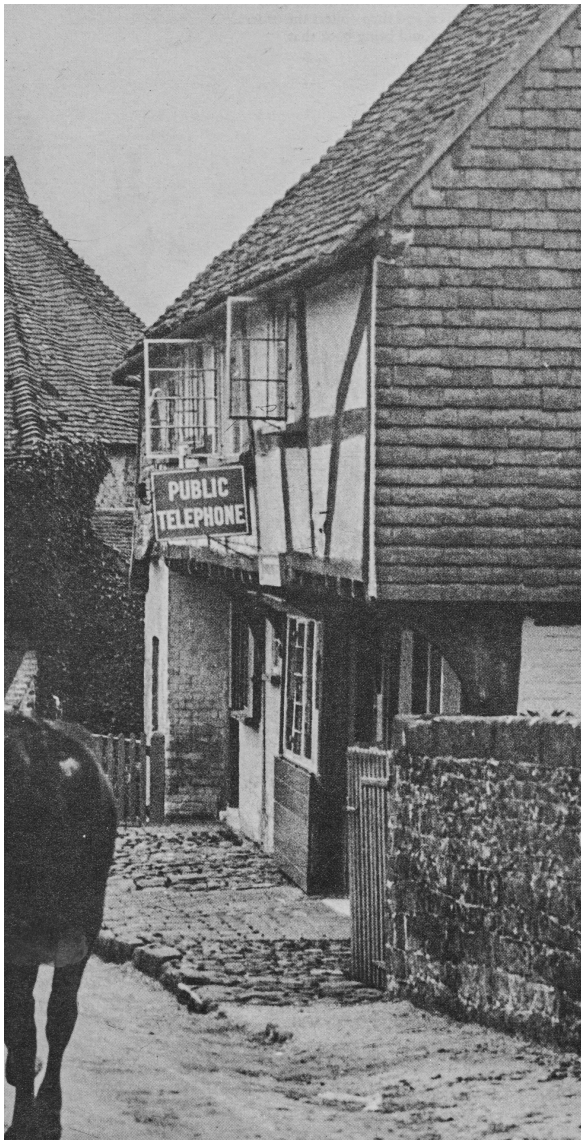
JN. You don't drive a car. Have you ever?

RH. No, I have never driven a car. Well, when I worked in Petworth I didn't need to – I used go by bicycle and then later I'd go by bus to Midhurst. An hourly service – the Worthing to Midhurst bus route to and fro.

JN. You said earlier that you went to the infants school in Petworth but surely there was a school in Byworth?

RH. Oh, yes, but that was before me. It closed in the 1920s I think. My father went there when he was little. The children came from all round about from a few scattered dwellings. It was built there as a double purpose. It was a church on Sundays and a school the rest of the time and the church continued after the school closed. They used to have a communion service in the morning and in the afternoon, evensong. I was a member of the little choir there. No more than half a dozen or so. There was a harmonium for the music which Mrs Harnett from Barnsgate Farm used to play.

BELOW Cattle from Barnsgate Farm walking through Byworth in 1931. No.375 is the right hand of the pair of cottages beyond them. The figure at the window will be one of Ray's family and the shutters either side of the shop window are just visible. Photograph by George Garland.



Mr Harnett was the tenant farmer at Barnsgate. A Leconfield Farm. And the other farm was Hallgate, where all the chickens are now. Charles and Daisy Thorne were the tenants there. Cattle from Barnsgate Farm used to come down the street every day for milking. There was no hurry, they'd take their time. A bit of roadside grass on the way. I used to have a nice framed photograph of the cattle in the road but I gave it away and now I wish I hadn't.

JN. I think I know the picture you mean. I'll see if we can get you a replacement. What sort of garden have you got here?

RH. Oh, a very big garden. My father did every spare hour I think in the garden and we always had very good vegetables. We were all brought up to have vegetables every day. Sadly, I can no longer do it I'm afraid and it's probably all gone to pot now. We were in the next door cottage then and the garden sloped right down towards the brook and there was quite an orchard down this side but a lot of the old trees are so old that they've died out. I always had an interest in gardening because of my father being a keen gardener you see. I always had a little plot of my own like I think a lot of children did

probably. And we used to play down by the brook at the bottom of the garden where we'd spend a lot of time. We used to paddle in it in the summer and we used to see minnows and sticklebacks and in the winter, usually just before Christmas after heavy rain the trout would come up and then the water would go down and they'd get stranded. If we saw Jack Heron come we knew that they were there but we couldn't eat them because all we ever saw was the remains after Jack Heron had his dinner.

