

NEWSLETTER of the Ferring History Group

Issue 1: July 2001

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Much interest in our local history

Ferring residents have responded with enthusiasm to the initiative of Kath Worvell and others in starting a regular series of meetings with presentations on local history.

The first meeting was held last year, with former local resident Geoffrey Claridge showing his compilation of cine film of village scenes taken by his father in the 1930s. More than 60 people came to that meeting, and it was there that Kath and Joyce Cooper, both keen local historians, proposed the idea of a Local History Group – to hear other presentations, and to do some original work in investigating and recording aspects of Ferring's history which have not yet found their way into print. Two other meetings have now been held (reported further in this Newsletter) and there are now some 55 members, all on our mailing list for this newsletter.

A Steering Committee was formed after the February meeting, with Kath as Chairman, to keep things moving ahead, and the Group will be formally established at the next meeting on 17 August. The Steering Committee is delighted at the response we have had so far.

Does your house have a history?

Many of Ferring's houses and bungalows were built quite recently; a few go back centuries. But even comparatively recent houses often have a story to tell. My own house, for example, built between 1924 and 1930, turns out to have been (partly) a shop for many years.

I found this out from neighbours and it helped to explain some of the puzzling alterations that had been made to the house, still visible in outlines in the plasterwork and rendering. I knew the plot had been much larger until quite recently because there were references in the Land Registry Certificate to plots which had been removed from the title. I checked this up on old large scale maps from Worthing Library, and the shape of the house and gardens was quite different in the 1930s and 1940s. There is the beginning of a research project here ...

Is there anything in the deeds of your house, or any unusual features that suggest it might have an interesting history?

For information and your research:

MiniGuides are now available, on loan from Kath Worvell (248694), of two West Sussex Record Office publications:

'Directories in West Sussex'; 'House History in West Sussex'.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on 17 August, at 7pm, in the Village Hall, when David Smith will give a talk on Roman Brooches, and will show examples from his extensive collection. A very short Annual General Meeting will be held before David's talk, to appoint a management committee for the Group, and adopt a constitution. Everyone interested in local history, whether to listen to presentations by others or to join in the work of research, recording and publication, is warmly invited to attend.

Ferring Shops And Businesses

By Mavis Ibbett

Looking into the history of businesses in Ferring has revealed, in an interesting way, how the village has changed to serve the needs of the people taking up residence here as land became available for building houses and shops. Improved transport also

brought holiday-makers to the village. What was a small farming community at the turn of the last century (population of 243 in 1901) had become, by 1981, a substantial residential area (population of 4,205), with many retired people but also many younger families with children.

Here are a few notes on what I have discovered so far on the various shops and businesses that have traded in the village over that period (all from Worthing Library Local Studies Section):

Kelly's Sussex Directory, 1907:

Peter Tourle was the Parish Clerk and the Sub-Postmaster, as well as running a business as a Wheelwright (and an Undertaker)

Sidney Wesson was the Baker; John Saunders was the Shoemaker. John Glover was the landlord of the New Inn (renamed '*The Henty Arms*' in 1927).

At Hangleton, a hamlet of the parish half a mile to the north, George Penfold had a farm. There are two other 'rustic' entries: Charles Lower had a poultry farm and George Bullen was a Horticulturist.

Worthing and District Blue Book, 1930-31:

W J McNab was the proprietor of the Ferring Grange Hotel.

[Formerly the home of the Henty family, it became a hotel in 1924, and was almost destroyed by fire in 1946. *Goring and Ferring, Past and Present:: J A M Vaughan*]

Kelly's Sussex Directory, 1935:

[Many more shops had appeared] The Directory lists: two greengrocers, two butchers, three grocers and a general store, two newsagents, a baker, a dairy, two cafes, a hairdresser, a coal merchant, a nurseryman, a branch of Barclay's Bank, two builders, two estate agents, two motor engineers, two riding stables, two hotels, and two guest houses.

I would appreciate members passing on to me any information they might have about the village shops – especially from 1939-45 and 1975-2000. It has also struck me that, just as the local businesses evolved to meet the needs of the growing community, there was a similar growth of local clubs and societies. Recording the history of these organisations would make another interesting project on Ferring's social history. If anyone is interested in this aspect of village life and is prepared to carry out some research, please speak up at the next meeting.

Our Meeting on 4 May

Some 30 or 40 people attended our May meeting, some joining as new members. Kath Worvell welcomed everyone, and reported on events since the last meeting – the formation of a steering committee, the arrangements for the first AGM and election of officers, the draft constitution, plans for this newsletter, and local research currently going on. Charges would continue for the time being as £1 membership and £2 per meeting.

