

NEWSLETTER of the Ferring History Group Issue 18: November 2011

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FERRING IN THE 1950s

Almost 150 people attended the 5 August meeting for 'Ferring in the 1950s'. There was standing room only in the Village Hall for this evening of information and reminiscences about the village 50 or 60 years ago. Ed Miller started with some facts about Ferring's population, housing developments, local businesses and public services and a few items on the Coronation Day celebrations. This was followed by Tim Baldwin with over 60 photographs – postcards and library photographs – showing familiar scenes that have changed dramatically. After the interval there were many contributions from long-time residents, former residents and people who had come to Ferring on holiday during these years.

Ed Miller said the 1950s saw the resumption of the building boom which had transformed Ferring in the late 1920s and 1930s. Nothing had been built between 1939 and 1949 but between the 1951 and 1961 censuses the population had increased by 60 per cent. This was when the village took on its modern character – although his large scale 1961 map showed that there were still several areas south of the railway line and off Sea Lane which were not covered with houses by that time.

At the Group's AGM immediately afterwards, Tim Baldwin and Ed Miller were re-elected as Chairman and Secretary and David Garnett and Eileen Godfrey joined the Committee, in place of Pat Attree and Keith Richards.

THE 1893 HIGHDOWN EXCAVATIONS

by David Garnett

"In the autumn of 1892, Mr. Edwin Henty, in planting trees on his property on High Down Hill, in the parish of Ferring, in Sussex, came across a number of graves, which, from the character of the relics found in them, were readily determined to be of Saxon origin."

So begins a paper read to the Society of Antiquaries, at Burlington House, London, on November 30, 1893 by Charles Hercules Read – the man who led the first detailed excavation on Highdown (or High Down, as it was then known) Hill.

As the site of an Iron Age hill fort, Highdown had already attracted the attention of General Pitt-Rivers. Regarded as the father of British archaeology, in 1867 Pitt-Rivers made a survey of every hill fort in Sussex. A pre-Roman skull and a bronze dagger, which he discovered in a grave on Highdown on October 12, 1867, were to become part of the founding collection of the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford. This was not the first recorded excavation of Highdown. Ten years earlier, George V. Irving dug pits on the hill but found "only a miscellaneous collection of objects, many of them very recent in date." Although they were digging in the right area, neither Irving nor Pitt-Rivers discovered any trace of the Saxon cemetery.

Highdown Hill was included in the estates Edwin Henty inherited on the death of his father (also named Edwin) in 1890, and Charles Read's paper continues: "Mr. Henty has carefully preserved all that he could secure, but from the unfortunate accident that the men employed in the work were strangers, and not his own workmen, there is reason to believe that a

number of the articles found were disposed of to visitors and others.”

No complete record was kept of the pottery and weapons, jewellery and tools which were found, or in which graves they had been discovered, and Edwin Henty was determined this would not happen when more trees were planted the following year. He approached Charles Hercules Read, who had been an assistant curator at the British Museum since 1880 and was also the Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, to supervise a proper excavation. Read was familiar with the 1892 Highdown discoveries, one of which was already in the British Museum – an *angon*, a barbed iron javelin from east of the Rhine, 30 inches long. “In England,” he wrote, “it is so rare as to be almost unknown.”

His paper mentions that “the men were willing and much interested in the matter, more particularly as local tradition tells that buried in High Down lies a golden calf.” (He then adds: “This, I may say at once, is one of the things we did not find.”) But as he continues his paper, Read is forced to admit that “the vigour of the men in digging (one of the graves) ended in disaster, for with a stroke of his spade he ruthlessly shattered a most charming glass bowl . . . This is the more to be regretted as it differs in ornament from any I have ever seen.” Considering the speed of the excavations, it's a tribute to the diggers' skill that more relics were not destroyed. Henty and Read began work at Highdown on October 31, 1893, and the latter delivered his paper only thirty days later – after the excavation of thirty-two graves. At one point, he confesses to the haste of the work by admitting: “This grave had unfortunately to be hurried as the light was failing, and the positions (of the bones) in the grave are not certain.” Read had to return to London in mid-November, and Edwin Henty supervised the rest of the work, cataloguing and measuring the finds (“with the most excellent of results,” commented Read).

