

**ARCHAEOLOGY BELOW HIGHDOWN**

We should soon know a little more about the pre-history of Ferring: a recent planning application for a foaling unit north of the Vineyard on Littlehampton Road was approved with a condition that the site is first given a thorough archaeological survey. The site is on the southern slope of Highdown Hill and is most likely to contain flint tools from the Stone Age but there may also be artefacts or ground works from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period, as we know these peoples also occupied Highdown hilltop and farmed its slopes.

Unfortunately, the ground was partly excavated by mechanical diggers before planning permission was applied for and some structures may have been destroyed but this never-before developed land should still hold some clues about those remote times. We know the owner has already re-started the ground work so the archaeology should be revealed very soon.

**... and in the Village Centre**

Another site in Ferring also has an archaeology condition attached. This is the garden of Yew Tree Cottage, in Ferring Street, just north of Smugglers Cottage. The owner was given planning permission for a two-bedroom bungalow last December but has not yet proceeded with it. This site is right in the middle of the mediaeval village and has certainly not been built on for hundreds of years – if ever. *Ferring Past* has a sketch map based on the 1635 Terrier (survey) showing this garden as an orchard belonging to the Peachey family, who lived in what is now Evergreen and May Tree Cottages (then one house). Smugglers Cottage and its annex were built in the garden of these cottages in the 1830s, Yew Tree Cottage around 1720. The tithe map of 1837 shows all these cottages but the area of the old orchard still unbuilt on. Nor was it built on subsequently.

We therefore have a site very close to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century cottages just off the highway that led down to the church, which has not been disturbed for centuries. However much we may regret the final in-filling of this site it does give us an opportunity to see what lies under the soil. Given the long history of the church itself, and the village centre, it would be surprising if finds are not made - from the Saxon period onward.

**THE ARTFUL DOGER OF FERRING**

by Ed Miller

Last March saw the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the escape of over 70 allied airmen from a Prisoner of War camp at Sagan (now in Poland). All but three were recaptured and 50 of them were then murdered by the Gestapo. This was 'The Great Escape' featured in the film starring Richard Attenborough and Steve McQueen. One of those who survived was a Ferring resident – John Dodge, known in his first prison camp, according to Anton Gill, author of *The Great Escape*, as 'The Artful Dodger'.

Despite all the American characters who dominated the film, there were no Americans in the camp at the time of the escape. Dodge was the only one with any US connections, having been born in New York, but he had been a British Citizen since 1915.

John Bigelow Dodge was the son of Flora Bigelow and Charles Dodge. After her divorce she married the Hon Lionel Guest, a cousin of Winston Churchill's, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota in 1905 and after moving to London they bought a piece of land, and had a house built, in Sea Lane, Ferring in 1922 ('Wookyi-Tipi', demolished in the 1960s). Lionel Guest bought a large sector of South Ferring when the Henty estate was broken up and sold most of the land as building plots.

John Dodge was 9 yrs old when his mother remarried and the family moved to Montreal, where Lionel Guest had been living. They moved to England in 1911, leaving Dodge at University there, but he came to England on the outbreak of war in 1914. He joined the Royal Naval Division, fought at Antwerp and was badly wounded at Gallipoli, where he won the DSC. He transferred to the Army and at the end of the war was a Lt Colonel commanding the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, having won a DSO and MC. After the war he travelled in Europe and Asia and was arrested by the Russians as a spy (but released for lack of evidence). He then settled down in London, as a financier, and became an LCC Councillor and Parliamentary Candidate. He is listed as a resident of Ferring from 1931 to 1939.

He lived in 'Florida', one of the houses built for his step-father, at the south end of Ocean Drive. He was 45 when the Second World War started and was back in the Army, now as a Major in the TA. Captured in France in 1940, he was sent to one prison camp after another (he escaped five times) and was finally sent to Stalag-Luft III ( he was one of the very few non-Air Force prisoners there). After his recapture from the 'great escape' he was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp but was released into Switzerland a few weeks before the war ended, with a message for Churchill about a possible basis for surrender. His wartime story is told in Gill's book and 'The Great Escapers' by Tim Carroll.

John Dodge died in London in 1960, after an amazing career, details of which are still coming to light. In 1917 his mother wrote to a friend that John had been partly responsible for the invention of the tank – having seen the huge tractors at work in the USA and Canada in his childhood, he suggested to Churchill (his step-father's cousin) that an armoured version of these would be very useful on the Western Front. Churchill did indeed have several of these tractors shipped over to study their potential.

Very little is known about his life in Ferring. He kept up his town house in London but must have spent much time here in the 1930s, and perhaps after the war, because his ashes were interred in Ferring churchyard, where there are two small memorial stones to him and his wife (who died 20 years later). His mother, a widow since 1935, continued to live at Wookyi-Tipi until her death in 1965

## **Home of the Yellowbellies**

In May the Group had an excellent talk by Bob Hutchinson on his home village – Amberley – and on August Bank holiday Monday about 20 of us had a mini-conducted tour by Nigel Foxell, another resident historian.

