

**MORE FROM VICTORIA**

by Ed Miller

A very important reference book on the history of Ferring, Goring, East Preston, Angmering and other local areas is to be published early next year. This is the latest volume in the 'Victoria County History of England' series - Sussex, Volume 5, Part 2. The material was originally drafted some ten years ago but has been thoroughly revised and rewritten by Dr Chris Lewis of London University, with the help of a number of local historians.

The County History project is by no means complete: it was inaugurated to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, and it has taken well over a century to get this far. Most counties have been covered, at least in part, but there are still many areas within counties where no history has been published. The volume covering our area is finally going to press in the next month.

These histories are so important because they are produced by professional historians who have very high standards of scholarship, meticulously basing what they say on the evidence of contemporary documents, reported archaeology and other verified sources. The section on Ferring alone has over 300 footnotes, giving hundreds of references which amateur historians can follow up.

The volumes are not cheap (those already in print are priced at around £45), but this volume will no doubt be available in Ferring Library, and our History Group Committee will want to think about getting a copy for ourselves. I have helped with the revision of the Ferring material, and have seen the Angmering and Goring sections in draft, and if the sections on Littlehampton, Rustington, Poling and other local parishes are as good as those we will have an excellent compendium of local history and reference sources.

**PILGRIMS AND DAY TRIPPERS**

Twenty six members of the Group took a trip to Bramber on 27 June, to visit St. Mary's House and Bramber Castle. Despite the very threatening weather, no one got wet and we all had a very interesting afternoon.

Our guides gave the background to the house – the once-wide estuary, the long bridge with the chapel of St Mary in the centre, and the original building on this site put up by the Knights Templar at the time of the crusades. Later, the monks from the chapel took it over as a hostel for pilgrims; the present building dates from 1470. From then on there a good record of the history of the house and its successive owners, although there are many legends and mysteries surrounding it. Did Elizabeth I sleep there? Probably not. Did Charles II stay there on his way out of the country in 1652? Possibly. Did Conan Doyle base his story 'The Musgrave Ritual' on the house and the Musgrave family that lived there in 1900? Probably.

The east façade of the house is 15<sup>th</sup> century but the interior arrangement shows the many alterations of the following 500 years. The contents of the house are no less fascinating than its architecture – the 16<sup>th</sup> century panelling, the 17<sup>th</sup> century furniture, the 18<sup>th</sup> century paintings and the 19<sup>th</sup> century memorabilia.

The Group went from there to the remains of Bramber Castle – with a talk from Pat Nightingale, Secretary of the Beeding & Bramber Local History Group. The Castle

was built for one of the Norman knights who fought at Hastings, to keep safe the territory awarded him by William I. Only one wall of the massive gatehouse, and a section of the curtain wall, is still standing and it is generally assumed that this dilapidation was the result of some siege, such as in the Civil War. Not so, said Pat Nightingale: the castle was already a ruin in 1553, and almost certainly collapsed through poor construction on unstable foundations. Oddly, though, the church next door to the castle – built at the same time – has survived intact.

The castle grounds have long been a popular location for a day out – particularly with the coming of the railway in 1861 (long since gone) and coach excursions from Brighton. The village has many other ancient buildings and interesting features and is still regarded as one of the jewels of the Sussex downland, particularly in the summer, with its flower baskets and attractive gardens.

### **A PETITION OF 1375**

There is an original document at the National Archive in Kew (SC 8/9/298/14869), which is very faded and difficult to read but is undoubtedly a petition to the Lord Chancellor asking him to discharge two customs officers at Kingston, Sussex and appoint in their place William ate Vicarys of Ferring and John Pakkeman of Goring by Sea.

The date is firm because there is a response (not seen) which gives this year, but no clue to what the reason might be for this change of officials. It must have been an important issue – almost certainly asking for their dismissal, not their replacement at the end of an agreed term of office. It might have been for dishonesty or high-handed officiousness. It might have been at Kingston Buci, close by Shoreham but this seems unlikely: at this time the port of Shoreham was still ‘old Shoreham’ up the Adur. And the appointment of men from Ferring and Goring suggests strongly that we are dealing with Kingston in our neighbouring parish.

