

Pill Box to open shortly

Members will have seen the first stage of the work of renovating the Second World War Pill Box on Patterson's Walk. This was the re-opening of the entrance, blocked up in the late 1940s, we presume, to see just what was inside, and what condition it was in, before the actual renovation started. It was then re-sealed, temporarily, with a strong timber screen which has resisted the best attentions of the vandals, prior to the next stage of the work – scheduled for 11 May. The work is being undertaken by Ferring Parish Council at the suggestion of this Group, and carried out by John Clarke of Ferring Building Services, with advice from Martin Mace – author of *Front Line Sussex*.

When John Clarke broke through the bricked-up entrance, we found an opening 4ft 6 ins by 1ft 6 ins (1350 x 450 mm), through a 2ft 6ins solid concrete wall, and a 2ft 6ins step down to a concrete floor covered in a few inches of brick rubble and a few more inches of water on top of that. A lamp brought in revealed a chamber of roughly the size we expected (deeper, but not as some residents had suspected underlying the whole of the promenade), with iron stanchions and remains of timber gun mountings against the inside apertures of the embrasures, themselves tapered quite severely from the external apertures.

The ironwork and the timber were in a good state of preservation, which, given the depth of water on the floor, indicated that the pill box had been airtight once sealed. The brick rubble appeared to have some camouflage paint on it and may have been the remains of a blast wall sheltering the entrance (we may find out more on this) but the water is rather a mystery: is it rain water leaking through the roof, sea water from very high tides, or ground water from the fresh water table which cannot be far below the surface?

On 12 May we hope to pump that water out and remove the rubble, and then fit a specially-made steel door. There after the intention is to re-position two of the benches, open up the embrasures, fitting some armoured glass to provide some natural light, and re-render the exterior. Access to the steel door will be via a step down from the east side of the promenade deck, along a concrete path. After a ceremonial opening, the Pill Box will then be kept locked and re-opened on special occasions, including for school parties.

Does anyone have an old steel helmet, or a greatcoat, we can hang on the wall?

FERRING MURDERER CLAIMS SANCTUARY

by Ed Miller

'In the middle ages, any felon who had taken sanctuary in a church, chapel or churchyard could remain there unharmed for forty days, during which he could send for the local coroner, confess his felonies and 'abjure the realm', swearing to leave England by a stated port. He was entitled to make his way to the port and leave the kingdom with impunity, but the normal penalty for staying from the direct route or for later returning to England was death'. So wrote R F Hunniset in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* (vol 102, 1964).

At least one Ferring murderer took advantage of this protection of the Church. On 28 December 1526, Thomas Wulvyn, the younger, a 'laborer', murdered Thomas Grenehill, and sought sanctuary in Poling Church. On 5 January he sent for the coroner and confessed to striking his victim 'on the head with a staff, so that he immediately died', and many other offences. He sought to abjure the realm and be assigned a port. The coroner granted his request and assigned him the port of Hastings (why not Littlehampton or Shoreham?), gave him 'a cross in his right hand' and committed him to the tithing man of Poling to lead him 'from town to town by the right road towards the port'.

Wulvin (from a prominent local family who gave their name to 'Woolvins' a cottage which stood just south of what is now the War Memorial, well into the 20th Century) would have had to go bareheaded and barefoot. The cross in his right hand was presumably a small wooden cross to show that he was under church protection. Two years later, in the first of a series of laws to reduce this remnant of mediaeval Church privileges, the forty days sanctuary could be cut short by the coroner and after confession the felon was 'to be marked with an hote yron upon the brawn of his thumb with the Signe of an A' (for Abjurator), the better to detect absconders. In 1624, sanctuary was finally abolished.

INVASION WORTHING by Ken Browne

"As England, in spite of the hopelessness of her military position, has so far shown herself unwilling to come to any compromise, I have therefore decided to prepare for and if necessary, carry out an invasion of England." ADOLF HITLER FUEHRER DIRECTIVE JULY 16TH 1940

Not many people passing along Worthing sea front road parallel with Onslow Court, the block of art deco-style flats on the seafront just east of Worthing pier, would realise that they were passing through the flank point of Hitler's second modified plan for the invasion of Britain in 1940 namely "OPERATION SEALION". Remarkable as it now seems nine divisions of crack German troops were poised just across the channel to land between Worthing and Dover on a broad front.

