

NEWSLETTER of the Ferring History Group Issue 17: November 2010

Editor: Ed Miller, 17 West Drive, Ferring, WORTHING BN12 5QZ.: EdMiller43@msn.com 01903 502267

Archaeology delayed .. archaeology abandoned

Last year I reported two imminent investigations in Ferring. The first resulted from planning permission being granted for a house in the garden of Yew Tree Cottage, in the middle of the historic heart of Ferring. That permission included a condition that when the work started on the site it must be monitored by an approved archaeologist because of the likelihood of finding structures or artefacts from the Middle Ages.

No work has started in the last 12 months because the new owner later decided to submit an amended application, for a larger house. This was granted on 14 October and we can expect the work and the archaeology to start very soon now. This gap between 'Smugglers Annex' and Yew Tree Cottage has remained undeveloped for at least 200 years and although it may never have been the site of a cottage in early-modern times (nothing is listed in the 1647 survey) there may well be signs of mediaeval buildings below the surface and 'finds' of objects from even earlier times. Watch this space.

The second was just below Highdown, where the equestrian business had been given permission to construct a foaling unit. Again there was an 'archaeological condition' but within days of getting the permission the owner started the ground work and by the time the County Archaeologist caught up with events he judged that there was no prospect of recovering anything worthwhile. This is a great pity: the old Ordnance Survey maps show 'Flint Implements Discovered' only 400 yards to the west. The building work is probably just about to start, and it is likely that more stone age tools will be turned up but we are unlikely to see them.

Our War Memorial

On Remembrance Sunday, Ferring History Group, along with many other village organizations, lays its wreath to the men from Ferring who died in the two world wars. We know quite a lot about these men and how they died but we know very little about the memorial itself.

The only mention in the Parish Council archives is a resolution passed on 15 November 1921 – 'This Council accepts on behalf of the Parish the gift from Mrs Henty of the site upon which is erected the Memorial to the fallen in the Great War'. Mrs Henty, of course, was the last of the family which had owned most of Ferring for the previous 100 years.

Every town, and just about village, in Britain put up a war memorial in the two or three years immediately after 1918 – because almost every local community lost men. The unveiling of the memorial was always a big event: Worthing had Field Marshal Robertson at its ceremony – which was well covered by the Worthing Gazette; even Angering had a Colonel from the Sussex Regiment at its unveiling. Ferring had only five names on its original memorial (more were added after World War II) but the unveiling or consecration should have been a newsworthy event.

It was not reported in the Worthing Gazette, the main local newspaper of the time but at the suggestion of Group member Angela Simmonds, I looked in the St Andrew's 'Record of Services' book in WRSO and found that the Archdeacon of Chichester consecrated it in a service at St Andrews Church on Sunday 6 November 1921. I then looked up the Worthing

Herald for the following week and found one small paragraph reporting the unveiling by Col. Purcell, a Ferring resident, immediately after the consecration service. It was described as a white stone cross. Not so white now.

So far so good but who exactly was Col Purcell (he was listed in the Street Directory for 1927 but not for 1919 -20)? Who carved the memorial. And who paid for it?

Ferring's Common Fields

Well before the Tithe Map of 1837 was drawn up, all the land in Ferring had been taken into private ownership and nearly all of it was being farmed in large, compact blocks of fields attached to the half a dozen farms in the parish. But in the names of the fields, and in a separate survey carried out in 1804 one can see evidence of the mediaeval system of farming and land ownership – cows feeding in common meadows and crops grown in strips of land in the common fields.

The area around Highdown Way and Downview Road is named on the 1837 map as 'Common Meadow' and divided into five one-acre strips, although all were owned by Edwin Henty and farmed by Thomas Trussler as a single unit, for grazing and haymaking. Each of these strips had a frontage onto the Rife so one can imagine that this was good grassland as well as providing water for cattle, and had been shared out to serve a number of smallholders.

Four other areas on this map are named as 'common *fields*', which implies arable farming. One was on the north side of Littlehampton Road (some 10 acres, where the Green/Gold Tree Nursery is now), divided into one-acre strips running east-west). Another was 'Southover Common', some six acres where Glenbarrie Way and Hermione Close are today (again partly divided into one-acre strips). The third was 'Ferring Common Field' some 16 acres where Meadow Way, St Andrew's Close and the other roads just west of the Recreation Ground now stand. At this time it was in the ownership of the Vicar, as 16 acres of 'Glebe' land, and was undivided.