What would the customs men have been doing at Kingston? It could never have been a port like Shoreham, given the nature of the beach and the lack of any estuary or creek, but there could have been some sort of anchorage or mooring for the small ships of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Cargoes might have been transferred by boat. The most likely cargo would be wool, or fleeces, on which there was an export duty at this time. Customs Officers would collect this duty at the ‘port’ of shipping.

Richard Standing tells us that Kingston was indeed regarded as something of a port in the 13th century, through to about 1410 when it was last recorded. It is reckoned that one or two of those named in the subsidy (tax) rolls of the time were shipmasters, and wool was being exported through "Kingston Haven" in the 1390s. Martin Kyngeston is one of those identified as a ship master in the 1332 Kingston and Wick subsidy, but he was of no remarkable wealth. His name does appear in the Kingston section of this subsidy. He also reminds us that both Ferring and Kingston are shown in the ‘Armada’ maps as having ‘stades’ or landing stages.

If they were not collecting taxes they may have been preventive officers, acting against smugglers. Landing contraband by boat was certainly done at Ferring in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century but what would have been smuggled in 1375?

We have no information on 'William ate Vicarys'. He is not mentioned in the Custumal (list of tenants rights and obligations) for Ferring which may date from this period. 'William' is a common enough name but 'ate Vicarys' suggests that he was closely associated with the Vicar, if only living close by him.

This is another glimpse of the remote past of Ferring, giving rise to much conjecture.

### **FERRING'S SMITHY**

As a farming village, Ferring always had need of blacksmith's work (not just for shoeing horses but for making and repairing farming equipment) yet it is hardly mentioned in the documents at West Sussex Record Office. The few mentions there are do however give us some clues to the proprietors and location of the smithy.

First, in the Subsidy Return (taxation list) of 1327, we have *Matilde Relicta Fabri* (Matilda, widow of the Smith (Latin *faber* = smith)). In the 1332 list we have *Robert le ferour*. This is Norman French for 'iron worker' (like the German *Eisenhauer*). These items are recorded just at the time that occupational and other descriptions were turning into surnames. Robert was almost certainly a smith.

The 'Custumal' (record of tenants obligations) dating from this early mediaeval period (no dates are given) has an explicit entry :

*William Smith (faber) holds 4 acres and renders 100 horseshoes and 600 nails at St Thomas' Day. He shall make 2 ploughs a year, and the lord [of the manor] shall find the iron and steel. He shall shoe 1 horse all the year round, and have 1d for the four shoes. He shall shoe the sergeant's horse likewise, and shall shoe another horse on two feet for 1d. He shall have a cheese, price 4d, and a pigling, price 8d, and 25d for the hundred shoes. He shall have one beast in the first pasture, and at least one beast in the after pasture, and one horse. And his dinner at all harvest and ploughing boon works [duties on the lord of the manor's estate], and at the mowing of the meadow, and as long as the Bishop or the steward is in the township [of Ferring]; and as much grass of custom as another mower. He shall shoe the steward's horse when needed, and have 1d for the four shoes.*

This sets out very clearly the range of the smith's work for the Lord of the Manor (the Bishop of Chichester) and his officials, and how he was paid for it, but we must imagine him also doing work for the few freeholders outside the manorial estate, for the smallholders within it and the occasional traveller who needed his horse shod.

Then we seem to have quite a gap until the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1649, William Watersfield (who owned considerable land in East Ferring and elsewhere) left 'to Manning the Smith of Ferring five shillings'. In the Heath Tax return of 1670 Richard Manning is assessed for one hearth (presumably his cottage) and 'a forge'. The Parish Registers show 'Richard Manning, a smith', buried in 1711. If this is not the same man it must be the same family.