Various items were displayed – the census material for 1841-1891, transcriptions of the inscriptions on the St Andrew's Churchyard Gravestones, tithe maps, and reproductions of old photographs of Ferring. Some of this was available to borrow.

Joyce Cooper spoke briefly on her research on family history and Mavis Ibbett gave a short account of her on-going project on the history of local shops and businesses.

4 May 2001

The main presentation was by Geoff Mead, Convenor for the Local History Project at Sussex University. 'Coasting through Sussex'. Geoff is a specialist in Landscape, and gave a talk, illustrated with slides of his own photography featuring some 50 localities along the East and West Sussex shoreline, from Broomhill Sands, near Rye, to Thorney Island, near Havant. As a 'historical geographer', Geoff's themes were the abundant contrasts between rural and urban environments, the 'working coast' and the seaside coast, and the wealthy and the not-so-wealthy populations and housing developments; together with the evidence of continuity and change in land use and settlement.

The development of the seaside resorts began, of course, with Brighton and went on to include Eastbourne, Bexhill (promoted as a fashionable alternative to Le Touquet and Deauville in the early 1930s), and reaching out to Bognor but there was always a 'working coast' of fishermen, wharfage, mineral working and farming. These activities continue side by side today, and the fascination of the coastal landscape is in the variety of the scenery, man-made and natural, which results from, and has conditioned these developments.

Travelling along the coast, we began with the longshore-drift at Broomhill, progressed to the plotlands at Jury's Gap, and then into Rye, town and harbour. Geoff told the story of the 1928 disaster of the attempted rescue of a Latvian ship, in which 17 Rye lifeboatmen were drowned. At Winchelsea, we saw the blue flint pebbles which had been the basis of a local industry until fairly recent times. Hastings displayed its fishing fleet – still the largest beach-launched fleet in the country- before we moved on to the stylish development of Bexhill. On the way to Eastbourne and Beachy Head, we passed the working-class community of Normans Bay. Then came Seaford, featuring an ancient merchant's house. Next west, because the harbours had silted up, was Newhaven, a comparatively modern town.

Brighton, we heard, was not an obscure fishing village before 'Prinny' built his Pavilion. It was always an important regional centre, because it was here that several valleys joined up and provided good road access to the sea front.. It was an important fishing centre. Hove and Portslade had their own stories to tell, as did Shoreham, with its houseboats and beach colony. Lancing and Worthing were dealt with in passing and Geoff mentioned the 'Tudorbethan' styles of Goring. He said he would leave out Ferring itself but went on to talk about Rustington, and Littlehampton (which he said was not so much a seaside town as a river community). The final section was devoted to Bognor (originally a farming community, a little inland), Pagham Harbour and Selsey (still, in part, a fishing community), the farmland of Chidham, the Roman villa at Fishbourne, Bosham, with its old waterfront and the peace and quiet of Thorney Island.

It was quite a journey!

Littlehampton Local History Society

Our counterparts in Littlehampton have invited our members to come along to their meetings too. I attended one on 10 May, *writes Mavis Ibbett*, and found it very interesting. The Littlehampton society was formed around 13 years ago: it has some 30 members and meets once a month, on Saturday afternoons in Winter and Friday evenings in Summer. They have an interesting programme of speakers month by month, and one outing a year.

Some members have published their research on various aspects of life in Littlehampton over the past centuries. One new project under consideration is on people connected with the River Arun, its boats and its harbour.

At the May meeting, members heard a talk by John Stevens, a Director of the Ockendons Hardware Store in the High Street. Established in 1802 by William Ockendon (1778-1858) as a blacksmith's forge, the business expanded in many directions – to engineering, wheelwright's work, supplying brass and iron fittings for boats, to ships'chandlery, and by the late 1870s had opened the retail shop in the High Street, selling many kinds of household goods, ironmongery, gas fittings, fireplaces, prams, builders' and gardening supplies.

Ockendons was truly a family business, with employees who stayed many years. They remain one of the few family run businesses of any size in our area.