Hutchinson said the nickname ‘Yellow Bellies’ gave no clue to the derivation of the place name: for the Saxons the ‘-ley’ element signified ‘meadow’ and ‘Amber’ was a measure of volume, like a bushel. But the settlement was much older than that: thousands of flint tools had been found, indicating a Stone Age production centre, and Bronze Age burial mounds had been found on top of the Downs just south of the village. Dug-out canoes were discovered in the Arun nearby, and a large wooden anchor at North Stoke. The area was close to Roman developments like Stane Street, villas at Pulborough and baths at Wigginholt, and Amberley may have been a farmstead supplying the villa at Bignor.

There was a Saxon church but it was rebuilt by the Normans just after 1100 and the Bishops of Chichester had their summer palace next door. This took on the shape of a castle in the 1340s when the Bishop obtained permission to ‘crenellate’ (add battlements) but it was never a military base like Arundel Castle, just a fortified manor house. Bob Hutchinson’s illustrations were mainly from the Victorian period. It was a lively place then: it had eight pubs in 1870, a village orchestra, and many tradesmen and workshops, and the old chalk quarry developed its lime kilns.

Our Bank Holiday walk began at Amberley Station, just by the old lime and cement works. We walked up the east bank of the Arun until we came to the path from Bury, where there had been a ferry long before the bridge at Houghton on the turnpike road. This path brought us into Amberley just north of the Castle, where we were met by Robin Foxell. He explained Amberley as a ‘one street village’, running between the escarpment of the Downs and the waterlogged ‘Wild Brooks’. There was no village green or any real centre, and the extension out towards Rackham was only a C20th development.

Nigel explained briefly the history and architecture of the church (he has published a booklet on it) and took us along the ‘the street’ describing the construction and architecture of all the houses. Some were not as old as they looked – Amberley House (one of the largest) despite its C18th style was built for an American couple in 1903. The weather was perfect that day and Amberley was looking more beautiful than ever. We had tea and cake at the highly recommended Tea Rooms and walked back, by another route, to the Station.

But we had not quite finished with this charming and interesting area. We drove up a long lane to North Stoke, and walked across the field to see the footbridge over one of the backwaters of the Arun. The old bridge had collapsed some time ago and the new suspension bridge was built by a Gurkha unit earlier this year: this too is well worth seeing.

We hope to go back to Amberley next Summer, when the village has its Open Gardens event. We will start with a conducted tour of the church with Robin Foxell, and then leave plenty of time for a snack in the Tea Rooms and a look at all those beautiful cottages and their gardens.

## MURDER MOST FOUL

by Ed Miller

Ferring has had at least three murderers. One, featured in an earlier *Newsletter*, was Thomas Wulvyn, the younger, a 'laborer' who murdered Thomas Grenehill in 1526 and sought sanctuary in Poling Church. A week later 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. Wulvyn was escorted to Hastings, put on a ship and forbidden to return to England on pain of death. Another was an infanticide - a Rose Higgons was hanged in 1628 for 'secretly throwing down' her new-born baby 'so that it died', in a garden off Sea Lane.

Both these cases might have been acts of desperation but the third case seems to be more premeditated and even more grisly. In 1789 Richard Grazemark, aged 50, murdered his daughter Jemima, on whom he had fathered several children. Jemima had broken away from him and was to marry James Martin. On the day of the wedding, which duly took place in St Andrews Church, Richard Grazemark set fire to his house. Four months later, he killed Jemima with an axe. According to the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser*, he 'sat six hours on the body of the deceased and horrid to relate, in that situation, cut his own throat'. Unfortunately he recovered. He was sent for trial at East Grinstead Assizes and was sentenced to hang.

The execution took place at Horsham, in March 1790, in public of course. Grazemark showed no contrition and no fear and as the hangman adjusted the noose 'he kicked his slippers at the great multitude of people crying out: "Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you all well, I meant no harm."'. There was a grisly sequel: after the body had hung for an hour it was taken down and handed over to two local doctors, who wanted the skeleton. They carried out a public dissection, the flesh was cut off and buried in a local churchyard, and the bones were boiled (to make a more presentable skeleton). Portions of the skin were taken to a local tanner and sold off in portions as souvenir pieces, for shoe leather.

Two descendants of Grazemark, quite separately, recently contacted me to ask if I knew any more about the family, and whereabouts in Ferring they had lived. The family had been in Ferring for one or two generations. John Grazemark 'of Ferring' married Elizabeth Baker of Angmering, in that village, in 1732. In 1739 they took the tenancy of a cottage in Sea Lane (where Crampnel Cottage is now) and named their son John, who had been baptised in Ferring in 1737, on their copyhold. William Grazemark may have been another son but no record of his baptism has yet been found.