German hierachy divided

Of course the major obstacles to be overcome before a landing could be contemplated was the British navy and air force, and this had been pointed out to Hitler at great length by his generals; that any landing on British soil could only be carried out after the total subjugation of the RAF and, in turn the British navy; air and sea superiority had to be established to get the first wave of troops across the channel. This was then to be followed up by a further seven divisions, to hold the position until the third wave was assembled and transported. The chiefs of staff of the German air force; navy and army were divided as to the viability of the scheme. Mainly due to the concerns of the German navy guarding a sizeable invasion fleet (the weakest link in the plan), original schemes were amended and revamped many times

Goering had assured the Fuehrer that the R.A.F would be no problem after the 'Battle of Britain' which commenced on the 10th of July; however as we all know it wasn't quite the pushover he envisaged.

The Compromise

Eventually a compromise was reached in the arguments over the final plan; and Hitler agreed to a narrowed invasion the most westerly landing area being Worthing. Putting aside the navy's limitations an invasion fleet made up mainly of specially converted barges was put into production, As no landing craft were available to the navy; a whole fleet had to be built using existing merchant craft i.e. river barges converted to take tanks and unload them on an open beach. The conversions included reinforcing with concrete; half were unpowered and tugs were to be employed where necessary. In trials, the barges proved to be quite seaworthy; although the drawback was slowness of deployment and particularly landing. With this in mind the initial assault troops were to be carried in engineer assault craft; the tanks were also to be of the amphibian type. The conversion of the craft had to be accomplished in short order and was a mammoth task: the total number of converted barges alone (over 2000) plus auxiliary freighters, tugs, motor fishing boats and yachts stretches the imagination. However, the Reich was able to bring into play resources from all over conquered Europe and a massive flotilla of craft was assembled at many European ports including Rotterdam, Antwerp Dunkirk, Ostend, Calais, Boulogne and le Havre; ready for the call to invade England.

Invasion Worthing!

The German high command had been sizing up the English coast for some time and Dover. Also, apart from topographical maps, models and aerial reconnaissance photos, fifth columnists must have been at work studying favourable landing spots on our side of the channel. In this respect the beaches to the east of Worthing pier were ideally suited for an armoured landing as they were long; flat and firm and not faced by cliffs or hills.

The tasks allotted to the German 9th Army, commanded by Adolf Strauss, was to take possession of the coast from Bexhill to Worthing. The first wave was to secure the beachhead: the second packed a powerful punch; made up of two panzer divisions of tanks artillery and the much feared panzer grenadier assault troops and one motorised division. The role of the panzers was to break out in a forward thrust in typical 'blitzkrieg' (lightning war) fashion in conjunction with the 16th army (to the right), to a line running from Hadlow Down to Storrington. The eventual westerly destination was to be Portsmouth.

Put on hold

On 10th September Hitler put off the decision to act, as there was no sign of air or sea supremacy and it was hoped that the ongoing blitz on London would bring about surrender without the need for a very risky invasion by sea. Also, the RAF had been heavily bombing the invasion fleets in the European ports. Consequently the whole plan for Operation Sealion was put on hold, in a Hitler directive issued on the 17th September. Meanwhile General Strauss and his 9th Army were redirected away from Worthing - to Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. The rest, as they say, is history.

FERRING TAKES THE PLEDGE

A few months before the outbreak of the Civil War a very comprehensive census was taken of all the households in England. The 'Protestation' obliged all males aged 18

or over to declare that they supported Parliament's manifesto for the protection of Protestantism and what we would now call the Constitution. Any refusers or absentees were recorded. The Ferring and Kingston return contains the names of 67 who declared, along with the names of the Vicar, Owen Arthur, who conducted the business, and two Collectors of the Poor (Rate) who acted as witnesses. It also explains that one of their Churchwardens has recently moved to another parish and that the other is 'lame' and cannot travel. It says none refused to take the oath.