LITTLEHAMPTON'S PROGRAMME

(Visitors pay £1 per meeting)

Thursday 12 July: 7.30pm:

'Looking for Tudor People': Prof. John Roberts

Thursday 9 August: 7.30pm:

'A History of Gardens in S E England': Frances Farrer-Brown

Thursday 13 September: 7.30pm:

'Portsmouth to Arundel Canal': Mr H E Roberts

Thursday 11 October:

TRIP TO UPPARK: House and Gardens

Saturday 10 November: 2.30pm:

'Sussex Tokens': Roy Kerridge

Saturday 12 January: 2.30pm:

'How well do you know Sussex?': Betty Jones and Pat Eves

Saturday 9 February: 2.30pm:

'Researching Family History': Wilf Dagget

Saturday 9 March: 2.30pm:

'Littlehampton and the Great War': Dr. Alan Simmonds

Thursday 11 April: 7.30pm:

'Diary of an Edwardian Lady': Mr. P A Jerrome

Thursday 9 May: 7.30pm:

'The Story of Goodwood House': Timothy McCann

Ferring's Meeting of 2nd February

Report by Kath Worvell

Dr Peter Brandon, from the University of Sussex and well-known author on the most reputed books on Sussex history and landscape entertained a capacity audience with a totally enthusiastic review of our county. Starting by referring to the general geographical areas of chalk, clay, sandstones and coastal plain he stressed the differences based on agriculture and landscape had had on cultures within communities. He spoke of the historically differing attitudes living in isolated and distinct areas provoked and with them the regard of suspicion and even hostility such isolation could engender. Sussex

until the arrival of improved communication was a series of quite identifiable and differing cultures, attitudes and communities.

Referring to Ferring, he related this to our historic outlier, Fure. - its place and function within the medieval Manor of Ferring. The onerous obligations to our Lord of the Manor, the Bishop of Chichester he highlighted with much relish.

Dr Brandon, from the University of Sussex and well-known author on the most reputed books on Sussex history and landscape acknowledged the importance of William Hoskins, author of 'Making of the English Landscape' (1953???). He stressed the importance of the radical change in the analysis and understanding of landscape that this book had engendered. Professor Wooldridge's book 'The Weald' (1953) surveyed this distinct geological area and from these, Dr Brandon's own work on the Sussex landscape stems.

Identifying human-like habitation in the Sussex Plain since Boxgrove Man - some half a million years ago - he put our current concept of the Millennium into statistical perspective by pointing out that these last two thousand years merely formed less than ½% of the time known 'man' has inhabited these parts.

Sussex derives from the 'Kingdom of the South Saxons' from the 6th century. An amalgamation of tribal communities, it became absorbed by King Alfred into Wessex in the 10th century. King Harold, defeated at Hastings, had a palace at Bosham and Ferring parish was owned by the Saxon Bishopric based at Selsey. With the coming of the Norman Lords church holdings were transferred to the Norman Bishops. The Norman conquest recast 'Wessex' and established the Norman ducal rapes which came to comprise Sussex and 'Sussex' remained the political region until the late 19th century establishment of local government. Reformed for greater administrative regulation, East and West Sussex were then defined.

Quoting Cobbett's 'Rural Rides' (1825), Dr Brandon outlined the diversity of landscapes that the South East encompassed - chalk down, heath, coastal plain brickearths, the maritime fringe, sandstones and heavy clays and correlated this to the diversity of communities and cultures that this historically had produced. Supporting differing types of agriculture, craft industries and landholdings, this had produced a region of diverse folk-lore and cultures. Geographical isolation in areas of poor accessibility in turn gave rise to communities, isolated, remote and consequently suspiciously regarding their neighbours as 'backward' and hostile. On the maritime fringe, the seafaring communities regarded any unrecognisable ship, local or foreign as 'fair game' for plunder. Correspondingly, the Londoner regarded Sussex as nothing short of barbarian!

The geographical isolation perpetuated local traditions long after the more sophisticated counties followed the changes in fashion. Separated from London by the intractable clays of the Sussex Wealden forests, blue farmers' smocks were worn later in Sussex than elsewhere.

The much quoted stance of the Sussex labourer, '*We won't be druv*' re-iterated their impoverished independence.

However the social conditions of the labouring poor in the 19th century were extreme. Cobbett records for such currently idyllic villages as the Hartings and Treyford in West Sussex abject squalor, desperate poverty and starvation which had its reflection in the Swing Riots of the 1830's. Landowners financed emigration to Upper Canada (the lakes districts) and the western side USA to relieve the problem.

Dr Brandon then turned to our local history and reminded us that Ferring was composed of two parts within the Manor - Ferring parish and its outlier - Fure some 14 miles to the north comprising parts of the parishes of Billingshurst, West Chiltington and Thakeham

All the manors of the coastal plain had outliers pre-dating the Middle Ages. Its produce supplemented that of the coastal plain soils by providing wood for its crafted needs, iron ore and clay as well as a wooded landscape for pig fattening in the Autumn. It is still possible to trace the drove roads which connected the two parts of the Manor of Ferring.