These cottages have been in our family for generations. We used to be in the other side and this one was the bakers. The bake house is still there although it closed what would be about fifty years ago when Mr Shoebridge, the baker, retired. Before that he was in partnership with Mr Tickner who was a good bit older. I remember the long wooden paddles for putting the tins in and drawing them out of the oven. The bread was beautiful. Every morning when it came out of the oven all round this corner – oh, the smell was something else. Mr Shoebridge would often give us a piece of dough that we would fashion into something. One of my best games when I was little was we had a fire at the bottom of the garden and we used to bake things. Not potatoes so much because they took too long but we had a go with our bits of bread.

Mrs Long used to keep the shop and post office across the road from here but this room where we are now was also used as a shop. At one time these two cottages were completely separate but they knocked a hole through the wall so they could come from one to the other without going outside.

JN. Was it only bread that was sold here?

RH. No, in the wartime when I was a child it was only bread but latterly they used to do cakes and all produced here on the premises. When Joyce Gumbrill ran the shop the counter was over there [gesticulating] and this was all tiled. The customers were mostly Byworth people but not necessarily. Latterly people used to come some miles to get bread because it had such a good reputation. It was every day except Sundays and Mr Shoebridge would start at four o'clock in the morning. The dough would be made the previous night and left to rise and then in the morning he'd knock it down and put it in the tins. The oven had to

be fired with long chestnut faggots. They were not the little pimps which were kindling for fireplaces and which have got posh now and are used for decoration as much as anything. When they cut the chestnut in the woods for fence posts and that sort of thing the faggots were made out of all the small stuff. They were about six foot long when they went in the oven – you see it was a very big oven and they gradually burned and then when they were finished the embers were all raked out and the oven was ready to use with the bread baked simply by the heat of the bricks the oven was made from.

JN. Why did your family move from next door into this one?

RH. Because our cottage was the only one left which had never been updated. There was no indoor sanitation although we did have electricity, but twelve years ago my late neighbour who was here died you see and the clerk at the Leconfield Estate said if we moved into here which had been done up they would do next door and when that one was done we could move back or stay here but it needs structural repairs.

My grandfather worked on the Leconfield Estate as a carpenter and I suppose that's how we became Leconfield tenants. My father was the only one left at home with grandfather and when he died my father took over the tenancy of the cottage. He was also a carpenter like grandfather but he didn't work for the Estate and when he and mother went my sister Valerie and I took over the tenancy.

JN. Neither you nor Valerie ever married?

RH. No. We looked after each other. My sister, poor soul, she suffered the last twenty years of her life with ulcerated legs and at the end she could hardly stand or walk. She died suddenly two years ago at Christmas. The cruellest part of my old life is the loss of sight but with all the extras and help I get I can do pretty well. So long as everything is in its place and I can manage well enough.

When I was a child all these cottages, most of Byworth in fact, belonged to the Leconfield Estate and they were either all estate workers or tenants and there were a lot of children but now you see it's quite different because they sold lots of the buildings and all these up here and those by the Black Horse were all sold and mostly bought by retired people and it has completely changed the


KEMP & SONS
127 STEPNEY
LON

LEFT

Mr Shoebridge, the Byworth baker, his jacket dusted white with flour, on his way back to the oven after taking away the hot ash in a bucket. The faggots for firing his oven are stacked behind him. The photograph, probably by George Garland, is reproduced courtesy of Chris Vincent.

BELOW

A six-piece montage of the cast iron top of Mr Shoebridge's Kemp & Sons bread oven. Because of lack of space it is not possible to get a single photograph of the complete casting which measures 46 inches wide.

John Kemp started his oven-making business in Stepney in about 1840 and developed new types of ovens for both private use and for bakeries. The business was based at 127 Stepney Green East (now London E1) from 1871 and when John Kemp's sons joined the business in 1878 the name was changed to Kemp & Sons. This oven must, therefore, date from after 1878.

LEFT
Ray Hunt's maternal grandparents, William and Elizabeth Sebbage, at their cottage 'Blue Dawn' at Churchwood, Fittleworth in 1952. Photograph by George Garland.

BELOW
Mr Shoebridge arranging the bread in his oven with a long wooden paddle with which he could reach far into the back of the oven. This is very like the *pala* which is used for manipulating pizzas in a pizza oven. The photograph is reproduced courtesy of Chris Vincent.

nature of the village. There was always a crowd of children when I was young, the road full of children's voices and getting together we all used to play in the road because there was so little traffic. There was no centre like a playgroup but we didn't need one because we had the road. You could hide in the bracken and dodge about all over the place and sometimes we used to play in the playground at the back of the school.

JN. What games did you play?

RH. We played hide and seek and skipping when two would stand either side of the road and two or three of us would jump in the middle. We got quite skilled at that; and conkers in the autumn of course. The road was tarmac and not too dusty and in those days they used to tar it and cover it in sand – not the sort of solid stuff that they put down nowadays. There was a double-decker bus but he wouldn't get through now with the overhanging trees and so many parked cars, especially by the Black Horse.