We know that he was married in Alfriston in 1758, and that his wife Anne certainly came from that village but Richard, although recorded as 'of that parish', may have been only a temporary resident. A son, William, was baptised at Ferring some eight months later so it is probable that Richard had come back to live near his family (this is an unusual name): presumably he was a younger son of the couple who married in 1732. The report of his trial and execution say he was about 50 years old, which points to a date of birth around 1740, consistent with his being of marriageable age in 1758. .

Richard Grazemark continued to live in Ferring. Subsequent children were baptised here (Jemima, Anne, Owena, Phoebe) up to 1769. His wife Anne died a few weeks after Phoebe's

birth and Richard remarried 12 months later, to a Mary King who had borne his son the previous day. The son died after three months, the wife after 12 months. Nothing is known about his activities between 1771 and 1781 but in that year his daughter Jemima (now aged 20) gave birth to a daughter which was baptised in Ferring. No father was named in the Register but it was presumably Richard. Another illegitimate child of Jemima's was baptised in Ferring in 1787.

In a small village like Ferring, and with another, respectable, branch of the family close by, it must have been fairly obvious what was going on but no action seems to have been taken against Richard Grazemark until the murderous attack on Jemima. Even the arson and attempted murder on the day of the wedding, seems to have been dealt with only as an add-on to the murder charge. This was a seriously dysfunctional family: Richard's eldest son William was threatening witnesses in the case (Ferring's churchwardens were offering five guineas reward for evidence of this), and Richard's younger daughter also had at least one illegitimate child.

Jemima was buried in Ferring on 17 August 1789, and the murderer's (legitimate) children who were still living in the village left soon after her death. Jemima's sister Owena had already married, in Tarring; Anne had had two children baptised in Angmering, before getting married there two years after the murder; Phoebe married a Broadwater man in Ferring at the end of 1790, shortly after the birth of her illegitimate daughter but did not stay in the village. Her brother Richard was living in Steyning in 1790 and got married in Slindon, later that year. It is not clear what happened to Jemima's children; a third child had been baptised in Ferring three days after her wedding, with James Marten named as the father: none of them were married or buried in Ferring.

The respectable branch of the family also left Ferring soon after these events. The male line seems to have died out and the widow and daughter both married before giving up the tenancy of the cottage in Sea Lane in 1802. This cottage was shown as 'two tenements' in the 1840 Tithe Award so it is quite likely that the respectable Grazemarks had to live cheek by jowl with their incestuous and murderous relative.

## **FRANK LEESON 1926-2009**

Frank Leeson, who died in September, was a keen supporter of this Group. He was delighted to see its foundation and he had no hesitation in turning over to us his own archive of research into modern and ancient Ferring. He had been working on Ferring's history from soon after he arrived in the village in 1965. His archive - of transcripts of original documents in the West Sussex Record Office, maps, photographs, extracts from learned journals, his own studies of the tithes and Land Tax assessments, the memorials in Ferring churchyard and much besides - is an invaluable reference source.

Frank did most of his work in the Record Office, and would drive to Chichester practically every Friday for a long session in the Search Room. He introduced several of us to this fascinating world, to the mysteries of ancient handwriting and to the discipline of accurate transcription, and it was my pleasure to work with him on one of his big transcription projects

– the Ferring wills (of which there are some 200 in the records of the Archdeaconry Court). He worked slowly and methodically, with great understanding of the material and with unfailing accuracy. Most of his work had been done with pencil and paper in his own neat handwriting but he later moved on to the world of laptops and spreadsheets – and again his data entry was tireless and faultless.

Frank made a major contribution to Sussex family history too – Colin Exell tells me Frank had membership no. 1 of the SFHG and carried out a great deal of archive work. His biggest project was perhaps the Sussex Marriage Index. Working from the Parish Registers of the scores of Sussex churches and other material Frank produced a complete index of all the brides and grooms in the county from 1558. ‘It took him 40 years’, said Colin, ‘but the product (now available on CD) is used by family historians all over the world’.

He had done important national work too – as Editor of *The Genealogist* magazine for eight years, as the author of *A Dictionary of British Peerages*, and as an authority on the derivation of surnames.

Frank had many interests outside local history and genealogy. He knew a great deal about medals and was an expert on Indian Army medals. This no doubt arose from his own service in the 1940s and 1950s, including his time on the North West Frontier. His memoir of campaigning in North Waziristan, *Frontier Legion*, is of great interest now: this is the home base of the Taliban, attacked by the Pakistan Army, and where Bin Laden is believed to be hiding out.