He explained that since Norman times the Lord of the Manor had been the Bishop of Chichester with wealth equivalent to the most wealthy landowners eg the Earl Fitzalans of Arundel. These were of great political influence The Bishops of Chichester held three castles from the 13th century, Wappingthorne, north of Steyning, Amberley and Cakeham on Selsey Bill. The Bishopric owned 8 deer parks, a London residence and many minor properties for their parochial perambulations. The holdings were run by peasants who tenanted land from their lord by Custumal leases - agreements within which they were obligated to provide labour, work and resources to support the whole of the Bishops' estates. This often meant transporting (carting) supplies to other parts of the county or to the other Episcopical holdings. Life was perhaps less onerous in Fure, remote as it was from easy and direct supervision of the Bishopric and this stretch of land may well have provided a form of 'outback' to which landless peasants could remove, to set up holdings starting with a primitive hut and gradually clearing and building up a holding as the farm became established. Even so, a poor harvest, inclement weather, famine or disease could easily result in death.

Anecdotally, Dr Brandon said that it would have been traditional for peasants to work bareheaded as seed was sown, in deference and trust to the prayed-for harvest bounty of God!

Bringing the survey to date, Dr Brandon spoke of the impact of the 2nd World War on the Sussex landscape. With haste to produce food much of the downland was put under the plough but only two harvests were achieved: by 1943 the War Office had commandeered all of the Sussex Downs for armed forces training and manoeuvres.

Turning to specific industries which had long formed part of the traditional Sussex economy he discussed the importance of downland sheep flocks in their production of wool, meat and in his opinion, the most important - manure on which the fertility of corn production had once entirely depended. Additionally, the wattle and hurdle production of the Wealden woods were essential to the control, management and penning of sheep.

He showed slides of the diverse patchwork of Wealden fields and holdings which contrasted not only in size but in industry and character with the wide open downs. Dr Brandon concluded with historic sketches of Shoreham, coastline, port and harbour and the industry and personalities which once characterised this important town.

Visit to West Pier , Brighton

A visit has been arranged to the historic West Pier, where work is about to start on a complete rehabilitation of this Victorian structure, restoring it to its former glories. We are told that it is structurally sound, so that there is no danger of falling through the floor, and that the architecture and décor are well worth seeing. Numbers for the visit are limited, but there are a few places left. We shall be meeting at 6.30pm at the Pier, on Friday 13 July (but don't let the date put you off). Please ring Vivien Hayes, on 247653, if you would like to join us.

(If you would like a lift to and from Brighton, that can probably be arranged)

November Meeting

The last meeting of the year will be held on 2 November, at the Village Hall, with Colin Excell, from the Sussex Family History Group. Details in the next Newsletter.

Ferring History Group: Inaugural Meeting

You are invited to the proposed inaugural meeting of the group, in the Village Hall, on Friday 17th August 2001 at 7pm where it is hoped a formal Committee can be appointed.

Agenda

1. To appoint a Chairman and Secretary for this inaugural meeting
2. Appointment of Chairman for the ensuing year
3. Appointment of Honorary Secretary
4. Appointment of Honorary Treasurer
5. Appointment of 5 other Committee Members
6. Adoption of Draft Constitution (see overleaf)
7. Any other business

Ed Miller
Steering Group Secretary

FERRING HISTORY GROUP

DRAFT CONSTITUTION (For presentation to AGM)

1. The Group shall be known as 'Ferring History Group'
2. Its aims shall be to:
 - a) collect, record, collate and, as appropriate, publish any original or secondary material of historical interest or historical value to the residents of Ferring;
 - b) stimulate interest in the history of Ferring and its environs;
 - c) present at displays, events or celebrations relevant material or artefacts for public viewing.
2. Membership shall be open to anyone interested in the aims of the Group, and anyone attending any of the Group's meetings will be enrolled as a member for that calendar year. Any separate membership fee shall be determined at an Annual, or Extraordinary General Meeting.
3. The Group's affairs shall be managed by a committee consisting of:
 - a) a Chairman
 - b) a Secretary
 - c) a Treasurer
 - d) up to five further members

all the above to be appointed at an Annual General Meeting. The committee shall have the power to co-opt , additionally, up to three members of the Group to assist in the administration and development of the Group.
4. The Group shall have a bank account. Signatories will be the Treasurer and either the Chairman or the Secretary.
5. Should the Group be wound up, any remaining funds will be either:
 - a) returned to the original funders (if practicable), or
 - b) donated to any charity decided upon at an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose.

Steering Committee, May 2001