JN. Did you used to go to the pub?

RH. Well, I did on the very odd occasion but I never made a habit of it. Sometimes George Garland would be in there.

JN. You knew him I suppose?

RH. Oh, yes. We once went to his studio in Station Road. I remember my mother taking us there and having our photographs taken. He used to go from time to time to see my grandparents at Churchwood in Fittleworth. That's one of his [gesticulating to a framed photograph on the sideboard]. It's my mother's mother's diamond wedding in 1952. I was so lucky because I had those grandparents until I was twenty years old. They both lived well into their eighties.

JN. You have a big family?

RH. Well, my mother was one of eight, you see, and Dad was one of five but the strange thing is they were nearly all female and of course the names have died out and when I'm gone I'm the last of the Hunts. There's no more Hunts and there's no more of the Sebbage (that's my mother's) family either. Bill Sebbage and George Attrill used to patch up the roads and do the ditches along the stretch of road between Fittleworth and here.

RH. I don't imagine I can have had much to say that can be of any interest really. What do you think?

JN. I'll tell you what I think. I think that people who think they have nothing to say prove to be the most interesting while those who have nothing to say do all the talking.

RH. Well, I don't know.

‘If you’ve got a good oak, keep it’

Roger Wootton (former Clerk of Works for the Leconfield Estate) in conversation with Caroline Egremont and the editor. Introduction by Andrew Loukes

PETWORTH AND WATERLOO

Between 1826 and 1828 the third Earl of Egremont installed an arrangement of Napoleonic works of art in the Beauty Room of Petworth House. This comprised a portrait of Bonaparte by Thomas Phillips, battle paintings of Vittoria and Waterloo by George Jones and a marble bust of the Duke of Wellington by Sir Francis Chantrey. While this ensemble was dispersed during the second half of the nineteenth century it was reintroduced to its 1828 location in the 1990s. It has recently been transferred within the House to the Oak Hall as part of a major scheme to restore the Beauty Room to its original baroque interior of around 1700.

Egremont’s interest in the Battle of Waterloo had been particularly personal as his second son, General Sir Henry Wyndham (1790-1860), played a central and heroic role in the epic action at Hougoumont Farmhouse. This key strategic position was held by Wellington’s forces against repeated French attacks throughout the day of 18th June 1815, culminating in a final assault which saw some forty French soldiers break through the northern entrance of the farmyard before ten British Guards were able to push the gates shut against a further sixty men trying to force their way in. Later, Wellington was to reflect that it was upon this act of bravery that the entire battle turned. In total, some 6,500 men were killed or wounded in the fight for Hougoumont.

Henry Wyndham, then a Lieutenant Colonel in the Coldstream Guards, was one of the ‘closers’ and his actions resonated at Petworth well into the twentieth century. In his book *Wyndham and Children First* (1968), John Wyndham, 1st Lord Egremont, recalled ‘My grandmother [Constance, Lady Leconfield], when afflicted by a draught at home, used to say that no Wyndham had closed a door since Hougoumont.’

The gates of 1815 were completely destroyed during the fighting, probably by fire, and several successive sets were introduced during the ensuing years as Hougoumont returned to life as a working farm. When the final tenant left in 2003 the entire site was bought by the Intercommunale Bataille de Waterloo 1815, the Belgian local government consortium that

BELOW
The Napoleonic arrangement in the Beauty Room of Petworth House. © National Trust Images/ Andreas von Einsiedel.

already owned parts of the battlefield (while in 1815 Waterloo fell within the Kingdom of the United Netherlands it is now part of modern Belgium). Project Hougoumont was launched in 2011 to raise funds in both Belgium and the United Kingdom towards a target of €3.8 million necessary for the sympathetic restoration of the farm and its conversion into a heritage site with a visitor centre in time for the 200th anniversary of Waterloo in June 2015. A significant aspect of this was to be the replacement of the gates at the north entrance, which were entirely funded by Lord Egremont in memory of the part played in the battle by his ancestor General Wyndham, with the new gates made, delivered and installed by the Leconfield Estate.

PETWORTH AND PROJECT HOUGOUMONT

CAROLINE EGREMONT It all began with Lord Egremont's cousin Samantha Wyndham, who was on the appeal committee of Project Hougoumont. It was Samantha who encouraged us. The family raised over £6,000 towards the £1.5 million raised on the British side, matched by the Belgians. The Chancellor, George Osborne, pledged £1 million from the government.

Here, Samantha was really the oxygen. The driving force pushing us on. It was she who said we must talk to Mr. Wootton [regarding the replacement of the famous north gates]. She kept saying that to me. I think you went to look together at a piece of charred wood at the Guards Museum in 2013?