All these interests, as well as his family life (to which he was devoted) were represented at his funeral. Befitting an old soldier, his coffin was draped in the Union Flag. (EM)

## **FAMILY NAMES IN MEDIAEVAL FERRING**

by Ed Miller

There are not many documents about Ferring before the wills and Manor Court records of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and many of them do not give any names for local residents. The two Saxon charters mention only the noblemen who donated the land and the bishops who accepted it; the Domesday Book entry mentions only ‘Amfrid’ who held the East Ferring estate. The next substantial document is the ‘Custumal’, the account of which tenants owed which services to the Lord of the Manor (the Bishop). This is undated but must be earlier than 1369 when it was copied into a book of similar documents) but later than 1244 (because it refers to a former bishop who died in that year). Then we have the account of the manorial income in 1431 (the Reeve’s Account) which mentions many of the tenants. Finally, we have three taxations lists – those for 1296, 1327 and 1332.

These last five documents are the main sources for a study of Ferring surnames in the middle ages. There are also a few land transactions and other documents which give up a dozen or so names but these are of landholders, not necessarily residents. Many are repeated from one document to another, and help to narrow down the date of the Custumal (which now looks more like the 1250s than the 1350s). This is an interesting period because this is when

surnames were first adopted and many of these were moving from a descriptive phrase in an earlier document, like 'de Sutheton' (from the south town) to a single name 'Sutheton', in a later document. The Custumal, in Latin, had both straightforward English surnames like 'Wolvyn' and functional names that equate to modern surnames (William *faber*, 'William the smith'; Ralph *pelliparius*, Ralph the skinner).

As elsewhere, many surnames were descriptive: of the person's occupation, where he lived, where he came from or what he looked like. Of course, the occupational names are all agricultural: in the earliest document we have William Smith, the blacksmith and his list of ploughs to be made and horses to shoe for the manor estate; and Ralph Skinner, almost certainly one who prepared sheepskin. In the taxation returns we have John le Carter, and the more obscure Simon le Neid (a 'neat' in Shakespeare's time was a cow, so he was a cattle man). The 'locative' names tell us something about the geography of Ferring – William de la Broke (the brook), William atte Doune, Walter in the Lane, Adam Bynortheton, Aumfrido Sutherton, Richard de Hangleton, and the less obvious William Horsecroft (enclosed grazing land) and William atte Berghe (possibly related to Langbury, the 'lange berghe' or long mound). Then we have those who had connections outside the village, like Johan Purbyk and Johne Kente, those of distinctive appearance like Ralph Blakecherl (swarthy fellow), Rado (=Ralph) le Swon and John Wolvin (wolf-like). There are hardly any of the '..son' variety.

One name that does stand out is 'de Ferring'. Nicholas de Ferring is mentioned in the 1296 taxation list – by far the biggest payer in Ferring. Bishop Seffrid gave his windmill on Highdown to Thomas de Ferring, his Steward, from 1187 to 1197. The family was still being taxed on land in Ferring in 1327 and 1332, again by far the biggest payer. In the previous century Amfrid de Ferring was mentioned in other land transactions and it is probable that the family was descended from the Amfrid who is mentioned in Ferring's Domesday entry. Michael Burchall, writing in *Sussex Family Historian* September 2004, shows many references to this family, in Ferring and other parts of Sussex, between 1164 and 1332 but there is no trace of them in Ferring thereafter. They did, however, take their name with them to another manor they acquired – Chiltington Ferring, near Billingshurst, which was the subject of a previous article.

## **SELLING FERRING**

By February 1929 the development of South Ferring was in full swing. This southern portion of the Henty Estate was sold to four developers in 1924 and Ferringham Lane, Ocean Drive, South Drive and West Drive had been laid out the following year. The first houses were built to individual order, on pre-purchased plots but by 1929 Estate Agents were offering a range of 'building types', some already constructed and some for construction on their sites when the client placed an order.

One of these Agents was W R Diss, with his Estate Office in Ocean Drive. He took a large advertisement in The Times of 12 February 1929 promoting 'Ferring by Sea: between Worthing and Bognor', referring to its 'Over 2,000 hours of sunshine in 1928 – a record for

the British Isles'. It went on to say, 'This old-world Sussex Village, with its tiny beach, is being developed on the best possible lines, and only well-built houses of the best possible type are erected'. And here, perhaps was the strongest selling point: 'The roads are private. Charabancs are not allowed, and the tripper element is entirely eliminated'.

Four-bedroom bungalows were being offered from £800 freehold, four-bedroom houses with two reception rooms from £1,150, and seven-bedroom houses from £1,600. All houses had sun rooms attached, electric light, gas, and *no road charges*. You had to hurry though, because 'the Company has only 130 sites left'. Diss was selling them on behalf of the owner, which was almost certainly Ferring Estates Ltd.

The many other advantages of the area are listed: good and safe bathing; excellent golf, boating and fishing; country club with tennis, dancing etc; an hour and half from London; beautiful historical surroundings. The pitch was very much up-market.