Two fields to the south there was another large, undivided 'Common Field', 25 acres belonging to Edwin Henty. But only 30 years before, these fields and the 7 acres between them had been part of an even larger area of 'common field', divided into strips of one or more acres. Kerridge and Standing, in *Ferring Past*, reproduce a plan from an 1804 Terrier (survey) showing an area of nearly 64 acres subdivided in this way. This stretched down over what is now Rife Way, Brook Lane, Clover Lane and beyond, and bounded by Ferringham Lane to the east and south.

The same area is shown on the first map we have of Ferring, in 1621, as the 'Ferring Towne Field', not part of the Lord of the Manor's own estate but (implicitly) shared out among the villagers). The other 'common fields' are not named but, again are shown as *not* part of the Lord's estate.

All this shows that the old, mediaeval system of strip farming continued in large areas of Ferring into the beginning of the 19th century. The Lord of the Manor's own estate (or 'demesne') was farmed in large single fields and, as a 14th Century record shows, most of the villagers had to carry out a defined amount of work on this land. The rest of the manor was available to his tenants. Originally villagers were allocated a strip one furlong by one chain – an acre indeed – for growing crops - and the right to graze any animals on less fertile areas. A furlong was 'a furrow long' - the length an average ox could plough before he needed a rest, and a chain was a tenth of that distance. Tenancies were inheritable, or failing an heir they could be regranted by the Manor Court.

By the 17th Century the wealthier tenants had large blocks of land but strip farming continued in certain 'common' fields. Some tenants had a number of single acres (strips) in different common fields, or separated acres in the same field, and gradually a consolidation took place so that tenants exchanged acres to give themselves a more workable smallholding, or sold their hereditary tenancies to the big farmers. So although in 1804 the 64 acres of Ferring Common Field still had 57 different plots, they were all occupied by just five landowners and by 1837 the area was shown as just seven undivided fields, owned by four individuals. Chief among these was Edwin Henty, who owned over 400 acres in Ferring under one title or another. The next largest holding was that of the Vicar, where the scattered strips of 'glebe' land had been exchanged for 18 acres in two large fields north of what is now Rife Way. These were sold to Worthing Rural District Council in 1946 for housing: very few council houses were built, most of it was sold off to Wimpeys in 1963 and a small area retained as the recreation ground opposite the Co-op. But that is another story ...

The Far North

Nearly all of what appears in the *Newsletter* is the history of the village of Ferring, the fields around it and the way the land south of the Littlehampton Road was developed for housing in the 1920s and 1930s. We occasionally refer to the Rife, and to the top of Highdown and its windmill and prehistoric settlements. This article looks over the hill, to the land running down towards the A27, which is much less known.

The parish boundaries run up and over Highdown, in more or less parallel lines – on the west, up Hangleton Lane, through the chalk pit, where there was a lime kiln in 1879, and along the footpath which goes up the dip-slope, over the crest of the hill, down the scarp slope, and along the field boundaries to a brook just south of Water Lane. On the east the boundary runs up 'McIntyre's Lane', meeting the east-west footpath on the lower slopes but from then on just a line on the map across the grass and down into Titnore Woods before meeting the track from Titnore Lane running into Woodlands Stables. The boundary continues this line westwards, taking in Northdowns Farm buildings.

This part of Ferring, on the other slope of the hill, is divided by a footpath known as Pot Lane, running down from the back of Highdown, through the woods to the Titnore Lane/Water Lane junction. Most of the western section, about 100 acres including Northdowns Farm, belonged for many years to the Shelley family, then to the Duke of Norfolk, freehold, and was not shown on the map of the manor in 1621. It was nearly all arable in 1837, farmed by John Duke Olliver.

The eastern section was certainly part of the manor estate in 1621. Part of it had been leased to the Watersfield family by 1552 along with the rest of the demesne (300 acres altogether) and the rest was also with that family as 'copyhold tenants'. The leasehold section, 35 acres of scrub and 4 acres of arable land allocated at one time to the miller, stayed with the manor estate and became part of the Henty estate when Edwin Henty, the last leaseholder, bought the freehold from the Church Commissioners. The copyhold section, in the far north, was passed down through the Watersfields, sold to the Westbrook family, and passed down through the Richardson branch of that family. By 1837 it had been sold to David Lyon, the new owner of the Goring manor lands. In the 20th Century it was acquired by the Somersets, owners of Castle Goring.