This was by no means a taking of sides in a civil war. The declaration was nominally in support of the King, against Catholic and foreign influence. Most of the Sussex Members supported Pym and the other Parliamentary leaders but their aim was to bring Charles back to constitutional government – no one knew the King was soon to declare war against Parliament. Probably most of the men in Ferring came to sign or make their mark without thinking very much about it or knowing exactly what it was about. Its importance really lies in its listing of all the adult male population of the parish, regardless of social status.

Well, almost regardless. By checking the parish registers, wills and other sources we can identify most of them as either Ferring or Kingston residents in 1642. The order of the first dozen or so names indicates social standing, or at least wealth. First came William Watersfield, outright owner of much of East Ferring, occupier of its Manor House, and a major copyholder in West Ferring; then Richard Sewell, owner of what is now Elford House in North Ferring, then Thomas Holden a local dealer in fleeces (who lived in Church Cottage), Josias Peachey (what is now May and Evergreen Cottage), William Cooke, yeomen (tenant farmers), and Richard Bennett of Hangleton Farm (in what is now Langbury Lane). At the end of the list came the Vicar and the two 'Collectors' – one of whom was John Snelling, the 'gentleman' who lived in what was later remodelled as East Ferring House.

It is not clear who was the occupier of Ferring Grange (the West Ferring manor house) at this time. William Watersfield's brother Thomas inherited the lease but, while still owning property in the village, seems to have moved away after his remarriage in 1638; he is not listed here (or on any of the other Protestation Returns of West Sussex). A near contemporary copy of the 1647 Survey of the manor shows the lease at that time to be jointly held by Watersfield, a man from East Grinstead, and Richard Taylor, who appears as number 31. The Kingston establishment was scattered throughout the list – John Pannett, the owner of Kingston Farm, coming in at 64.

From this one may also estimate the population of Ferring at this time. Of the 71 names, some 50 are identifiable as Ferring residents; doubling that for women residents and doubling again for children under 18, brings one to 200 – very close to the figure of 238 in the first official census of 1801.

GROUP MEETING TAKES OFF

An audience of 80 packed the Village Hall for our February meeting - featuring a talk on the history of Shoreham Airport by Dave Dunstall, who looks after the archives of the Shoreham Airport Historical Association. The airport is much in the news at the moment, following its purchase by a private company. Dave Dunstall said the new owners are committed to maintaining the 1930s atmosphere.

This was the golden age of the airport, when flying was still a new and exciting phenomenon - for sport and for luxury transport. The airport, built by Brighton and Worthing Borough Councils, was opened in 1936, and was indeed the scene of many flying displays and air races, as well as running very exclusive scheduled flights to France and the Channel Islands. But its history goes right back to the early days of flight., with pioneers like Harold Piffard , who built and flew the first aeroplane to fly over Sussex, at Shoreham in 1910.

His 'Hummingbird' attracted attention but it was the Pashley Brothers who developed a more successful type at Shoreham in 1911. The growing popularity of their displays attracted A.V. Roe (later AVRO Ltd) , who set up their first flying school at the airfield, and put up the first permanent buildings on the site, including hangars for aircraft production.

In 1914 the Royal Flying Corps moved in, and set up their own Flying Training Unit, sending pilots to France with a precious few hours flying experience (and initially only 45 minutes). The first Canadian squadron was formed here in 1918.

After the war, recreational flying and aircraft production started again, with Cecil Pashley and the Miles Company, and then 'Sir Alan Cobham's Flying Circus' and 5/- flights over Worthing Pier, and then into that 'golden age', which finished with the collapse of France in 1940 (commercial flying continued for the first nine months of the war).