ROGER WOOTTON Yes, John Staker [Head Joiner, Leconfield Estate] and myself met Samantha and we went to the Guards Museum in London. They said they had pieces of wood from the original gates but John and I assessed they never came from Hougoumont. Towards the end of our visit a fellow came in and said the wood was picked out of the Thames! So, we had to start again.

CE. Did you go out to the battlefield?

RW. Yes, John and myself went out in 2014. Over the centuries there were several different gates.

CE. I think before we got involved in the restoration the opening was covered by a wire mesh?

RW. Yes, I've got a picture and there are bullets in that chestnut tree next to it.

CE. We brought conkers back from that tree and grew them here. Were you able to ascertain there were hinges on those gate piers?

RW. We put new hanging posts in. The piers were very irregular.

CE. How did you work out the measurements?

RW. A Belgian architect produced some measurements, but in the end our own dimensions were better. The ground was uneven. When we came into it we started to produce some facts and figures. The Belgian architects put forward several designs but in the end I drew these gates up and John made them.

CE. And they were made from Estate oak.

RW. Special oak! Felled behind Hilliers House, at Upper Roxalls, in 2006. We then had it planked and put it for eight years up at Limbo to dry it out.

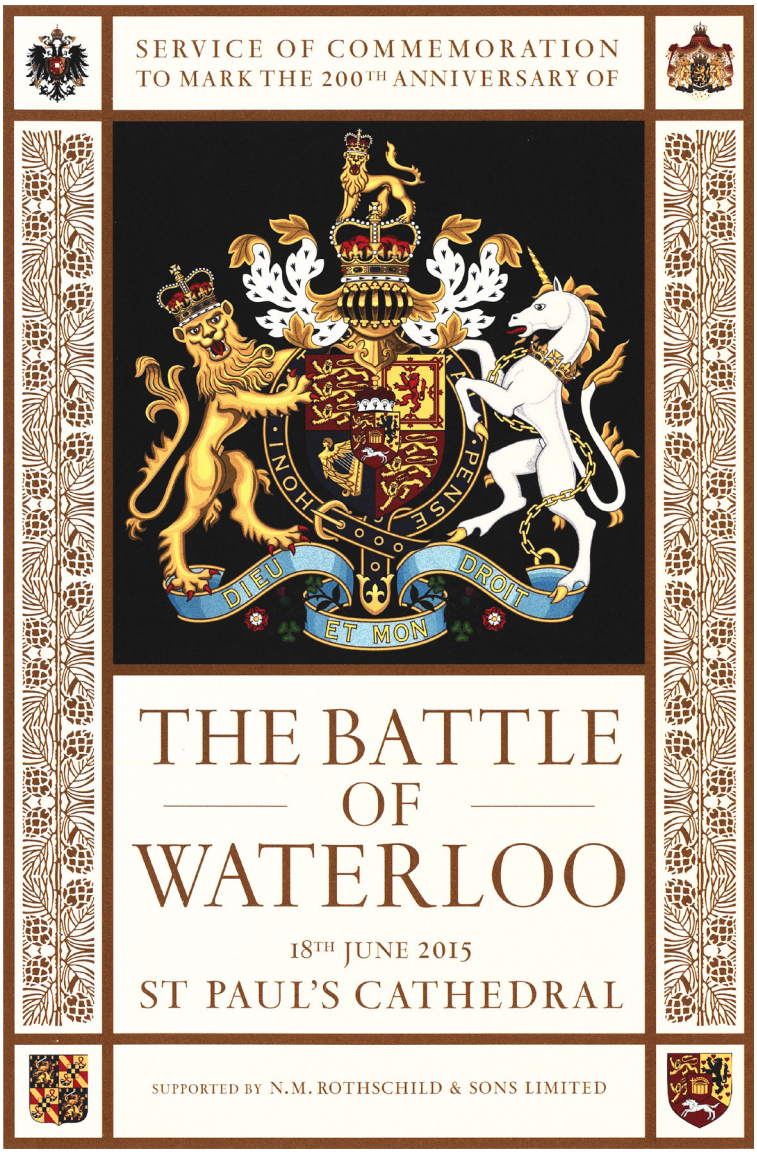
CE. When you planked it you didn't know what it was going to be used for?

RW. No. I'd said to Neil [Neil Humphris, Head of the Woods Department, Leconfield Estate], if you've got a good oak, keep it. That oak would have been planted mid-nineteenth century. It's virtually knot-free. John Staker is particularly finickity.

CE. Has the oak been treated?

RW. We finished it off with an oil to prevent water penetration. The gates were made in the yard. I did a schedule of maintenance. We sent a team of

The start of it all. The oak butt from which the gates were made after felling at Upper Roxalls in 2006.