The use of the land in both sections has changed very substantially over the centuries. In the eastern section, what had been sheep pasture became arable, and is now mainly woodland, kept

for raising pheasants, a fishing lake and a stables. In the western section what was arable is now grazing for dairy cattle. And one land use has disappeared without trace – the hop yard just north of Highdown Copse, shown on the 1621 map and named in various later 17th Century documents as 'Philpotts'. One wonders how many pots it filled with Sussex beer.

This is a little known part of Ferring. But now all this is part of the South Downs National Park, and will be safe from development and capable of being enjoyed by everyone, forever.

There's No Place Like Dome

by Tim Baldwin

On a lovely summer's day on 4 June, twenty three members of the Group went to the Cinema. We met at the Dome Cinema, Worthing for a talk on its history given by two members of staff. We started in the upper section of the building and were ably addressed by Mark - the manager of this newish, upper, business venture. We were told that Worthing Council's decision to retain the site as a cinema had been passed by just one vote; a Trust had obtained some £3m of Lottery Funding, and Worthing Council sold the cinema to the Trust for £10 in 1999, and today this same Trust leases the building for the combined businesses of a Cinema, a cafe and an area for people to hire for such use as civil weddings, parties and other celebrations.

Mark gave us a potted history of the site and we learnt that it was originally opened on Easter Sunday in 1911 as a roller skating rink 'where 3,000 people could enjoy the floor, skating to live music'. Over one hundred years ago (actually in 1904) Carl Adolph Seebold, originally from Switzerland, made Worthing his home. He had previously lived in Southend on Sea where he was the actor-manager of the town's Kursaal Theatre - (Kursaal had come to mean 'seaside pleasure place'). We learnt that he had a vision to build his own Kursaal Theatre in Worthing and obtaining the assistance of an architect - Theophilus Arthur Allen, he proceeded to build the building we know today. Construction began in 1910 and very quickly was completed to the present. It initially opened for the summer season for "high class al fresco entertainment" which offered the Edwardian attenders "a pleasant retreat when the wind is all boisterous from the front". He named the venue. Entrance prices ranged from 6d to one shilling. The garden area opened for the summer season and was popular.

Allen designed a long rectangular hall with side galleries, a Canadian rock maple floor for the rink and a double aspect stage which allowed both indoor and outdoor performances. The opening brought the Dublin Fusiliers to give a concert, and on the Easter Monday it opened to roller skating where an orchestra was hired to give live music to each session. The rink also boasted of experienced instructors and instructresses (known as the Rollettes), and the rink quickly became popular in Worthing with roller skating teams regularly playing. This area was renamed "Coronation Hall" after the accession of George V later that year.

Although primarily a roller skating rink, the Kursaal had its own male and female hockey teams using the site. The site also ran social functions and variety shows - many of these by Seebold's "Comedy Comets" (later renamed "the Worthing Whimsies") at which he used his own orchestra. More on these times can be found in the Worthing Local Studies Library.

Whilst these energetic performances were being enjoyed in the lower hall of the Kursaal, upstairs offered an equally exciting form of entertainment - "the electric theatre". This room offered the people of Worthing another area to watch the new entertainment "film shows". Actually the Kursaal was the fourth venue for such things, Worthing having become the first town in West Sussex where audiences paid to see film. Interestingly, scattered around the lower

area of the building one can still find several original film posters for these early films shown at the electric theatre. This room opened on the 7th October 1911 with Seebold accompanying the films on piano.

The introduction of the projected moving image to the Kursaal in these prestigious surroundings became a major event in the town, and within weeks of it opening, the theatre was so popular that an additional projector and additional seating were installed. Three years later the first world war brought some significant changes to the Kursaal. The name is of German origin (from spa resorts) and thus was felt to be unsuitable for the times. The theatre held a competition to obtain a new name and the eventual winners were awarded the sum of £1.00 for offering "The Dome".

The Dome remained open throughout the war and the Electric Theatre became more and more popular - so much so that in 1921 the site was radically remodelled and Seebold transformed the ground floor into a "luxurious picture house" - the one we all know and admire today. The Coronation Hall was transformed with a domed ceiling, oak panelling and a slopping floor with 'new' tip up seats. Boxes were also built on either side of the projection room. The entrance became a spacious foyer area also embellished with oak panelling, ornamental cornices and a grand staircase leading into the auditorium. Two anterooms were also built either side of the foyer, one a cloakroom, the other a refreshment bar. Upstairs the Electric Theatre was renamed the King's Ballroom and given a sprung floor for dances.