The airport now came under RAF control, and was used by Air Sea Rescue spotter and recovery aircraft. It was little molested by the Luftwaffe, possibly because it rescued as many German pilots as Allied, but an Me 109 made a celebrated crash landing in nearby fields. After a quiet period, flying resumed in the late 1940s, and scheduled services from 1950. 'We've never looked back since', Dave Dunstall told the group, and the future looks bright'.

Group Secretary Ed Miller, thanking him, reminded the audience that the next meeting would be at 7.30 on 11 May, with John Mills, the County Archaeologist, presenting recent discoveries in West Sussex.

ANSWERING THE ARCHDEACON

In the 1630s the Church of England was going through one of its regular convulsions following the break with Rome a century earlier. After the austere Protestantism of Edward VI's reign, and the return to Catholicism in Mary's, there had been a settlement under Elizabeth – for a tolerant, broad Protestant church, accommodating many styles of worship. Then came James I, trying to appease the Calvinists in Scotland and the conservative Anglicans in England and satisfying neither. After his reign, Charles I went on the offensive against the protestant extremists in England and Scotland. In England this was marked by his appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. Laud was a crusader for what we would now call the Anglo-Catholic tendency, who was determined to root out all puritan influences (and to make sure that the church buildings, and the clergy, were 'fit for purpose').

The Bishops of Chichester were firm supporters: Richard Montague was an enthusiastic High Church man, and his successor, Brian Duppa (consecrated 1638) was tutor to the King's son. Duppa reissued Montague's long and detailed questionnaire, to be filled in by the churchwardens of every parish, enquiring into the state of the parish church, the style of worship and the character of the incumbent. The questions made it very clear what was required – an altar at the east end of the

church, bowing and kneeling at particular parts of the service, sermons stressing allegiance to the King and so on. He repeated the exercise in 1639.

Then in 1640 he delegated the task to his two Archdeacons. James March, for Chichester, refined and extended the questionnaire, including items about the length of the minister's hair and the clothes he wore in and out of church.

In October 1640 the churchwardens of Ferring had to answer over seventy such questions. Their answer is preserved in the West Sussex Record Office. For the most part, they answered parrot fashion – giving the answer that was clearly expected (as most churchwardens did) no doubt hoping that they would not be cross-examined or inspected. But the first set of answers, on the church buildings, is more interesting. They said that the churchyard was well-fenced – no cattle were allowed to feed or dung there, no swine allowed to grub up the corpses in the graves. The church itself was in good repair: 'Our church is covered with tyles, our steeple is furnished with bells.'

This is the first mention of a steeple, which could have meant a square tower or a spire – or even both. The 1603 Inspection of the church had reported 'there is no steeple the bells hange in a frame in the Churche yarde'. And as late as 1790 a description in the publication *The Topographer* says exactly the same, albeit with a comment that there were signs of a steeple being present at one time but presumably having blown down in a storm. In 1792 the Churchwardens obtained a licence from the diocese to sell two bells to finance 'building a tower and hanging therein the largest Bell'. This 'tower' is evidently the small turret we see there today – something very much like it appears in an early 19th Century sketch.

So did the Churchwardens of 1640 give a false answer, or was a steeple built some time after 1603 and demolished not many years after?

THE TIDE OF WAR

by Ed Miller

By the Autumn of 1944, the Allies had liberated France and Belgium and, with the Invasion Threat a thing of the past, the Royal Engineers began to clear the minefields and other defensive obstacles the South Coast., including the Ferring foreshore. The Pill Box, of course, remained.

The slow and inconsistent opening of the beaches for bathing etc caused irritation and occasionally outrage. Just before the clearance from Ferring and East Preston a Kingston Resident wrote to the authorities.

Ashton

Kingston Gorse
East Preston

13 10. 44

Dear Sir

Forgive me again for appearing importunate but I just cannot understand the situation that has arisen relative to the beaches here. For eighteen months there has been a notice at the entrance to the beach 'Cleared Area'. For over two years the military and the Nursing Sisters of the RAMC have bathed here and used the beaches freely. Since your letter and following one from your Department to the District Council giving a

seeming OK these entrances have been closed and RE WIRED. Further, the notice affixed showing a cleared area has been removed. Is this as it should be or is there some lack of liaison?