LEFT
Order of the Service of Commemoration to mark the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, at St Paul's Cathedral on 18 June 2015.

men over there and they did it all. Ours. We got the gates up and everything. Finished. They went out in the Estate lorry. Tim [Jemmett] drove it. It was the best decision we made, to do it as we wanted it done. And it was as Martin Drury [the Chairman of Project Hougoumont] wanted it. He came here.

CE. So, it's really your design finally?

RW. Well, we kept getting odd things that weren't really what we were looking for. In the end the overall width was 4.8 metres; the height was a debatable point. The brickwork was quite good. We had to form a threshold. And then they decided they wanted a beam back there. The Belgians weren't very helpful! It took a long time to make a decision. In the end we had to make that decision which was confirmed by Martin Drury. He said that's perfectly alright, carry on. The gates were three metres high; four metres from ground to lintel.

CE. Did you look at other carpentry nearby?

RW. We tried to. Was there a post there? No, there wasn't. They thought it was a rugged gate. We had to start somewhere. Anyway, that was the ultimate sort of thing and I think that looked a nice gate. Being a perfectionist, it took John Staker over six weeks to make the gates. The men were over for one week and they struck up a rapport with soldiers from the Coldstream Guards who were there on other duties.

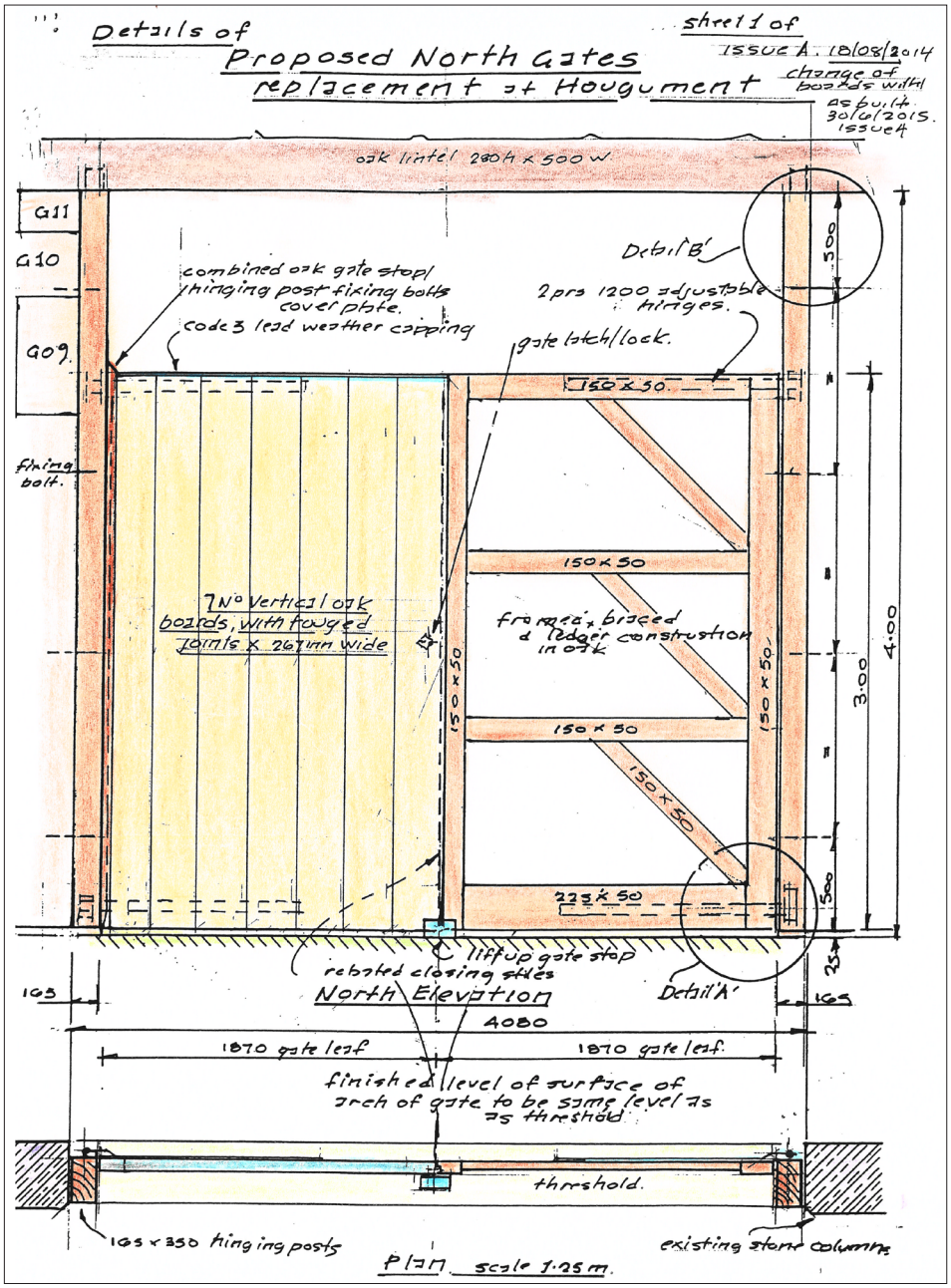
CE. And you went out to the great opening and saw the famous shaking of the hands between descendants of Wellington, Blücher and Napoleon?