We know too that there was a smith here in 1742, because an apprentice is listed. But from then on, and all through the 19<sup>th</sup> Century there seems to be no mention of a smithy. None of the Censuses give this occupation. This may have been because there was a smithy nearby in Goring all through this period – the building survived until the

1960s. What we do have in Ferring is an entry in the Inland Revenue Survey of 1910, which lists 'George Peskett' in a 'Smith's Shop' next to Holly Cottage. This was evidently where Greystoke Road now cuts through Church Lane. The shop may have been taken over by Peter Tourle, who operated the Post Office from Holly Lodge and is described in the 1911 Kelley's Directory as a wheelwright, as well as undertaker, postmaster and Parish Clerk (Ferring did not get its Parish Council until 1919, but had had an Annual Parish Meeting since 1895).

## **FLATLANDS**

Harry Clark, Secretary of the Rustington Heritage Association, gave his illustrated talk 'Rustington – Farms to Flats' to a large audience at Ferring History Group's AGM on 17 August. A long-time resident himself, he drew on his personal memories as well as his large collection of slides to show how the agricultural landscape was obliterated by housing development and the village atmosphere overwhelmed by modern shopping centres. Much of this had happened well within the last 40 years.

And yet, he told the group, many of the old houses still remained: Rustington had 22 'listed' buildings, including the Norman church and the two manor houses. There was great interest in preserving what was left and displaying the record of what had gone – his group's heritage museum was soon to be rehoused in one of the 17<sup>th</sup> century cottages in the village centre.

Rustington was not mentioned as such in the Domesday Book, he said, but corresponded with 'Nonneminster', a settlement between Angmering and Poling. Bronze Age remains had been found when the by-pass near Sainsbury's was created, and the area shared the same history of Roman and Saxon settlement as the rest of the coastal plain. Traces of the two mediaeval manors are indicated by the rebuilt manor houses. At least one timber-framed cottage survives from the late mediaeval period but most of the historic houses are from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Several more striking large houses were built in Victorian times, including Knightcroft and Rustington House but the area remained agricultural until the 1930s. The Sea Estate had been built in the 1920s, on what had been acquired for an aerodrome for the US Airforce in 1918, but the newer developments were more intensive and gradually the farmland and most of the old cottages disappeared. After World War II more and more development was in the form of flats and this has become the dominant feature of the last 20 years. The last market garden closed down in 1972. 'Farms', said Harry Clark, 'had finally given way to flats'.

At the Annual General Meeting earlier in the evening, Joyce Cooper was re-elected President, Adge Roberts as Chairman, Ed Miller as Secretary and Peter Bentley was confirmed as Treasurer.

## ELECTIONS BEFORE DEMOCRACY

Before the Reform Acts of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century only a handful of people in Ferring had a vote in the election of their Member of Parliament. The main qualification was not residence but property ownership. Until 1832 the level of the property qualification varied town by town and county by county. Ferring was in the Sussex county constituency, and it seems you had to be a freeholder to vote (however, the Vicar seems to have had a vote in any event).

A few of the registers of electors ('Poll Books') from this pre-democratic age survive: The first is for 'Electors of the Knights of the Shire for the County of Sussex 24 May 1705'. It shows John Cutter 'clk' (i.e. clerk or vicar), John Curteis (variant spelling of 'Cortis'), John Dennett and John Tidy.

Another, the 'Sussex Poll Book 1737' can be seen in Worthing Local Studies Library (catalogue M107):

### 'Record of voting in the Parliamentary Election of May 1737, by Rape

Electors for Ferring:	William Allbright	<i>Tarring</i>
	John Bennett	<i>Tarring</i>
	John Curtis	<i>Angmering</i>
	John Dennett	
	William Southon	
	Ralph Woolwyn	<i>West Grinstead</i>
Electors for East Preston:	John Baker	
	John Norton	<i>Leominster</i> [Lyminster?]
	William Richardson	<i>Ferring</i>
Electors for Goring:	John Tilley	<i>Ferring'</i>

Again, the Vicar, now William Allbright, heads the list but there is the suggestion that he lived at Tarring (perhaps because the Vicarage was in disrepair). Curtis (Cortis) certainly did live in Angmering, and Dennett and Southon are familiar Ferring names. Woolwyn (Woolvin) is one of the oldest Ferring names but the family seems to have left Ferring some years before this, while still owning land here.