Our second speaker, Sue, the Cinema's manager, showed us the original ticket office which still has the original machines dispensing pre-decimal tickets. She also pointed out the footstep area in front of the box that showed clear wear from the vast volume of people who had stood at the box to buy tickets over the years. She told us that it was one of only four Cinemas that still allowed the client to take purchased alcohol into the seating area.

The first film shown at the newly refurbished Cinema was "Pollyanna" starring Mary Pickford. It was accompanied by a six-piece orchestra and received fantastic reviews from the sell-out audience of 950 people at each sitting. (Interestingly she advised that the current film - Sex in the City II had also produced sell out numbers of 950 patrons for each house).

Sue allowed us to look behind the scenes of the buildings stage, bar area, projection room, cinema floor area where we saw the ceilings and lights, boxes – even into the cleaning cupboard area which boasted original floorboards from 1911. The building's heyday was the 1920s when it was very popular with locals and visitors to Worthing. During this time Seebold opened several more cinemas which all added to the golden years of film in Worthing. The Dome shut briefly in 1940 because of invasion fears, and a curfew of 10pm was also imposed on all venues in Worthing until the end of the war.

The town was now the proud possessor of five Cinemas and the Dome suffered from this competition. Its boom days appeared over. It was forced to show second-run films at cheaper prices and it remained unchanged throughout the forties and fifties. In 1951 Seebold died. The Cinema was struggling to survive. In the mid 1950's Cinemascope sound and a new wide screen were fitted. In 1960 one of its rival venues - the Rivoli burned down allowing the Dome a minor revival. The closure of the Plaza also helped the Dome to attract additional clients, and by the time the Odeon Cinema was demolished in 1987, the Dome was the only purpose-built Cinema left in the town.

In 1969 Worthing Borough Council purchased the freehold of the Dome specifically to redevelop the area. Whilst it remained a Cinema to its clients, the following thirty years proved to be exceedingly turbulent times for the building. We learnt that the Council had multitudinous ideas for the site, which led to them as landlords being loath to granting long-term leases for the site. This policy therefore discouraged tenants from spending money on maintenance and modernization. As a result this action proved to be both a blessing in disguise and a curse for the building because whilst it retained much of its original facade, it also suffered from accumulated neglect. It was also around this time that the Council sliced the buildings into three separate sites - much as they are found today - a Cinema, a cafe and then a Bingo hall. These they leased out to individuals who wanted to maintain and modernize, but could not because of their short-term leases.

It was in the late 1980's that the site came under threat from developers who wanted to build a shopping mall (and, we learnt, as a gesture from the contractor, with a smaller Cinema). Although this plan appeared to have the backing of the then Council, a local resident was able to obtain over 35,000 signatures on a petition to "Save the Dome". The Department of National Heritage (DNH) was alerted to the historic merits of the site and awarded it a Grade II listing, and the Dome Trust was set up to try and find a solution to the future of the building. The DNH described the building as "a remarkable survival of an early Kursaal and one of the best Cinemas to survive in England".

During the 1990's the Cinema was forced to close for 'health and safety' reasons. Interestingly, during this time span at least one scheme offered to the Council (to make the site into a nightclub) prompted the DNH to upgrade the building to a Grade II* listing. This appears to have stopped all further suggestions to change the site from what it was. Eventually the Worthing Dome & Regeneration Trust Ltd obtained the site having secured Heritage Lottery Funding as related above.

We learnt from Mark, whilst standing in the upper dome area that this had cost a huge sum of money to make good. One of the failings of the new construction was the fact that the business could no longer raise and lower a flag on the flagpole seen from the outside as no access was readily available to them to do such a thing. Hindsight appears to be a wonderful thing!

Our visit allowed us to enter into areas not normally seen by the public, and offered us a view to its history over the past one hundred years. I specifically enjoyed the anecdotes offered by Mark on the seven pre-Cinema glass windows to be found in the upper ballroom area, and repairs to the upper area ceilings, especially the one concerning how they eventually found a 93 year old plasterer to make good the damaged papier maché ceiling roses and cornices, and the sheer enthusiasm offered to our group by the Cinema's manager - Sue who facilitated our being able to visit areas of the building not seen by others. Like many previous visits to the Cinema, our two and a half hours just zoomed by. For those members who might wish to read further information on the history of the Dome, I was given a pamphlet by Sue on the building which is now held by the Society Archivist - Mrs. Pat Attree. Please contact her should you wish to read it.