RW Yes, and we went to the service at St Paul's, with John. Martin Drury organised all that for us and it was very good.

ANDREW LOUKES How would you put this into your forty-year history of projects with the Estate?

RW. it was very challenging. Samantha Wyndham was very helpful and kept us all on the go. The men were extremely skilled, each one.

CE. Mr. Wootton never said no to anything. I remember, when I first got married, being amazed – if I asked Mr. Wootton to move the house six inches nearer to the lake he would. I remember literally thinking he would have done that. It's extraordinary, that everything seems possible.



The final design for the new Hougoumont gates, drawn by Roger Wootton.

BELOW
The north entrance at Hougoumont viewed from the outside prior to the installation of the new gates.

BOTTOM
The new gates, installed and ready for use, viewed from the inside.

LEFT Roger Wootton (left) and John Staker, with the gates in the Leconfield Estate yard.

OPPOSITE ABOVE The King and Queen Consort walking through the newly installed Petworth-oak gates at Hougoumont having spoken with Roger Wootton and John Staker about their manufacture, 17 June 2015.

OPPOSITE BELOW Two soldiers of the Coldstream Guards alongside historical re-enactors wearing the uniform of 1815 and standing inside the new gates.

BELOW The Leconfield Estate installation team: (left to right) Tim Jemmett, Luke Howard, Jim Geal, Tom Carter and Brian Williams, with the new gates loaded onto their lorry prior to departure for Belgium.

Daylight robbery

The Window Tax in England 1696-1851. Paul de Zulueta

England has had a long history of terrible taxes but the tax on air and light, the 'window tax', was worse than any. Like many great writers, Charles Dickens was an acute observer of the human condition, particularly the plight of the poor: 'The adage "free as air" has become obsolete by Act of Parliament,' he thundered in 1850. ' Neither air nor light has been free since the imposition of the window tax. We are obliged to pay for what nature lavishly gave us; and the poor who cannot afford the expense are stinted in two of the most urgent necessities in life.' Dickens was right. The tax became known as 'daylight robbery', now a popular phrase whose origin I was unaware of.

Petworth is a vibrant town that engages all the senses, but as you walk down Lombard Street or pass the Stringers' Hall in East Street you don't normally notice their bricked-up windows. Such likely examples of window-tax avoidance are typically defined by bricks indented into a building, contrasting with the clean finish of its outside walls. They give the impression of picture frames that should be filled with something significant. But instead, they're empty. It was only during the pandemic, which reminded us all of the importance of natural light and fresh air, that I began to notice this curious anomaly. The window tax is not an untold story but is often a forgotten one. If history teaches us anything, it is that those who do not study the events of the past are destined to repeat them. The poll tax of 1377, which led to the Peasants Revolt and the March on London, was repeated in 1990 by Mrs. Thatcher's government, and London witnessed full-scale riots.

William III (William of Orange), or 'King Billy' to his Protestant supporters in Ireland and Scotland, had invaded England in what became known as the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. The Protestant majority in Britain feared a revival of Catholicism. West Sussex, unlike East Sussex, had more than a few 'Left Footers', probably because of the influence of Arundel's Catholic cathedral and the Duke of Norfolk, but they had learnt to voice their faith quietly. Burdened with expenses from the Revolution and the huge cost of re-coinage brought about by the practice of 'clipping', or scraping off portions of the high-grade silver coins which was the currency of the time, William III introduced the window tax.

At first glance, the tax seemed clever. William III accepted the advice of

BELOW
Alfreston House in Middle Street, Petworth where no attempt has been made to disguise the fact that this was once a window – the antithesis of the blocked window on page one.

his Chancellor, Charles Montagu, that the tax would fall on those with the broadest shoulders and would not penalise the poor. The broad theme was that the more windows you had, the more tax you would have to pay. It was an easy tax to assess as windows are easy to count. Poor people didn't own large houses so they would not be unduly affected by the tax. And as the number of windows in a house does not change, so the tax was impossible to avoid. At a stroke, it seemed to meet the famous dictum of Louis XIV's finance minister, Colbert, who said in 1669, ' the art of taxation is to pluck the goose to obtain the largest possible amount of feathers with the smallest possible amount of hissing.'