The Highdown discoveries were, and are, of major importance in establishing the history of the Saxons in the region. (Sussex means South Saxon, while the name Ferring is also Saxon in origin.) Among the relics were brooches, glass and amber beads, silver rings, pottery cups and bowls, Roman coins used as ornaments, glass bowls and goblets, iron knives and swords and spear heads. The grave excavated as night was falling, for example, shows the range of artifacts which were buried with the dead – from the mundane “three iron hoops of a bucket” to the skilled craft work of “two bird-shaped brooches of bronze gilt and inlaid with silver, the eyes being discs of garnet in silver settings”.

Women, men, children, all were buried here, each grave between 2 feet 6 inches and 5 feet deep. Because they were buried in chalk, the skeletons were generally well preserved. Most of the men had been around 6 feet tall. One was even taller, laid to rest in a grave 7 feet 6 inches long. Read notes his regret that “there was not some one present at the digging who had a good knowledge of anatomy.” All he could guess was that “none of the bodies had the appearance of old age, if one may take the state of the teeth as an indication”.

Read draws particular attention to one of the skeletons: “One unfortunate man had a hole in his skull large enough to admit a finger. Whether this blow was the cause of his death or not I cannot say, but he certainly lived for some time after he had received it, for it had originally been twice as large, and the bone was gradually closing up the hole when he died.”

How long ago, however, did he and the others die? All of the graves were aligned from east to west, as in Christian burials, and Christianity reached Sussex during the seventh century. Read, however, reasoned that Highdown was a pagan cemetery. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles record that the South Saxons landed in Sussex in 477 AD, and Read decides “to place this cemetery somewhere towards the end of the sixth century”.

Whatever the precise date, and later excavations reach varying conclusions, there is little doubt that those who were buried in the ancient cemetery once inhabited the land which lay below it. Fifteen centuries ago, it was they who lived in Ferring. Between Highdown and the sea, this was where they were born, where they died.

The next Highdown excavation was the following year, 1894, when Edwin Henty invited Charles Hercules Read back to Ferring to continue his work.

Charles Hercules Read (1857–1929) became keeper of British and medieval antiquities and ethnography at the British Museum in 1896, a role he occupied until his retirement in 1921. He wrote many papers for professional journals, was a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, and was knighted by King George V in 1912. He died in Italy.

Edwin Henty (1844-1916) kept many of the Highdown finds in his home, Ferring Grange. He was born in Ferring, died in Ferring and is buried in St Andrew's churchyard. Georgiana Henty, his widow, donated the Highdown collection to Worthing Museum – where it is now on display

FERRING'S OTHER CABINET MINISTER

Leslie Hore-Belisha, Minister of Transport 1934-37, Secretary of State for War 1937- 40, lived at 'Elverland' in 1936 (where Elverlands Close is today). As with many of these wealthy residents with business or other ties to London, one does not know whether this was a holiday home, perhaps rented, or a main residence. Hore-Belisha certainly had a London address too.

Hore-Belisha is best known for his very active time at the Ministry of Transport. He introduced the 30 mph limit, driving tests, the A Road classification and, of course, the pedestrian crossings with the orange 'beacons' with which his name is always linked. His briskness and energy appealed to Chamberlain, and when the latter became Prime Minister in 1937 he sent Hore-Belisha to the War Office, to shake up the army establishment. Hore-Belisha certainly did that – both as to its peacetime organisation and its performance in France, waiting for a German attack in September 1939 and the winter of 1939-40. Indeed his criticisms of the army's poor effort in France during the 'phoney war' led to his dismissal, when the Generals ganged up against him.

Hore-Belisha knew what he was talking about. He had been through the Great War, as an infantry officer and then a staff officer. Like Harold Macmillan, he had interrupted his studies at Oxford to volunteer in 1914. After completing his degree he became a barrister, then went into Parliament as a Liberal. In 1931 he joined the National Government set up by Ramsay MacDonald, and continued as a 'National Liberal'.

In May 1940 Hore-Belisha was proved absolutely right about the weaknesses of the British Expeditionary Force in France. The German army swept them back to the coast, and to the beaches of Dunkirk, in less than six weeks. Now Churchill was Prime Minister it would have been natural for Hore-Belisha to be reinstated but Churchill nursed a grudge against him. In 1939 Churchill's son-in-law Duncan Sandys, who was both an MP and an army officer, revealed secrets about how badly Britain's anti-aircraft defences were organised. Hore-Belisha had him disciplined for this – and Churchill was furious.