With all this fear and trepidation I may now say that despite frequent applications in writing and by verbal methods there remains buried at my gate a few sticks of dynamite to blow up the road where needed and although the fuse is easily handled no one has as yet bothered to remove it.

Yours faithfully

B D Davis

LEARNING CURVES

by Adge Roberts

Do yourself a favour and learn first hand, about the long-closed 'Portsmouth and Arundel Navigation' (of which the Chichester Canal is a part). Join a guided walk along the route from Barnham to Ford, a distance of some 4 miles.

The walks are led by well informed guides who are members of the Sussex Industrial Archaeological Society (SIAS) and have all taken part in the archaeological works along the route. The walks are generally along the tow path and several recent archaeological finds will be seen and explained by your guide. The poor standard of brick work will also be pointed out as we pass along the gentle curves of the canal.

The start is at Barnham Court Farm, at the site of the Stewart Bridge where much conservation work is being carried out. The farm is signposted from the Murrell Arms (just east of the railway bridge on the B2233) and from the parish church in Church Lane. The grid reference for the starting point is 956034. The walks start at 10 am and begin by first walking west for a quarter of a mile to visit an interesting feature, and then return eastwards, arriving in Yapton at about lunch time. You can bring your own lunch or purchase from a local shop. The village hall will be open for the use of toilets (note that there are also toilets at Barnham Court Farm at the start).

In the second half of the walk, we arrive in Ford at about 2-30.pm. There is ample free parking at Barnham Court Farm, and a frequent train service from Ford to Barnham with a 10 minute walk to from the stations.

The walks are on Sunday 1st July as part of the Chichester Festivities and run for the Chichester Ship Canal Trust (by SIAS) and the next walk is on Saturday 8 September during the National Heritage Open Day. There is no charge to join these walks but donations will be welcome and the proceeds will help to fund the conservation works. I hope to see you there.

FERRING IN 1910

Lloyd George's budget of 1909, 'The People's Budget' as he called it, provided for a new Land Tax, and required a comprehensive survey of land ownership and land values across the whole of the country. The records of the survey in West Sussex (WSRO IR 4), give a good snapshot of Ferring just before the first world war.

The principal landowner was, of course, Edwin Henty, with nearly 600 acres. He was followed by William Lyon, whose family had bought up the Richardson estate in East

Ferring and the eastern side of Highdown, in stages, in the 1840s through to the 1870s. He had nearly 200 acres. Other owners were insignificant.

But the survey also reveals the occupiers of the land and cottages. – the tenant farmers like William Prince at Home Farm, George Penfold at Hangleton Farm, and George Harrison at East Ferring Farm; the independent traders like George Peskett in the Smiths Shop (thought to be where Greystoke Road now cuts through Church Lane), Frank Lever at the New Inn (to be renamed, in 1928, The Henty Arms), Peter Tourle at the Post Office (now Holly Lodge) and Sidney Wesson's general stores at Landalls (opposite the modern post office). Other trades are hinted at, with Dairy Cottage (just south of the Barn Surgery today), the Gatehouse (level crossing keeper), the School House, and the Glasshouses occupied by George Bullen (at Langbury Lane/Littlehampton Road). It also shows the retinue around the Hentys – his coachman at the Lodge, his gardener at Garden Cottage, as well as his personal staff at the Grange..

This was the golden age of the Henty family in Ferring – they owned not only most of the farmland and cottages, the brewery that owned the village inn, the Old School House and most of the big houses in the village (the Grange, St Maurs, Franklands, Home Farm House). But they had actually started the process of selling off their land for non-agricultural uses. Three acres at the south end of Sea lane had been sold in 1909 to Sir Louis de Pan Mallet, a senior diplomat in the Foreign Office who ended his days as our Ambassador to Turkey.