One wonders where the seven-bedroom houses were built, if they ever were. Ferring Estates Ltd built some 20 houses in 1929 and 1930, mainly in the Beehive Lane-Ocean Drive-West Drive area (according to the Council's Building Plans register), but there are very few, very large houses of that date in South Ferring.

## **DIGGING UP ROPETACKLE**

Simon Stevens, a Senior Field Archaeologist with 'South East Archaeology' gave a fascinating and good-humoured talk to 60 members of the Group on at the August meeting on his excavation of the Ropetackle site in Shoreham.

Ropetackle was an unusually large site to become available in a town centre and in due course it gave up 18,000 pieces of archaeological remains, he told the Group, including many from the mediaeval period. The site, just north-east of the Norfolk Bridge in Shoreham, is now covered by a striking residential development but had been empty and derelict for many years. It was always very likely that it was inhabited in the early middle ages, Simon Stevens said, and the developers were required to arrange a full archaeological survey before any building work began. Most archaeology is funded in this way, he said: the work is put out to tender and a number of archaeological companies bid for the work.

Shoreham owed its development to the River Adur and had needed to adapt to the changing course of the river and the silting up of its harbours. Old Shoreham around St Nicholas Church was a Saxon settlement but silting up caused New Shoreham to be built in Norman times, where the town now lies. Ropetackle was on the eastern edge of this town and must have been close to the river, and probably involved in boat building but there is no record of any rope-making on the site.

What was found was mostly broken mediaeval pottery (the disposable packaging of its day, Stevens said) and food residues. Numerous cesspits had yielded many animal and fish bones and undigested seeds and pips, as well as material simply thrown there for convenience, such as oyster shells and broken crockery and quern stones (for hand-grinding corn). Several larger



items were also found here, or in old wells, more or less intact – including a ceremonial water jug made in Scarborough in 1275.

Many of these finds are now in Marlipins Museum but, he said, there was far too much to display – including thousands of items from the early Victorian period. All these items, some of them trivial in many ways, illuminated the lives of our ancestors and enabled us to connect with them. This, he said was the whole point of archaeology.

Earlier, at the Annual General Meeting, the chairman, Adge Roberts, had looked back on another very successful year for the Group. He, the Secretary (Ed Miller), the Treasurer (Peter Bentley) and committee members Pat Attree and Keith Richards were re-elected, and were joined by Hugh Faithfull and Tim Baldwin.

## **ROGUES AND VAGABONDS**

A ‘Did you know?’ snippet in The Sentinel in March 2009 referred to a plaque over the door of a cottage near Ferring Church in the 1890s, threatening a public whipping to rogues and vagabonds found in the vicinity. The poor and the homeless leave little trace in local history: no headstones in the churchyard, only the occasional entry in the Parish Registers of baptisms and burials – ‘a tinker’s child’, .. ‘a beggar woman’... ‘a man found dead in a field’. Those who definitely belonged to the Parish had to be supported – from 1792, in Ferring’s case, in the workhouse at East Preston, or on outdoor relief, but those who had no local connection were very harshly treated.

The notice found on the house adjoining St Andrew’s Church, Ferring must date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Public whipping for vagrancy was common in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century but by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century the punishment for vagrants was more likely to be removal to a House of Correction (there was one at Arundel) for six months hard labour before being sent back to their own parish.

In the Vagrancy Act of 1743 rogues and vagabonds were described as ‘gathers of alms under false pretences; common players unauthorized by law and minstrels and all those wandering abroad or those who pretended to be gypsies and those playing or betting at any unlawful games; persons who ran away leaving their wives and families chargeable to the parish; unlicensed petty chapmen and pedlars; persons wandering abroad and lodging in alehouses, barns and outhouses and not being able to give a good account of themselves’.

Ferring did not have a particular problem with vagrants, perhaps a dozen cases in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century of paupers removed to another parish, who may have spent some time in the House of Correction. It is interesting to wonder why the notice was put up. It may have been put up, as a warning, by the Overseers of the Poor, who were based in the church. The cottage which displayed the notice was probably the one pulled down in 1902 to make room for an extension to the graveyard – you can still see the outline of it in the north east corner. As a macabre footnote, it is worth saying that when the demolishers took up the floor they found an old skeleton underneath. Police were called but they decided that the crime, if any, had happened a very long time in the past and was not practicable to investigate.

## THE SELSEY TRAMWAY BRIDGE PROJECT

by Adge Roberts

Known generally as the Selsey Tramway but actually a light railway, this line was opened from Chichester to Selsey in 1897 and ran until 1935; it carried both passengers and freight. The engineer was Holman Fred Stephens (later Lt- Col) who built several light railways across England and Wales all on a shoe string, and this one was no exception. The bridge (which carried the line over the Chichester Canal at Hunston) was removed during WW2. It was technically a half-bascule bridge (similar to a castle draw bridge) that was pivoted at one end and raised by two men on winches working in strict harmony, if they ran out of synchronization the bridge would twist, and jam and could take 48 hours to be freed. It was mounted on a mass-concrete abutment on the north bank of the canal. The line of the railway (at this point) is now a public footpath running south from the bridge site. The abutment is still to be seen today when not overgrown with vegetation.