The last two Poll Books (also at Worthing Library) are more explicit:

### 'Sussex Poll Book 1774

Record of voting in the 1774 election:

Electors for Ferring:	John Pledge	living at Ferring, freehold at Leominster
	Rev Jas Penfold	vicar at Ferring
	William Souter	living at Ferring, freehold at Ferring occupied by himself
	Edwin Sanders	living at Guildford, freehold at Ferring occupied by John Pledge'

### 'Sussex Poll Book 1820

Record of Voting in 1820 election:

Ferring electors:	John Cortis
	James Cortis living at Angmering, freehold at Ferring, occupied by Winton

Rev Francis Whitcomb, freehold at  
Lodsworth  
Preston electors: George Henty, living at Ferring  
Charles Dyer, living at Ferring, land at  
Goring  
John Bennett, living at Ferring, land at  
Angmering, occupied by M Henty'

### **DIGGING UP WEST SUSSEX**

John Mills, County Archaeologist, gave the Group a fascinating account of his work in West Sussex over the last 16 years at its 11 May meeting. He said his work involved a great deal of administration – commenting on planning applications where the site was thought to have significant archaeology at risk – but that he still got the opportunity to do research and occasionally get his hands dirty.

The coastal plain was very rich in Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon remains – the continuity of settlement was remarkable – and every major development yielded a range of finds. But the archaeology did not usually stand in the way of the development, as long as it was recorded for later study: a field system or ancient road, or the foundations of large buildings could often be covered up again. Small finds could, of course, be removed to a museum.

John Mills said the archaeology of mediaeval and later periods was full of interest and could be associated with written or printed material, including maps. He had recently been looking at a 17<sup>th</sup> Century street in Arundel, until recently under a car park; early 19<sup>th</sup> Century engineering work on the Arun-Chichester canal; a Victorian steel bridge across the Arun at South Stoke; installations from the 1950s at Tangmere Aerodrome; and a Royal Observer Corps control room from the 1970s at Horsham.

Many mysteries remained: the earliest human remains in Britain had been found at Boxgrove, dating from 500,000 years ago, but then nothing to represent the next 400,000 years. Did the Ice Ages push the early populations out of Britain? Was there a spectacular flood when the ice-cap melted that created the Channel and swept away all traces of habitation? Why did over a hundred Iron Age cremation urns dug up at Drayton contain not cremated bones but sea cobbles, sandstone and flint? Why did Stane Street, the Roman road from London, seem to enter Chichester at such an odd angle? Why is there no trace of the siege works around Arundel from the Civil War battles?

All may be revealed one day, John Mills said, but the story of archaeology goes on forever.

### **MODERN FERRING NOTABLES**

**J B Morton** (1893 – 1979; humorist) better known by his pen-name 'Beachcomber') lived at 16 Sea Lane in 1972 (and probably from the early 1950s) until shortly before his death. The house seems to have been demolished in the early 1980s and a modern house has been built on the site. He was still writing his column for the Daily Express (which he took over in 1924) and used to post it, in manuscript, to the newspaper

offices. Richard Ingrams (then a sub-editor on the Express) recalled this in an introduction to a collection of his articles.

**Raymond Massey** (1898 – 1983; stage and film actor) had the house now called Milbury House, off Florida Road, built in 1927, and lived here for some years. He was the son of the founder of the Massey-Fergusson tractor business. He went to Oxford, and was a soldier in both World Wars (and wounded in both) in the Canadian Army but after WWII settled in the USA. Father of Anna Massey.