But it was not too long before the hissing started. Many poor people did live in large houses, either as servants or in tenement blocks. Adam Smith, the great Scottish economist and philosopher, wrote in his seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), that the other problem with the tax was that it was paid only by the rich: 'A house of £10 rent in a country town may have more windows than a house of £500 rent in London.' Years later, when Dickens complained that the poor were being denied light and air, it was no flight of fancy. The poor did not have to pay out of their own pockets but their landlords did, and the poor dwelt in fetid and dreary darkness as a result. Upstairs, the light shone and the air was breezy; downstairs in the basements, or perhaps in the attics, a great gloom descended and health, both physical and mental, suffered.

William III's first window tax in 1696, like property tax today, was a banded scheme. It was a flat rate of two shillings a year for a house with fewer than ten windows; four shillings for ten to twenty windows and eight shillings for 21 windows and above. Before decimalisation in 1971, we used the Carolean monetary system of '£/s/*d*'. A pound was divided into 20 shillings ('s'), each of 12 pence ('*d*'). In the year 1700, a skilled tradesman might hope to earn a shilling a day. Let's imagine Nathaniel Soskin, a Petworth glass-blower whose house in North Street had just six windows. His window-tax bill for the year 1697 would cost him from two to three days' pay. Not crippling but certainly onerous. And if you take into account the cost of food – a loaf of bread was

nearly 8*d* – Soskin had quite an incentive to block-up a couple of windows.

The tax burden got a lot worse if, for example, you lived in a tenement building comprising eight flats, each with four windows. Tax assessors, or 'window peepers', would charge the residents collectively based on 32 windows. This was particularly burdensome on the poor. No wonder that new buildings might contain a whole floor with no windows. A good deal of resentment built up against the 'window peepers', many of whom would take great pleasure in defining what was a window and what was not. There were several cases of cellar trapdoors being defined as a window.

There is no evidence of any bricked-up windows at Petworth House, and although a house of this stature employed dozens of servants there was never any stinting on their basic needs. When the tax was introduced, Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset was married to Lady Elizabeth Percy who had inherited vast estates from her father, Josceline Percy, 11th Earl of Northumberland. They were among the wealthiest couples in the Kingdom and the window tax would have been a mere bagatelle to those who managed their joint fortune.

Petworth as a whole got off pretty lightly. I have never seen myself as an obsessive about anything, but I did turn into an 'anorak' one dreary day in March this year when I walked around Petworth's streets gleefully recording every blocked-up window. It's not a pastime I would recommend, but if you find yourself at a loose end in Petworth, or any town or city, glance upwards with a thought for those of our forebears deprived of light and air.

Georgian London was a good deal worse. Bloomsbury, Covent Garden, parts of Highgate, and even in the rather grand area north of Kensington High Street, the evidence is in plain sight. While London's old tenement blocks have now been largely knocked down a few remain in the East End with whole floors blocked out.

Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger added to the window-tax burden when he increased rates in 1784 to compensate for the loss of revenue from tea. The window tax had already been ratcheted up in 1747 before the colonists in America were forced to pay three pennies on every pound of tea, leading to the famous Boston Tea Party and the American Declaration of Independence in

BELOW
A bricked-in window above Tallulah Fox in Lombard Street in Petworth in which the bricklayer has been moderately successful in concealing his actions – even to his keying the new bricks to the surrounding wall in six places.

OPPOSITE
A clumsy infilling with undressed and uncoursed stone of what appears to have been a four-light stone-mullioned window in Lancaster House in Golden Square, Petworth, which sits rather unhappily with the dressed stone below it.

1776. Back in England, thousands of windows were bricked-up overnight. The president of the Society of Carpenters told Parliament that every homeowner in Bedford Place, central London, had approached him to reduce the number of windows. Whole apartment buildings were designed with second floors filled with windowless bedrooms.

Pitt then introduced his 'triple assessment tax' between 1797 and 1799: income tax (for the first time); land tax; and assessed taxes – not only were the schedule and levels raised on window tax, but also on dogs, coaches with four wheels, hair powder, manservants and horses used for pleasure. This was all to pay for the Napoleonic Wars. Except perhaps for the tax on dogs and yet another increase on window tax, little of this would affect the working class in Petworth.

Taxes always come with loopholes which any sharp accountant can exploit. Accountancy as a recognised profession was not formalised until 1872, but there were any number of exemptions and pretexts for avoiding the window tax: some had valid cases, like cheese-makers, malt houses, coach-

BELOW
Taking it to extremes. A four-storey house in Bedford Place, London with only one glazed window out of a potential seventeen.

makers, and hat-makers, where there was a genuine need for air and light; while others, such as the houses of public officials and wealthy and well-connected families, were false.