In March 2007 a small group of members of the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society (SIAS) cleared a massive amount of undergrowth, trees, bramble, and ivy to open this piece of industrial history to the public gaze. The soil level was left flush with the top of abutment with a view to installing a weed preventative matting to keep it clear.

The last time this site had been cleared was in 1984 by Alan Green, Rosemary Gilmour and Peter Hounsom. Rosemary was employed by Chichester District Museum at this time and had charged Alan (in his capacity as a railway engineer) with building a 1:76 scale model of the bridge. Their clearance work was to obtain measurements and other structural details of the site. Plans were then made to lay some 14 ft. of track along the abutment, to be readily visible from the tow path on the other side of the canal.

Research by our own railway engineer, Alan Green, identified the correct rail section, spikes and ballast as would have been used by Col Stephens in the original construction of the track. The rail was supplied by Amberley Working Museum who cut it into two pieces and straightened it out. These sections of rail had some conservation work carried out on them and the spikes to fix down the track (located and supplied by a colleague of Alan's) were of the same type as used originally, as proved by the discovery of a couple of originals during the excavation. A variety of sleepers was used by Col Stephens, mostly second hand and that is what we decided to use. These were donated by a railway colleague of Alan's. Alan also produced drawings and specifications for the complete project for us navvies to work to.

In December 2008 and January 2009 the SIAS group returned and removed the nine months of soft growth that had reclaimed the top of the abutment and lowered the soil level to the specified 300mm below the top of abutment. This produced a large quantity of spoil which was used to create an approach ramp at the rear up which to move some 3.5 cubic metres of ballast and six sleepers, plus of course, the rails. The whole assembly was laid on a weed-preventative matting, hopefully keeping it clear of serious growth in the future.

We opened the line officially last May Bank Holiday with a "driving of the golden spike" ceremony carried out by a representative of the 'Colonel Stephens Society'. The Chairman SIAS, John Blackwell and County Archaeologist John Mills arrived at the bridge by the

Canal Trust's trip boat *Richmond*, and they drove in the two original spikes. The whole party, with other members and guests then moved by boat down to Hunston landing stage where a marquee had been set up with refreshments and a display of artefacts found during the work. This was a great piece of industrial archaeology and reconstruction and thanks are due to Mr. Hugh Brown for allowing us to gain access to this site across his farm.

## SERVING WORTHING

**'Through the Hard Times and the Good : an Oral and Social History of Worthing'** by **Chris Hare, published by Guild Care, £10**, was launched on 6 October. The 160 page book comes with a DVD of interviews and commentary on location. The publicity sheet says 'The memories of sixty-three Worthing residents born between 1910 and 1945 bring the history in these pages alive. These oral history interviews include eye witness accounts of hardship and unemployment during the Great Depression and the challenges of the wartime years. Issues such as illegitimacy and sexual relations are talked about with candour, highlighting the enormous shift in public and private morals that has taken place over the last 75 years.

'The book follows the development of the Worthing Council of Social Services (today known as Guild Care) from its founding in 1933 through to the present. This organisation was a local welfare state providing services for the town. Thousands of people enjoyed a better life because a small team of dedicated pioneers decided that they would create a kinder, more caring society ...'

*Joan Quarry writes:* With a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and assisted by a loyal band of volunteers, local historian Chris Hare has undertaken an ambitious project celebrating 50 years of social service in Worthing. In his introduction to the book he says, 'this book has without doubt been the most exciting, interesting and rewarding project I have ever been involved in'.

With access to its extensive archive material, Chris has produced a wonderful account of what has today become Guildcare, with its headquarters at Methold House in North Street. 'Among the many men and women who guided the service through its formative years was Mrs Effie Methold, who became Secretary in 1937 and remained in post until her untimely death in 1957. Mrs Methold worked tirelessly for the service and could always be relied upon to offer help to the Rotary Club or the Probation Officer where a family was in difficulties.

Until the end of the second world war the main concern of this voluntary social service was with poverty in the town. So many families were housed in rented property where a third of their weekly income went to the landlord. This meant that doctors and dentists were rarely called upon. The book shows that with the coming of the NHS and the welfare state, Guildcare's responsibilities gradually shifted to the care of the elderly and by the 1950s this became paramount.

Visiting Methold House for the book launch on 6 October I was uplifted by the overall atmosphere and the dedication and purpose of its staff. The people of Worthing should be

proud of their Guildcare and, throughout the years, its care homes. To our own Chris Hare too, an enterprising local historian, we give a big vote of thanks.