**‘Jimmy’ Thomas** (1874 – 1949; union leader and politician) lived at Milbury House from 1936 to the end of the war. He led the National Union of Railwaymen during and after the First World War. He became an MP in 1910 and was a senior member of the Labour Government of 1929-31. He continued as a Cabinet Minister in the National Government of 1931, under Ramsay MacDonald and then Stanley Baldwin but had to resign in 1936 because he had leaked a tax proposal in the Budget of that year. He wrote his autobiography ‘My Story’ at Milbury House.

**Leonard Hussey** (1891 – 1964; Antarctic explorer) retired to Ferring in 1960 and lived at 9 St Aubins Road until his death. Hussey was the meteorologist on Shackleton’s 1914-16 expedition and one of the party left on Elephant Island before the eventual rescue. Hussey was subsequently a soldier in WWI, a General Practitioner, and an RAF Officer.

**Robertson Hare** (1891 – 1979; actor) lived in Florida Road just before and during the war. He claimed for minor bomb damage to his house from the same incident which killed three people in Sea Lane Gardens. Robertson Hare was best known for his appearances in West End farces, and later in the television situation comedy ‘All Gas and Gaiters’. He refers to Ferring in his autobiography ‘Yours Indubitably’ (1956)

**John Barron** (1920 - 2004; actor) lived in Home Farm Cottages until just before his death in 2004. Best known for his television roles – in Emergency Ward 10, All Gas and Gaiters, The Rise and Fall of Reginald Perrin (as ‘CJ’).

**Bud Flanagan** (1896 – 1968; comedian), star of the ‘Crazy Gang’, lived in Ocean Drive in the late 1930s. He refers to the house he bought in Ferring in his autobiography ‘My Crazy Life’. Had earlier lived in East Preston (‘Angmering’) and sold his house there to another Gang member. The producer of the shows, George Black, lived in Kingston Gorse

Joyce Cooper has also given me an obituary of **Freddie Baldwin**, airship pilot and pioneer, on whom I am seeking further information. She has also told me about **Marcus Sieff**, chairman of Marks & Spencers; **Jean Pougnet**, violinist; and **Godfrey Rampling**, 1936 Olympics Gold Medallist. Has anyone any information on them?

## **PAVILIONED IN SPLENDOUR**

Thirty two members of Ferring History Group had a conducted tour of the Royal Pavilion, Brighton on 19 September. George IV, as a young man, had bought a farmhouse here in 1786 and had it converted to a comfortable country house but after he became Prince Regent he decided on a lavish transformation into a fantasy

pleasure palace. Neither he nor his architect or designers knew anything of the Orient, and the 'Indian' exterior and the 'Chinese' interior owed much to their imagination.

The Group saw the great treasures of the Pavilion, including the Banqueting Room where George IV (as he became in 1820) gave some memorable dinners for his friends (one surviving menu shows 26 entrées). The decoration, including the one-ton chandelier, was likewise designed to impress, but the kitchen was very practical and 'state of the art'. After the meal, which might last 6 hours, the party would adjourn to the Salon, and perhaps then to Music Room where 40 musicians might play for them, with George attempting to conduct the orchestra and sometimes singing along. One of the guests wrote in his diary that it was difficult not to laugh.

William IV also enjoyed the Pavilion but Victoria and Albert thought it (and Brighton) rather vulgar, and built their own south-coast retreat at Osborne House, Cowes. She sold the Pavilion to the new Brighton Corporation in 1850, having removed many of the best *objets d'art*. The Council still owns and maintains it – very well, having had to deal with some catastrophic damage over the years, through arson and freak weather.

The Group very much enjoyed the visit, which included a quick look at the splendid Brighton Museum in the Pavilion Grounds.

### **THE ROMANS ON HIGHDOWN**

Eleven years ago this month the following news item appeared in the West Sussex Gazette.