The Making of Ferring

Dr Chris Lewis gave a presentation to the Group on 2 August, on 'The Making of Ferring' – what we know about the very early years of the community, from archaeology, landscape reconstruction, place names, and three crucial documents - and how that material gives the underlying structure of its history.

He said the archaeology was largely unexplored, despite several villas nearby and abundant Roman coins, and even the earlier finds on Highdown needed looking at again with modern techniques but the pattern of settlement and the wealth of the community was shown by the Saxon graves on the hill top. The physical shape of the parish and the distribution of different soils and farming all indicated how life was lived, then and for many centuries after, and the place names of places within the parish, and the name 'Ferring' itself, pointed to various features of its early Saxon beginnings.

The most telling evidence, he said, was in the three earliest documents relating to Ferring – the charter of 765AD, that of 791 and the Domesday Book entry of 1086. The first two were not completely reliable because they were mediaeval copies and had probably been edited and 'updated' but the first showed an already settled and named territory being granted to a Saxon thane, to support a 'minster' (mission centre for the district). The description of the territory – arable land, pasture, meadow, woods, springs – fits very well with the Ferring of later years and the acreage corresponds with the mediaeval parish (but this was probably part of the updating).

The second charter recorded a further endowment of woodland somewhere on the downland slopes, for what was now named as the church of St Andrew. This grant of woodland seems to have been made direct to the Bishop of Selsey, whose predecessor was one of the signatories to the 765 charter.

By the time of Edward the Confessor, just before the Norman Conquest, the whole endowment had been transferred to the Bishop. The Domesday book entry, Chris Lewis explained, showed the Bishop's lordship of the manor, his own estate there with its plough teams and his serf, a number of tenants and smallholders of the manor, and the larger holding of a certain Amsfrid (which later became the sub-manor of East Ferring). The landholding described here, and the mixed farming, said Chris Lewis, made up the economy of Ferring which continued for another 800 years.

Chris Lewis, a Fellow of Kings College London, was the editor of the 2010 volume of the Victoria County History which covered Ferring and other parishes. His presentation – scholarly but very accessible – was enjoyed by an audience of 70 members and visitors.

The Prince of Wales and Ferring

There have been many stories about Prince Edward, later Edward VIII, and very soon after that the Duke of Windsor, spending time in Ferring in the 1920s and early 1930s but the evidence is very thin – no photographs, no mention in his memoirs or any other books of reference. Most of what one hears is second or third-hand, vague and uncertain, and some of it is clearly wrong. For example, it is not true that Flora Guest (née Dodge) who had moved to Ferring in the early 1920s was connected with the millionaire US car manufacturers, and it is very unlikely that she had known Mrs Simpson. Nor is it at all likely that Mrs Simpson would have demanded that the level crossing keeper in Ferring Street open the gates for her with the cry, 'Don't you know who I am?', as no one outside a tiny social circle in London would have known who she was before the Abdication crisis.

However, a collection of press cuttings recently given to Ferring History Group does show that there is some substance to the stories. The Worthing Herald of 1936 reported that the Prince had spent a holiday in Ferring in the summer of 1928, staying at 'St Malo, a charming house by the sea', and that he had played two rounds at Worthing Golf Course with his equerry and his wife and Mrs Dudley Ward. The Herald had reported this visit briefly at the time and on 25 August 1928 reported another visit to the golf course with Mrs Dudley Ward, and the Prince strolling on Ferring beach where he met a local boy, Ralph Newman. He helped Ralph to dig bait and cheerfully gave him an autograph on a scrap of paper (pictured in the Herald). Then in 1933 the Prince flew into Shoreham Airport and drove to Highdown Gardens, where he spent the day with Lady Stern.

The Herald published some articles about this in 1986, which also drew on the memories of readers who had known Ferring 60 years earlier. The former caretaker of 'Yellowthatch', a house almost at the south end of Sea Lane, remembered the Prince staying at 'St Malo', next door, in 1926, with Mrs Dudley Ward and her two daughters, and Peter Tourle remembered the talk in the village about a series of such visits. An Arundel resident remembered the Prince staying at Ferring Grange 'with another married companion, Mrs Jean Mulholland', and 'watching the couple walk hand in hand along the beach at Ferring'.