Hore-Belisha was invited into Churchill's Government only in the Spring of 1945 when the Coalition had been dissolved. A few months later Labour won the General Election and he lost his seat to Michael Foot.

There are few traces of his stay in Ferring: a couple of entries in the Street Directory, a photograph of him riding on Ferring Beach (in the background, the tamarisks of what is now Patterson's Walk) and a 1936 newspaper story that his house was being offered for sale to the exiled Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia. Hore-Belisha died in 1957.

BRITISH FAIRGROUND TRADITIONS

Christmas came a little late for the Group last year: its December Social had to be postponed to January because of the snow. Everyone enjoyed the buffet, the raffle, the crackers – and the presentation by Ted Burst, 'A short history of Fairgrounds'.

Ted began with the origins of fun fairs – at the trade fairs, hiring fairs and events like Findon Sheep Fair, where entertainers of various kinds would come along to earn some money from the crowds. Their equipment was very limited, and they slept in 'bender' tents, because they travelled on foot. It was only when the roads improved that they could bring large horse-drawn wagons, which doubled as sleeping accommodation and equipment carriers. The equipment was primitive – hand cranked rides, or swingboats that used the customers' own muscles.

By 1900, steam traction, for powering the rides and mechanical music, and helping with transport, had made a big difference to the range and scale of fairground entertainment. There had also been a great improvement, Ted said, in showmen's accommodation. Traditional wagon shapes, and 'mollycroft' roofs were retained but inside, the decoration and ornamentation became more and more elaborate. Cut glass, gold leaf, chandeliers and painted ceilings showed the status and wealth of this new kind of fairground entrepreneur: some even had servants' entrances.

Fairground attractions continued to develop, with travelling menageries, 'bioscopes' (early film shows) and dancing girls. Once generators could produce reliable electric power the rides became more elaborate still, and the lighting and musical effects bolder and bolder. Only the war dimmed the lights: fairs were encouraged, as providing 'holidays at home', but sometimes had to operate under canvas to conform with the black out.

Ted Burst illustrated his talk with a wealth of early photographs and some of the large models he has made of classic accommodation wagons. He emphasised that fairground operators were, and are, quite different in their origins and way of life from the Romany and 'travellers' – just ordinary people who travelled to earn their living.

FERRING'S PONDS

What are left of Ferring's ponds are rather hidden away – Little Paddocks pond is in a private estate, the Warren Pond is well off the beaten track in South Ferring and the pond in the Goring Gap, on the Parish border all but dried up – indeed, at the time of writing they all seem to very short of water. But many older ponds dried up, or were filled in many years ago. The 1911 and 1932 maps show ponds at what is now Elm Park; opposite the Barber's, just outside Symonds and Reading; just north of the children's playground; outside Home Farm Cottages; and in several locations either side of Sea Lane. Some of these would have been maintained for the cattle of Home Farm, East Ferring Farm and Manor Farm but were natural

enough on low-lying ground where the brick-earth was thick enough to prevent the rain water soaking away.

Our climate is getting drier but the development of Ferring, and the change from dairy to arable in what remained of the farmland must have been responsible for most of these ponds disappearing by the end of the 1930s, but the three that remain are interesting enough. The one in the Goring Gap, says one long-time resident, was called Palmers Pond before the war (Archibald Palmer being the tenant farmer) and its area was much reduced by dumping of rubbish during the war years. It must have been a very ancient pond, always marking the boundary between East Ferring manor and one of the Goring manors, and between the parishes of Ferring and Goring – as it still does.

The Little Paddocks Pond and the Warren Pond are probably those referred to in a 1330 survey of (West) Ferring manor as ‘the new pond’ and ‘the old pond’ but it is not easy to tell which was which. The surveyor gives the areas of ten large arable fields, averaging over 20 acres, a smaller area for folding the sheep: the names of the fields give a clue to where they were – on the slopes of Highdown, near the sea and so on. The largest (almost 50 acres) is ‘at the new pond’ and the pond is measured precisely at 2 acres 1 rood 13 and three-quarters poles. A smaller one (24 acres) is at ‘Theusput’ or ‘Thevsput’ and the ‘old pond’ included in it (with ‘one bagge’) is measured at half an acre.

No one knows what ‘Theusput’ refers to but the area of the ‘old pond’ is very close to that of Little Paddocks pond today, and the order in which the fields are listed places it in central South Ferring. The ‘new pond’ is over four times the size and is listed just after ‘Seforlang’ (the field by the sea) and the only candidate is Warren Pond. Both ponds are shown on the map of the 1625 survey of the manor and no others are shown. Warren Pond is shown as a rectangle, which means that it could have been accurately measured. It might well have been dug to drain a marshy area.