*FERRING: Evidence of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Roman farmstead near Highdown Hill has emerged during the laying of new water pipes between Patching and Ferring. Archaeologists working alongside Southern Water found fragments of pottery and a number of unidentified iron and bronze objects as the water company laid a mile-long stretch of pipe.*

*Mr Derek Turner, from Southern Archaeology, in Chichester, who assisted in the dig said, 'We were looking for evidence of prehistoric man, but the evidence we have found also suggests there was a Roman presence.'*

*The site falls between the Iron Age fort at Highdown Hill and a Roman villa to the west and is of great historical importance.*

*A total of 19 metallic objects were found: three bronze items, two iron items and 14 iron nails. In addition several fragments of a Roman bowl were found as well as some Roman tile, bones from cows and some small animals, and even some sea shells.*

*Mr Turner said the pottery fragments were found in a large pit, carved into the chalk and of regular shape. It was next to a track running east and west. He said mystery still surrounded the use of the pit, but dismissed its use as a rubbish tip because of its regular shape.*

The site was exactly on the Ferring/Angmering border, which continues south on the line of Hangleton Lane. Just over the border in Angmering is the site of the Roman bath house, excavated in 1937-39. Both sites were covered up again and are not obvious to the walker or the amateur metal-detector, and both must relate to a substantial Roman building or group of buildings which constituted a farmstead ('villa'). The bath house had a hot room as well as hot and cold baths and those who excavated it believed that another hot room was used for drying grain. G P Burstow,



who led the 1937-38 excavation, wrote in 1941 'Foundations of other rooms of the villa or farm are clearly visible under the cornfield in dry weather'.

These other buildings have never been excavated: Burstow only had permission to dig a very small area, and no one has been back there since. It must have been a substantial establishment: he also referred to a large quantity of broken early Roman pottery found near the disused windmill (now partly reconstructed) on the western end of the hill, which is just 500 yards along the track. He thought there might be a Roman road running past the villa and the old hill fort, although he found no direct evidence of it. But he did find evidence that the Iron Age fort had been re-fortified by the Romans – pottery fragments and coins from a later period near the end of their rule in Britain. He speculated that the inhabitants of the villa may have had to move into the fort to defend themselves against civil war or Saxon raids.

He said in his 1941 report, 'There is much more work to be done there. In the days we all look forward to when the war is over perhaps archaeological trenches and not machine gun posts will be the order of the day, and then we hope to be able to get to work again and add more to our knowledge of this delightful hill'. Not so far, Mr Burstow, but I have heard that the producers of 'The Time Team' have it on a reserve list of sites, so perhaps we will know more before too long.

### **ROAD NAMES IN FERRING**

Before 1924, the only roads in Ferring (this side of Highdown) were the road from Broadwater (Worthing) to Littlehampton, the two roads leading down into the village and a single road to the sea. After 1924 a host of new roads were laid out. How did they all get their names?

#### *The Old Roads*

'Ferring Lane' and 'Ferring Street' are obviously long-standing names for the road into and through the village. That road continued east and then south as 'East Ferring Lane', or 'Sea Lane' (in 1818 a smuggling case involved gin being landed at 'Ferring Lane End'). The other road into the village was what is now known as Langbury Lane. But before 1924 the section north of the Rife Bridge was called Hangleton Lane, running past Hangleton Farm and across the Littlehampton Road (formerly 'Herstle Street Lane') and up towards the hamlet of Hangleton below Highdown.

Fragments of other old roads survive. In 1621, when Randall drew his map of the West Ferring manor, he showed 'The Lane' running from the manor house (the Grange), down through what is now Little Paddocks and continuing on the line of Little Paddocks Way and Jersey Road, down towards the sea. This line still marked the western edge of Henty's land in the 1837 tithe map, and continued in field boundaries until the early 1930s, before the northern section was obliterated by the Little Paddocks development. It also shows 'West Lane' running from Little Paddocks pond to the Rife. This was later called 'Horsemarsh Lane' (leading to the marshy ground where the stream flooded before it was embanked, and where horses were grazed). It is now part of Ferringham Lane.