## **SCATTERED SQUALOR**

Geoffrey Mead, from Sussex University, gave us a witty and fascinating account of the piecemeal development of Sussex between the wars at their November meeting. He used the term ‘scattered squalor’ to describe some of the early self-build schemes, otherwise known as ‘plotlands’, where landowners sold quarter-acre plots in inaccessible locations, and without services, to people determined to own a home of their own – however ramshackle. Ready-made, or convertible buildings were also offered – railway carriages, army huts (‘officers’ huts’ in the more select areas).

Most of these buildings have long gone, replaced – even in the 1930s - by modern housing estates but traces of them, he showed, can still be found in places like Patcham, Shoreham and Pagham. Other developments might not be squalid but were certainly done on the cheap. Commercially designed bungalows for £175 were shown at the Ideal Home Exhibition of 1925, and plots on new estates could be cheaper still.

Higher standards were set in the Council Housing estates like Moulsecombe in the early 1930s and private developers raised their game, with attractive layouts, sea views, leisure facilities and shops as part of an attractive package for those seeking a new life on the south coast.

The years 1930-1935 was the fastest period of house building, said Geoffrey Mead, (as Ferring itself can witness) and suburbs all along the coast took on their modern look. This was not always the ‘bungaloid growth’ that architects and planners deplored. Some fine ‘modernist’ buildings were erected (many of them still surviving) and some of the estates were very well designed, and have worn well. Even Peacehaven, a by-word for bleak and soulless estate building, was a brave effort but handicapped by a lack of trees up on the thin soil of the Downs. The same architect had gone on to build Woodingdean, still a much sought-after area.

And even the plotlands had their successes: Geoffrey Mead concluded with some stories of life in Bungalow Town on Shoreham Beach, with its fast set of film makers and show business celebrities, before it was cleared for military purposes in 1940.

## **OUR NEW YEAR WALK**

Twenty FHG members began 2009 with a walk along the parish boundaries from the footbridge on the Rife, down to the Bluebird Café, along Patterson’s Walk and Marine Drive, up the unnamed road and up to the Ilex Walk. Ed Miller, carrying a large-scale map published in 1960, gave a commentary at a number of points.

We met at Brook Lane, the old footpath to East Preston and Kingston, as well as giving access to the arable strips in Ferring Common Field. The brook (not known as the Rife until the C20th) was always important for draining Ferring but the southern end had often flooded before the present embankment had been built and the course of the stream straightened somewhat. The track from the South Ferring fields was called Horsemarsh Lane (now Ferringham Way/Ferringham Lane).

The sea front too, Ed pointed out, had also been subject to much flooding and erosion – the coast line of 400 years ago was now several hundred yards offshore. Big coast defence works in the 1950s had stabilised the beach and Patterson's Walk is the roadway used by the machinery involved. We walked over the WWII minefield (all cleared away in 1944) and the 1941 Pill Box, to the end of Sea Lane, where the beacons had stood for the expected Spanish invasion of 400 years earlier, and along the greensward towards Goring. Marine Drive and the two unnamed roads off it had been laid out just before the war, as a projected extension of the Goring Hall estate: the war, followed by shortage of building materials and then planning legislation had stopped the development, leaving the 'Goring Gap' and a good short cut to Goring and Worthing.

The parish boundary follows an old field division just west of the first of these unnamed roads but we were able to keep close to it walking up the road and along some undesigned footpaths in the fields of what had been Manor Farm (the old manor of East Ferring). Some of the field boundaries had not changed since the 1830s, at least, and some old stone walls still marked out what had been grazing for the animals. The old farm house (probably C17th) was demolished in the 1960s but the remains of some of its walls could still be seen in the copse just off Sea Lane, south of Ilex Walk.

Everyone seems to enjoy these New Year excursions. The weather is usually fine. Look out for our next one, which will be at Widewater and Shoreham Beach

## **WORTHING AT WAR**

An audience of 60 came out in foul weather on 6 February to hear Chris McCooey give a talk on 'A Worthing Wartime Dairy'. In 1988 Chris had edited and arranged the publication of the diaries that Joan Strange, a Worthing physiotherapist, had kept from January 1939 through to VE Day in May 1945. The diaries had been full of observations about everyday life in those extraordinary times, as well as her commentary on the progress of the war and, Chris McCooey said, were a priceless source of local history.

Chris had met Joan Strange through her sister, who was a fellow member of a writers' circle in Tunbridge Wells: Joan still lived in Langton Road, Worthing, where she had grown up. They 'vetted' him over lunch and produced a suitcase full of Joan's notebooks, with a detailed entry for almost every day of those six and a half years and asked if would like to write something based on them. He told the Group that the writing was so good he only wrote six words of his own, '*Despatches from the Home Front*', the title he gave to the greatly cut-

down version that was published the next year. The original diaries, three times the length, are now in the Imperial War Museum.