Warren Pond is very much smaller now but still retains the rectangular shape. We know it has been reduced in size since the 1920s – first in the landscaping of the grounds of Milbury House, and again in living memory. The 1949 Ordnance Survey map shows a footbridge over the western end, on the line of the road, ‘The Warren’, built for the housing development to the south some 10 years later.

THE FLEET AIR ARM ON THE SOUTH COAST

Richard Searle gave a dazzling presentation to 76 members and visitors at our 4 February meeting, drawing on his own aircrew experience with the Fleet Air Arm, and years of research into its history, to give the story of naval aviation from earliest days to the present. He used photographs, film and his own graphics to illustrate the story of the development of the aircraft, the personalities involved, the history of the many RNAS and FAA bases along the south coast and some of the FAA’s role in World War II, including the Swordfish attacks on the Italian Fleet at Taranto in 1940 and the attempt to stop the German warships making their ‘Channel Dash’ in 1942.

The first south coast base was at Polegate, with balloons for spotting submarines, but soon the RNAS was deploying aircraft against the German Navy's Zeppelins and its warships and naval bases. Gosport, Portland, Lee-on-Solent and Ford all played a part in these campaigns, Richard Searle said. Aircraft taking off and landing on ships was still a very difficult business.

Between the wars there was much technical development with aircraft and ships to carry them but defence spending was cut back and the Navy had to fight for its own aviation branch (RNAS having been absorbed in the new RAF in 1918). The FAA was established in 1937, and it was not long before it became a large and powerful force again (340 aircraft in 1939 and 1300 in 1945). Ford (HMS Peregrine) and some other stations which had been decommissioned in the inter-war period were now re-commissioned and FAA units shared other airfields with the RAF. Carrier-borne aircraft contributed to many operations, from Taranto to the sinking of the *Bismarck*, but it was FAA aircraft from Manston (Kent) that attacked the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* in the Dover Strait in 1942. Some of these bases also played an important part in the development of the helicopter force in the early post-war years. Yeovilton continues to be the centre of the naval helicopter service, said Richard, as well as housing the FAA museum.

There were several FAA veterans in the audience, who revived a few memories of flying and servicing some of the aircraft under discussion, during the coffee break and in questions to Richard at the end of his talk.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOGNOR

by Joan Quarry

The Ferring History Group was well entertained at its May meeting by Sylvia Endacott, with her History of Bognor. One man, Sir Richard Hotham, began the transformation of Bognor from a minor fishing village to the well-known seaside resort it is today.

Sir Richard, having made a great deal of money in London and elsewhere during the 18th century, decided to create an estate somewhere along the south coast for his retirement. He gave his first attention to Brighton, but finding nothing suitable there he travelled westwards until he found in Bognor what he was looking for. He purchased enough land on which to build a handsome house for himself and his second wife. Sadly he had no children. His aim was to create a second Brighton and to encourage royalty to follow him there. Hence he built the Dome House in anticipation. Apparently royalty weren't that interested and it wasn't until 1929 that the monarchy graciously turned Bognor into Bognor Regis. The Dome House is now home to part of Chichester University while the rest has been turned into flats. Richard Hotham enjoyed only eleven years in his new domain, and died, in debt, in the early part of the 19th century.

By then Bognor was becoming a town of note. In 1820 the Royal Norfolk hotel was built, followed by several crescents and in 1870 the magnificent Mansions appeared. Photographs abound of ladies resplendent in their crinolines, taking the air beside the sea. By 1910 the population had reached 3000.

With the creation of the railways the line between Brighton and Chichester was in full swing, but it was several years later before Bognor was provided with a branch line. Wooden station buildings were subject to fire, and it wasn't until 1902 that a purpose built brick station was erected - which still survives.

Several excellent photographs were produced. One showed Mr Field with his wife and daughter and their fine array of charabancs lined up ready for excursions into the countryside,

and another one depicts Mary Wheatland, in charge of the bathing machines. In 1864 the pier was constructed, in 1909 a model railway was in operation and the cinema opened in 1919. Finally, Billy Butlin rounded it all off!