#### *The New Roads*

When Mrs Henty sold her South Ferring Estate to developers in 1924, the first requirement for the new owners was estate roads. The first to be laid out were

Ferringham Lane and Clover Lane (1924); next were Ocean Drive, South Drive and West Drive in 1925. West Drive then continued northwards to link up with Clover Lane. Beehive Lane followed a year or two later and this gave the basic layout for South Ferring. But where did all the names come from?

Ferringham Lane seems to have been named after the house 'Ferringham' built for Reginald Smart, the last tenant of Home Farm, who bought the farm and 67 acres immediately south of it in April 1924. The house still stands, as the retirement home 'Ferringham House'. The name seems to be entirely fanciful – a playful development of 'Ferring'. The names 'Clover' and 'Ocean' sound like Estate Agents' enticements, but 'South' and 'West' seem unimaginative. Beehive Lane is probably named after the house which still stands on the corner of that road and Ocean Drive (its white weather boarding and thatched roof giving it some resemblance to a beehive).

Later roads were given a real variety of names – from the exotic ('Florida', 'Barbary') to the twee ('Foam Court Way'), and several are named after developers (Draycliffe, Malcolm) or after the large houses that were demolished to make way for the development (St Malo, Elverlands, Lamorna). Only one group of roads has any theme to its names – the Channel Island group in the south-east corner of Ferring, the last section of Ferring to be built, in the early 1960s. Does any reader know why this theme was chosen?

### **PARHAM HOUSE**

We continue to get large audiences for its quarterly meetings in the Village Hall. On 9 November Caroline Adams, Senior Archivist at West Sussex Record Office, gave a talk on Parham House and the latter-day owners - the Pearson family.

The house, near Storrington, was constructed in the 1570s and shows the classic 'E' shape of Elizabethan mansions. It was built by the Palmer family, who had bought the land in the 1530s (when they also bought land and manors at Angmering). Sir Thomas Palmer, who laid the foundation stone in 1577 at the age of 2½, ended up in prison for piracy. Perhaps it was not surprising that Queen Elizabeth did *not* sleep here on her way through Sussex in 1591.

At the end of the century, along with the Angmering properties, it passed into the Byshopp family, another local dynasty with strong local connections and some dark history. Edward, son of Sir Thomas Byshopp who bought the estate, was evidently an extremely unpleasant character – he literally 'got away with murder' by claiming 'benefit of clergy' when he was arrested (he was no clergyman) and, although sentenced to branding by the church court, managed to avoid even that penalty.

The house stayed with that family for 300 years and in 1916 was bought by Sir Wheatman Pearson, who became Lord Cowdray. It remains in the possession of the Pearson family (owners of a large engineering business from Victorian times), and Caroline Adams had worked with the current owner to chronicle their time in the house and the restoration work that had been carried out.

The restoration was all the more needed because of the upheaval of the Second World War, when the paintings and other treasures were taken away for safekeeping and the house occupied by several companies of Canadian troops. The family decided the

only way they could finance the restoration was to open the house to the public – which they did in 1948. It is of course still open to the public – between Easter and the end of September – and is full of interest.

### THE SNELLING FAMILY

The Snellings were one of the wealthiest families in Ferring in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They lived in the house which now forms part of East Ferring House in Sea Lane (then called ‘Shamblers’) and owned another 30 acres in the Hangleton area.

**Richard Snelling** married Agnes Smythe in Ferring in 1586. We know he was in the property in 1609 because it was noted in the list of Hollibredes in the Parish Register. She died in 1609, and he in 1629. The Parish Register shows a daughter Agnes, christened in 1587 and a son John in 1596, but his will refers to Elizabeth (Capon) as his daughter, and he leaves her only 10 shillings, the same as he left to the poor of Ferring and the poor of Beeding. The main bequests were to his son John, and John’s four children.