England and Scotland were both subject to the window tax, but Ireland (only self-governing in 1922) was exempted because of its impoverished state. Some Members of Parliament joked that in 'advocating the extension of the window tax to Ireland, the hon. gentleman seemed to forget that an English window and an Irish window were very different things. In England, the window is intended to let the light in; But in Ireland the use of a window was to let the smoke out.'

But what really did for the window tax was Britain's growing industrial revolution and those 'dark satanic mills' immortalised in our nation's favourite hymn, 'Jerusalem'. People began at last to take the health and well-being of the poor seriously. In 1842, Edwin Chadwick published a report that proved poor living conditions were directly linked to disease and low life-expectancy. This led to the Public Health Act of 1848. The Public Health Act, however, needed a voice, and in Charles Dickens it found one during the winter of 1850-51. The window tax was repealed on 24th July 1851.

There have been some unpopular taxes in our history: the 1377 poll tax at 4*d* per head regardless of means; the hearth tax on stoves and fireplaces in 1662; the tax on knowledge in 1815 putting newspapers out of the reach of the poor; the tax on matches in 1871; the hut tax of 1898 on inhabitants of India and Africa; and the poll tax Mk. II in 1990. But none has had such an invidious effect as the window tax of 1696 to 1851.

There is a useful lesson to be learnt from the window tax. It is that people will respond in quite different ways to taxes and tax incentives. Rising demand for taxation on carbon emissions has already led to the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London, encouraging people to adjust their behaviour to avoid the tax, or is this more in hope than expectation? And maybe it will lose Sadiq Khan the next London mayoral election as commerce and those who cannot afford a new car put up a fight.

But perhaps a more straightforward lesson is this: it's perfectly possible for a bad tax to last 155 years.

PICTURE NOTE

Andrew Loukes

A distant view of Petworth by Hendrik Frans de Cort (1742-1810)
*c.*1800. Oil on panel, 81 x 110 cms.
The Egremont Collection.

This view of Petworth from the south includes two recent introductions to the landscape it records: boats using the Rother Navigation, completed in 1794, and the new route of the Petworth-to-Chichester turnpike, opened in 1800. The viewpoint is from the higher ground beyond where the station would later be built for the railway line of 1859. While the old bridge seen in the painting survives it is the adjacent second bridge which we cross today, added subsequently to allow the elevation necessary for the road to cross the railway-cutting further on.

The distant church spire was removed in 1800 to be replaced by a square tower, which remained until the addition of Charles Barry's larger one in 1827. A smaller architectural detail within the composition is the triangular pediment on the west front of Petworth House. This was added by the 3rd Earl of Egremont in the 1770s before being taken down in 1816 and the artist seems to have slightly rotated the house in order to reveal this feature (page 48). As the 3rd Earl also sponsored the Rother Navigation it might seem likely that he commissioned this picture, along with its companion – a view of the rotunda in Petworth's Pleasure Ground. There is, however, no evidence for this and the paintings do not appear in any inventories of Petworth House, up to and including C.H. Baker's paintings catalogue of 1920; the pictures were recently brought to Petworth from Cockermouth Castle, where they had hung since at least 1924, and may now be seen by the public on days when some of the bedrooms in the house are opened by the National Trust.

The paintings derive from a group of sketches by the artist recording West Sussex views, which are now in the West Sussex Record Office. At least two more of these were worked up into finished oils, one of which – *A remarkable old oak in Burton Park, Sussex* (present whereabouts unknown) – was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1801. Another, a view of Cowdray Castle, was sold at Christie's in 2021. It seems, therefore, that de Cort used his West Sussex

drawings to produce a series of paintings for the open-market and the Petworth examples could have been bought for Cockermouth by the 3rd Earl or any of his descendants, down to the 3rd Lord Leconfield (or more likely his wife Violet, Lady Leconfield).

In order to give the paintings greater narrative interest, and thus increase their saleability, de Cort typically embellished or replaced elements he recorded on the spot. For the view of Petworth, for example, he swapped the solitary rider he sketched crossing the bridge towards Duncton for two drovers with their livestock. He also introduced a group of bibulous rustics enjoying a picnic washed down with ale (page 48); the seated mother appears to have left her child lying on the floor in a vignette reminiscent of William Hogarth's famous *Gin Lane*.

De Cort was born in Antwerp, where he studied before moving to Paris. In the wake of the French Revolution he settled in London and remained there for the rest of his life. The artist enjoyed a highly successful career in England, exhibiting regularly at the Royal Academy and achieving many sales and commissions for such lively and detailed topographical views as this example.

BELOW

Two details from Hendrik Frans de Cort's *A distant view of Petworth*: the short-lived triangular pediment on the west front of Petworth House and his group of bibulous rustics.