Why did the Prince take holidays and 'carry on' with married women at Ferring, rather than anywhere more fashionable or exotic? This always seemed to me most implausible but, as the cuttings reminded me, the village did have its connections with 1920s high society. Lionel Guest, a grandson of the Duke of Marlborough (and Churchill's cousin) lived here from 1924 until his death in 1935. He had bought most of the area bounded by Sea Lane, Beehive Lane and Ocean Drive and sold plots or rented houses to several leading figures for holiday homes - among them 'Lullaby', in Beehive Lane to Sir Piers Legh, equerry to the Prince since 1919. Another house, originally The Hollidays, later St Malo, was built for Lt Col Tharp, and it was here that the Prince stayed with Freda Dudley Ward (there is no record of her tenancy in the street directories - probably Tharp just loaned it to her). Tharp's younger daughter was baptised at the Chapel Royal, St James's Palace, so here was another royal connection.

St Malo was a discreet rendez-vous, at the far end of a lane with no road connections with anywhere else, among sophisticated neighbours, on a very quiet stretch of the coast, less than two hours drive from London. Ferring Grange is less understandable - whether as a hotel from 1927 (a very public place) or as Mrs Henty's residence up to 1924 (an elderly widow would be an unlikely hostess) but Edward does not seem to have hidden himself much from public gaze. Another story I heard, only second-hand, was of him playing tennis on a court in West Drive. There seems little doubt that he knew Ferring well and enjoyed himself here.

The AGM

At our August Annual General Meeting, Adge Roberts reported on a year of rising membership, good meetings and enjoyable meetings and visits. The Treasurer reported a very healthy balance of over £800. Adge stood down as Chairman but remains on the Committee as an enthusiastic and very supportive member.

Tim Baldwin was elected Chairman. Recently retired, he now wants to spend more time on local history, with a special interest in Ferring in the 20th Century. Ed Miller and Peter Bentley continue as Secretary and Treasurer respectively, with Pat Attree, Keith Richards and Hugh and Janet Faithfull making up the rest of the Committee.

Memoirs of an Evacuee

by Adge Roberts

Our past-Chairman remembers leaving Worthing in 1941, and coming back

One of my earliest memories is of two bombs dropping a few hundred yards away from where we lived in Durrington, in August or September 1940. One landed, I think, on Greenyers Nursery on the east side of Cotswold Road and I believe the other was in the nurseries that used to be at the end of Mendip Road (then a cul-de-sac). Neither of them exploded and we were evacuated until they were disarmed.

We used to watch dog fights over Durrington while standing in the back garden. I saw once a stream of shells hitting the roof of a house which must have been in Chiltern Crescent. It never seemed to occur to anybody that if an aircraft were to fire its cannon while in a dive, then anything that did not hit another aircraft was going to continue downwards, possibly to where we were standing. I did on occasion pick up empty shell cases in the road after the event. One day we saw a German aircraft shot down and we followed its descent and my sister Jo and I decided that it had come down in Honeysuckle Lane High Salvington, so with no more ado we ran off to find out, no word to or from our parents.

We arrived at Honeysuckle Lane and the crash site (about a mile and a half away) just as the crew were being marched off by either the army or police. The plane crash-landed, with wheels up, but was intact, and I believe all the crew survived. I later learned it was a Heinkel bomber. Unfortunately a guard had been left on the plane so we could not break a piece off it as a souvenir to take home. It had come down just above the cottages and in the field between Honeysuckle Lane and Cote Street (just to the west of today's car park).

I remember the day we were evacuated (I later learned that this would have been about 20 March 1941), our school party arrived at Worthing Central Station (presumably by bus). It was cold and we were all dressed in top coats and scarves and wearing balaclavas and pixie hoods. I think we were carrying our gas masks in their cardboard carrying-boxes hanging round our necks and carrying a packed food parcel for the day, with labels on our coats for identity. We were sent to Mansfield Woodhouse, in Nottinghamshire.

After four eventful years (which I have recorded separately), we left there a few weeks before the end of the war, and travelled down under steam power - all trains were steam powered in the north. Then we crossed London, I think by bus, to Victoria where we sat impatiently waiting for the train to leave, looking out of the windows and saying that it can't go yet as the engine was not coupled up, and then while we were saying this the train moved off - so we looked to the rear to see if we were being pushed. We could not remember electric trains of course. On the way down we kept putting our heads out of the window to see if we could smell the sea yet.

Soon after return to Cotswold Road the war in Europe ended, on my birthday, 8 May. Street parties were held all over the country. Cotswold Road was no exception. The difference was that this was "my birthday party" - the best party any 10 year old ever had.