The extracts he read from the book showed how an 'ordinary' woman in her 30s reacted to the problems and worries of the times – but this was no 'ordinary' woman. A committed and active Christian, she was heavily involved in helping the refugees who left Germany and Austria before the war started, as well as the evacuees that came from London soon after, she raised hundreds of pounds for good causes, she looked after her elderly mother, did duty in the Civil Defence control centre, ran an allotment, played tennis, attended political meetings, and cycled back and forth to Winchester to see her brother, as well as holding down a demanding job.

Joan Strange made many acute comments on local shops and services, dog fights over the town, the blackout and the ARP wardens, the British Restaurant in Lyndhurst Road, and many references to places and people in and around Worthing that many in the audience knew well. The book is available from the Library Service but many of the audience wanted a copy of their own, and Chris sold and signed at least 20 copies.

Earlier, Ed Miller had made a presentation to Joyce Cooper, president and co-founder of the Group, who was retiring after 54 years in Ferring to her old family home in Lancashire. Ed Miller said she would be greatly missed by all the societies she had supported so well.

### **A FLYING VISIT**

Thirty members of the Group took a trip out to Shoreham Airport on 30 May. This was a belated follow-up to a talk by Dave Dunstall a year or so earlier and it was good to see the displays and replicas of old aircraft close up. Some of them were the real thing, like the Hawker Hunter of the 1950s being renovated by the engineering students at Northbrook College who are based at the airport.

Volunteers told us the story of the pioneers Piffard and Pashley, before the First World War. Shoreham Airport opened in 1911, and was the first in the country to carry freight. The flights to Paris took 12 hours but you could have a short joy-ride flight for £5. The airport was requisitioned by the Government in 1914 and used for training pilots: they were given 20 minutes flying experience before being sent to France.

The airport did not reopen fully until 1936, although the facilities were used by visiting airmen, small aircraft manufacturers and 'flying circuses' in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Regular services to Paris and other destinations continued until the spring of 1940, under RAF control though still municipally owned. Thereafter it was used for military transport and air-sea rescue, before being returned to civil aviation after the war.

The terminal buildings still retain their *art deco* look, and have hardly been altered since 1936 (we often see them in modern films set in the 1930s). We were taken through them and onto the apron of the airfield, looking in on the hangars where old and replica aircraft are stored. We also saw the Fire and Rescue station where crews explained what was involved in providing this service at even a small airport like Shoreham.

The future of this airport seems uncertain – it is well used by ‘leisure flyers’, and it hosts the Air Show every August/September, but there are no longer any scheduled services to France or the Channel Islands. But it certainly has an interesting history, and this is well displayed by the Shoreham Airport Historical Association, in their building just to the left of the main terminal building. Visitors can do as we did, and have a snack – or a substantial meal, at the airport restaurant

## **OUR PROGRAMME**

Our programme for 2009/10 is as follows:

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

6 November: **The Royal Sussex Regiment in World War I** by Alan Readman

5 December: Christmas Social, with **Sussex Superstitions and Curious Beliefs**

5 February: **Wiston House – The Story of Sir Thomas Shirley** by Janet Pennington

7 May: **Resorting to the Coast** by Geoffrey Mead

6 August: **Ferring in the Early Middle Ages** by Chris Lewis (AGM 7.15)

5 November: **West Sussex in the 18th Century** by Alan Readman

4 December: Christmas Social (presentation to be arranged)

## **Walks and Visits**

The ‘Worvell Walks’ continue in 2010, organised by Keith Richards. He writes, ‘As usual we will be organising three walks throughout the year. Our New Year walk will be something a little further afield - weather permitting a shortish pleasant flat walk along Lancing seafront to Widewater Lagoon and return. Meet at Lancing Beach Green car park (free) at 11.00am, on Saturday 2 January. The walk will be approx 1 1/2 hours, own transport.’

As usual all walks will be advertised on the two village notice boards, outside the village hall and next to recycling compound two weeks before due date.

There will be a visit in the Spring by coach or minibus to Steyning, for a guided walk with Janet Pennington, and a return visit to Amberley in the Summer. We would also like to run some trips to other historic sites in Sussex. There is no shortage of interesting venues. Please look for notices or phone Ed Miller for details.

## **Research**

There is still much to discover and publish on Ferring’s history. The sources are not just the centuries-old documents in West Sussex County Record Office but newspaper collections and other more modern documents in Worthing Local Studies Library, and the memories and memorabilia of long-time Ferring residents. There is also an increasing amount of material accessible by internet. If you would like to get involved in this, or if you would like to follow up your own interest in any Ferring subject, do contact one of the Committee.

## **HAVE WE GOT YOUR E MAIL ADDRESS?**

If you have received this Newsletter as a hard copy, it means we have not got your email address. If we can have that it makes it so much easier to get the Newsletter to you, as well as reminders of meetings and other news. Your address is not disclosed to other members, or to anyone else. Please send an e mail to [EdMiller43@msn.com](mailto:EdMiller43@msn.com)