**John Snelling** inherited money and ‘goods’ on the death of his father but the Court Roll shows that he came into the property in 1618 at the age of 21 (Richard did not mention any property in his will, having already disposed of it.). His ‘messuage’ (principal house) is referred to in the Glebe Terrier of 1635, and can be easily placed at what is now East Ferring House. John (senior) married Elizabeth Elliot in 1617, and had at least seven children surviving in 1677, as well as a probable two who died in infancy. John senior and his son John junior (born 1618) were included in the Protestation Return of 1641. John senior died in 1647 and the estate was claimed by his widow, Elizabeth, as her ‘bench’ (widow’s right for life). She died in 1659.

**John Snelling junior** married Jane Pickum at Ferring in 1660. He was 42 but had only just come into his property. They had no children, judging by his will (made in 1677), and he left her £40 and ‘all the goods now standing in the Parlour Chamber of my dwelling house in Ferring’. He left some £400 to his sisters and their children, and his property to his brother, **Thomas Snelling**. But at the manor court in 1680, following John’s death that year, his widow, Jane, claimed the estate as her ‘bench’ and was given permission to sub-let it.. Then in 1682 Thomas died and on 1 May their eldest sister **Elizabeth Manning** (nee Snelling) claimed the estate as the next heir, immediately surrendering it to her husband Edward Manning.

John Snelling junior’s will is a good indication of the family’s wealth, and of the size of the family in 1677. The dwelling house he refers to is the one assessed in the Hearth Tax return for 1670 as having six hearths; he also refers to the land he had bought from William Andrew of Littlehampton and his other lands. He leaves £5 to the Churchwardens for the poor of Ferring and five shillings to Chichester cathedral. He was buried in the Church (floor slab at the west end of the north aisle, the oldest memorial inscription in the village).

The Snelling male line appears to die out with Thomas but for three generations it is clear that they were one of the dominant families in the village.

## OUR PROGRAMME

Our programme for 2008 is as follows:

**Meetings** (all Fridays, at 7.30, in Ferring Village Hall):

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

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

15 August: **Historic Buildings of this Area** by Michael Standing (AGM 7.15)

7 November: **Suburban inter-war development in Sussex** by Geoff Meade

12 December: Christmas Social (programme to be announced)

## Walks and Visits

The 'Worvell Walks' continue, organised now by Keith Richards. There will be three this year, beginning with one on New Years Day, to from Angmering village to Poling church and return. Keith says, 'This is pleasant flat terrain, across fields, with a few stiles and about half a dozen steps. It will take roughly one and a half hours plus a short break at the church. The walks later in the year will be announced at our quarterly meetings and advertised on the village notice boards. We shall also be running two coach visits to historic sites in Sussex. There is no shortage of interesting venues. Please look out for notices or phone Ed Miller for details.

## Research

Joyce Cooper continues her work on Ferring families, and holds regular consultations in Ferring Library. Enquiries come from all over the country, and abroad, and for all periods. Joyce is often able to help, and in the process picks up information which she adds to her 20 volume alphabetical compendium. People often pass her copies of pre-war deeds of their houses, which help us trace the stages by which the farmland of the 1920s was sold off to developers and built upon. Do you have any old deeds we could borrow?

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.

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. Do contact one of us if you would like to follow up your own interest in any Ferring subject.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND E MAIL ADDRESSES

Everyone is welcome to come to our meetings but we do reserve the Newsletter, the coach trips and our Christmas Social to members who have paid their subscription. If you do not have one of our new membership cards you have not paid your subscription for 2007/08. We cannot knock on doors to collect the subs (only £2 per head): please pay your sub to our Membership Secretary, Colin Teare, 15 Telgarth Road, Ferring (cheques made out to Ferring History Group).

If you are receiving this as a printed document it means I do not have an e mail address for you. E mail is a great help in reminding members of up-coming meetings and other news. If you are on e mail please let me know ([EdMiller43@msn.com](mailto:EdMiller43@msn.com)). I will keep your e mail address private by sending you 'blind' copies of Newsletters and other circulars, so that your e mail address is not shown.