BOOK REVIEW- Women of Victorian Sussex

This admirable book is not half a dozen profiles of eminent Sussex ladies, as one might expect from its title, but a detailed account of the working lives of hundreds of women, based on the census returns, trade directories and newspaper material of the time. The records examined are largely those of East Sussex, with Hastings well represented, so the title and the cover illustration is in a sense misleading too. It might better have been called 'Women in Victorian East Sussex'.

It is admirable in the thoroughness of its research into women's occupations – everything from Artists to Washerwomen – and their dealings with the law; from property cases to violence and murder. The listing of so many inn keepers or hospital inmates or cases of domestic violence makes the book sound like something of a catalogue in places but some of the detail lights up the big picture – the case of Eliza Honeysett, a destitute woman who stole a faggot of wood worth sixpence from a farmer at Hellingly in 1865, for instance. She said she had stolen it to make a fire to dry her baby's wet clothes. She was sentenced to one month hard labour because of suspicion that she was a prostitute.

Despite all the lists, and recitals of one sad story after another, there is some useful analysis of the status of women in the early and mid-Victorian period – disadvantaged at all social levels, generally unable to live independently and so forced into marriages where they became the property of their husbands, domestic service where they worked from morning to night and were at risk from predatory masters, or into prostitution.

The book ends with a few notes on East Sussex feminists of the period – Barbara Leigh-Smith, founder of the first Women’s Suffrage Committee; Sophia Jex-Blake, one of the first women doctors; Clementina Black, a pioneer in trade unionism and employment protection for women; and several others. Theirs is a worthy story in a grim environment of male supremacy and, for the great majority of women, grinding poverty, continual childbearing and hard physical work.

There are some lighter moments and colourful characters – ‘Cast-Iron Sal’ a Brighton prostitute, arrested outside the *Royal Oak* in 1854 for ‘conducting herself in a drunken and riotous manner’ with a corporal of the Guards; the audience reaction to the 1851 lecture on ‘Bloomerism’ in Hastings; and the ‘dippers’ of Brighton, formidable ladies who helped hesitant bathers benefit from the curative powers of sea water.

This is a valuable piece of work for local historians, a ‘must-have’ book for Sussex feminists, and a good read for anyone with an interest in the way life was lived in this region five or six generations ago.

Women of Victorian Sussex: Helena Wojtczak, Hastings Press £9.99

OUR PROGRAMME

Our programme for 2007/08 is as follows:

Meetings (all Fridays, at 7.30):

11 May 2007: **Update on local archaeology** by John Mills, County Archaeologist

17 August 2007: **Rustington – Farms to Flats** by Harry Clark (AGM 7.15)

9 November 2007 **Parham and the Pearsons** by Caroline Adams WSO

14 December 2007: Christmas Social (programme to be announced)

8 February 2008: **Sussex Customs and Traditions** by Chris Hare

9 May 2008: **Old Portsmouth Dockyard** by Mike Ross

Walks and Visits

These are usually arranged at a couple of months notice, and details are announced at our quarterly meetings. We are continuing the ‘Worvell Walks’: Keith Richards, who has joined the Committee organised a New Year’s Day, circular walk from Clapham to Patching and return, and another on the recent Spring Bank Holiday, to Kingston and East Preston. Not many braved the wet and windy weather that time so we will do it again for the August Bank Holiday. We will try to repeat these dates (with different venues) on these three dates every year. As usual a poster advertising the walk will be placed in each notice board nearer the time. Also this year we hope to run a coach visit to St Mary’s Bramber, and Brighton Pavilion. There is no shortage of interesting venues. Please look out for notices or phone Ed Miller for details.

Research

The articles in this *Newsletter* are all the product of work done by our members, using local records. There is a great deal to be done and one does not have to be very experienced to do most of it, or necessarily have to go outside Ferring. The Committee encourages all members to get involved. One of our members, Tim Baldwin, has begun some interesting work on an Oral History of Ferring. Please phone Tim on 246868 if you have any memories of Ferring in the 1960s or earlier, or can introduce him to any one who does, or if you could type up some of the interviews he has already done. And do contact one of the Committee if you would like to follow up your own interest in any Ferring subject.