Resorting to the Coast

Geoffrey Mead, a regular visitor from Sussex University, gave the Group an excellent presentation on 7 May on the development of seaside resorts in Sussex. Most of them, he said, developed out of working towns – like Littlehampton with its port and boat-building, and Brighton with its fishing and small industries – others were created out of nothing, like Bexhill and St Leonards. The idea of the seaside as a place of recreation had taken hold in the late 18th

Century – partly a matter of medical recommendation of sea bathing and partly the consequence of the Romantic movement that saw wild and natural places as attractive and uplifting. Brighton was first in the field – much closer to London than the Kent channel coast, already a thriving town, and with plenty of land for development. Royal patronage helped, and then, from 1840, the railway brought thousands of trippers. Worthing followed along similar lines but Littlehampton remained a river port until much later.

The development of the resorts rapidly expanded the towns. Brighton built Kemp Town, and Hastings filled up the original valley and spilled over into the next. All resorts, he said, had to keep innovating, adding piers, promenades and, in Brighton's case, the Volks Railway. Even now Hastings was now re-branding itself as 'Foyle's War country'. Many of the resorts had become residential and commercial areas rather than holiday centres, he said, but the appeal of the Sussex coast was still very powerful.

The Royal Sussex Regiment

Two days before Remembrance Sunday last year, Alan Redman gave a talk on The Royal Sussex Regiment in World War I. He presented photographs from the RSR Collection at the County Record Office, and read poignant extracts from diaries and letters home.

The regiment had two regular battalions (2,000 men) in 1914 (one stationed in India, one at home), and three Territorial battalions but these were eventually joined by another 15 battalions from the 'New Army' raised by Kitchener's appeal. The home battalion went to France on 4 August 1914 and stayed on the Western Front all through the war, losing 1700 men. Many other battalions were sent and the RSR took part in heavy fighting at Aubers Ridge, Loos, Passchendaele and many other battles: four VCs were awarded. Other battalions were at Gallipoli, Palestine, Murmansk and Archangel, Egypt, and on the NW Frontier fighting the Second Afghan War.

Overall, the regiment lost 7,300 men. The impact on some of the home towns and villages, where 'pals' had volunteered together, was devastating: the village of Wadhurst lost 27 men in one day. Many of those who did come back were crippled physically or mentally. Letters home however were usually cheerful and reassuring: more realistic accounts were recorded in diaries and post-war memoirs. Alan Readman drew particular attention to the unpublished writings of Ralph Ellis and to one of the classic accounts, *Undertones of War* by Edmund Blunden, one of the war poets, about his service in the trenches with the Royal Sussex. He ended his talk with a reading from Blunden's poems.

An Elizabethan Con Man

Janet Pennington gave the Group an excellent talk on Wiston House, the Elizabethan mansion house near Steyning, at its 5 February meeting. The home of the Goring family since 1740, it is now the venue for the high-level 'Wilton Park' conferences for the Foreign Office and other Government Departments but its earlier history is of great interest. It was built in 1573 for Sir Thomas Sherley, Justice of the peace, Sheriff of Sussex and Surrey, MP for Steyning, a courtier of the Virgin Queen, and (as Janet Pennington put it) a 'con man'.

Shirley was appointed 'Treasurer at War' for the ten-year campaign against Spain in the Netherlands. Responsible for the pay, provisions and equipment of the troops, he diverted enormous sums into his own accounts. He was dismissed, declared bankrupt and his estates forfeited to the Crown but carried on swindling until arrested for Debt on the complaint of a

London goldsmith. His fellow MPs rallied round however, and passed a law making such an arrest an offence against Parliamentary privilege. His son managed to get the estate restored to the family and sold it to Lionel Cranfield, a favourite of James I. It was sold on in 1649 to John Fagge, whose great-granddaughter married Sir Charles Goring of Highden Washington. It was their son Charles Goring who, in 1760, planted the trees on top of Chanctonbury Ring, behind the house.

The house was a hive of activity in World War II, serving as Montgomery's HQ from 1940 to 1941, and then HQ for the Canadian Army. It survived the occupation very well and remains a very elegant and well-preserved Elizabethan house, with an original double-hammerbeam roof and later decoration, including unusual gilded-leather panelling.

Development of Sea Lane

In 1920, Sea Lane (or East Ferring Lane) had very few houses. The first stretch, before it turned south towards the sea had no houses at all. The first buildings were those of East Ferring Farm, across what is now the junction with Midhurst Drive. This belonged to the Lyon family, owners of Goring Hall and all of what we now call the Goring Gap. The farm house itself was known as 'The White House', and was still there in the 1950s. On the west side, almost opposite, were two cottages and some farm buildings (replaced many years ago by Homestead Cottages).

Just south of East Ferring Farm was West Lodge, by the gates of what we now call the Ilex Way, the drive to Goring Hall. South of the drive was Manor Farm House, the original manor house of East Ferring (the remains of which can still be seen in the undergrowth of the copse which has grown up there).

The largest house was (and still is) 'East Ferring House', its Georgian facade fronting a building which goes back to the 16th Century. South of this there were just four cottages – Bramble Cottage (17th century) and the group of three (probably Victorian) cottages just below it.

All the west side had belonged to the Henty family for many years. Edwin Henty had sold 3 acres at the seaward end, in 1909, to Louis Mallet but nothing had been built on it. Edwin died in 1916: he had no children to carry on the estate and in 1921 his widow put the southern part of the estate (267 acres) up for auction. It did not reach its reserve price and Mrs Henty had to think again.

The most valuable land was evidently at the far end of Sea Lane. The Hon Lionel Guest had a 'Timber Framed Chalet - temporary building' built there in March 1921, followed by a 'Timber Framed Building' in May, just before the auction (we do not know exactly where – possibly on land he was renting). Mallet had sold his 3 acres to the Hon Mrs Lionel Guest in March 1922. The Guests sold part of it to Col. Gerard Tharp, who applied to build a house there ('Hollidays', later 'St Malo') in July 1922. Mrs Tharp then encouraged her sister and her sister's husband Maj. Bridge, who was serving at the Washington embassy, to buy the plot immediately to the north and they had a house, 'Yellowthatch', built there in May 1924. Lionel Guest then bought 5.5 acres immediately north of that in March 1923 and began building another house there – 'Wookyi-tipi' ('House of Peace' in North American Indian).

It may have been this flurry of building that encouraged Mrs Henty to try again. The Times of 30 August 1923 reported the recent sale of Ferring Grange (259 acres – indicating that 8 acres had been sold since 1921). It is not clear who bought it in 1923 (possibly Charles Draycott) but

by May 1924 the estate had been broken up: Guest had 58 acres fronting Sea Lane below what is now Beehive Lane, Birdwood had a smaller holding either side of East Ferring House, and Draycott was selling off most of the rest of the frontage to individuals. Smart, who was the tenant of Home Farm, had bought the Clover Lane/Upper West Drive area and Hooper the Grange and its grounds. By 1925 the west side of Sea Lane was lined with houses, most of which survive today.

This was the first development of Ferring, along the existing roads. More houses were built in Ferring Lane, and then Langbury Lane, before new roads were laid out such as Ferringham Lane, West Drive and Ocean Drive. That was when the building boom really got under way.

PROGRAMME 2010-2011

MEETINGS – at 7.30 in the Village Hall

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| 5 November | West Sussex in the 18th Century by Alan Readman |
| 4 December | Christmas Social : with special presentation on <i>Fairground History</i> |
| 4 February | The Fleet Air Arm on the South Coast by Richard Searle |
| 28 April | The Hentys in Ferring and Worthing by Tony Brook and Ed Miller
<i>(jointly with Worthing History Forum, St Paul's Centre, Richmond Road)</i> |
| 6 May | The History of Bognor Regis by Sylvia Endacott |
| 5 August | Ferring in the 1950s by Club Members |
| 4 November | Dr Dixon, Worthing's health pioneer and geologist by Tony Brook |
| 9 December | Christmas Social (presentation to be arranged) |

WALKS AND VISITS

Our 'New Year Walk' will be a little later this year, on Saturday 8 January. Meet at the Village Hall at 11 am for a two-hour walk across the fields to East Preston, down to the sea front and back along the beach to Ferring, ending with refreshments at the Bluebird Café . Commentary on points of local history interest. Further walks and visits (with coach travel when appropriate) will be announced at meetings, and by posters on the village notice boards.

RESEARCH

We are always pleased to help members get started on research into Ferring's history. Our focus in 2011 will be 'Ferring in the 20th Century'. No problems here about needing to understand Latin, or deciphering ancient handwriting. Much of the material is in the local newspapers on microfilm in Worthing Local Studies Library, and in the Street Directories and other local records kept there. Much of it too is in the memories of long-standing residents, which need to be written up. Can you help? Please speak to Tim Baldwin or Ed Miller.