In February 1929 Bognor received its sovereign, George Vth, who came to convalesce at Craigweil House. He stayed for three months and during that time his three-year old granddaughter Elizabeth arrived on a visit. When The king was ill again, and dying, in 1936, it was suggested that he might like to return to Bognor. To this day his reply remains open to question!

FERRING'S PROBATE INVENTORIES

West Sussex Record Office holds many fascinating documents from Ferring's history and none more interesting than the 60 records of probate inventories, taken between 1587 and 1759. We do not know why these particular records have survived – many more must have been made because between 1529 and 1782 every executor was required to produce an inventory before probate was granted, and the Record Office has 127 Ferring wills from this period. Some of these tie up with the inventories but obviously many wills and many inventories have been lost.

We have printed extracts from one or two inventories in previous issues and commented on the insight they give us into the lives of Ferring's gentry, farmers and tradesmen (the farm labourers rarely made a will and had very few possessions). Now all 60 have been transcribed, mainly by Richard Standing, as part of a Record Office project. They give us a much fuller picture than we had before of how people lived at that time – their houses, furniture, kitchen equipment, farming implements, livestock, and tradesmen's tools and materials.

The inventory-makers ('appraisers') worked to a pattern – starting with any money found in the house, then the deceased's clothes, and then went from room to room listing and valuing all the furniture, linen and other moveable items, before going outside to list any animals and crops, and then listing any money owing to the deceased. All this gives us information about the layout of the house, heating and cooking arrangements and much else in everyday life, apart from specialised information about farming practice and the paraphernalia of other trades.

The valuations are interesting too. Now we know the market value of a four-year old cow, a brass pot, a bedstead and a pewter plate over the course of 180 years. And the total valuation gives us more clues to the distribution of wealth in Ferring. A typical valuation in the C17th was £20 or £30 but some were five or ten times as much, usually because of large sums of money due to them from loans. The highest was that for Thomas Cooper, in 1759, at £1250. Cooper was the tenant of the old manorial estate and lived in the old manor house which was rebuilt some 100 years later as Ferring Grange. His inventory tells us a great deal about the size and layout of the old house, and about the farming practices of the day – because all but £100 resulted from the furniture, farming equipment, crops and livestock.

Most of the 60 deceased were farmers or smallholders, a few were 'Gentlemen' and six were designated as tradesmen (three wheelwrights, a weaver, a glover and a 'malster' (brewer));

another was evidently a blacksmith because the inventory included a stock of iron and coal. Two of the gentlemen had swords, the tradesmen had the tools of their trade and a certain amount of stock. Nearly all had fireside equipment (iron ‘dogs’ to hold the wood, tongs, pot hooks, spits and other arrangements to hold meat for roasting) and in the kitchen, not only pots and pans but utensils for preserving food, making cheese, and brewing beer.

Some of the items listed in the inventories remain a mystery. Even allowing for eccentric spelling – the word ‘pewter’ sometimes appears as ‘putta’ – and clumsy handwriting, we have no idea what is meant by a ‘hehell’, ‘broogken’ and ‘cuier’ for example.

Drawing up these inventories must have been very time consuming and one can see the ‘appraisers’ sometimes rounding off the list with ‘other lumberment’, ‘trumpery’ and ‘things unseen or forgotten’ but they certainly provide a great deal of information and entertainment for the local historian.

THE HORSHAM WALK

by Ed Miller

Our September visit was to Horsham, the old market town 15 miles north of Worthing, and our guide was member Tricia Hall who lived and worked in the town for many years. We met at the Town Hall in Market Place, rebuilt in 1812 and serving as a courthouse well into the C20th, and walked down ‘Causeway’ to the Norman church and returned by a slightly different route to an old-fashioned tea shop just behind the Town Hall.

There was a great deal to see: many half-timbered houses from the C17th and earlier, all very well preserved and each with its own story, and a fine church with a mediaeval effigy of one of the de Braose family (who had come over with William I in 1066). St Mary’s was heavily restored in the C19th but the tower and an old doorway are definitely Norman.

Everywhere there is ‘Horsham stone’ – inch thick slabs used for roofing, flagstones in courtyards and gravestones in the churchyard. This locally quarried sandstone was much valued because of the way it could be split like slate – a few old cottages in Ferring are still roofed with it. Another link with Ferring, of course, was that our C18th murderer Richard Grazemark was tried at the courthouse and hanged at Horsham Heath, afterwards dissected and pieces of his skin sold off as souvenirs.

This was a splendid walk: you can either do it on foot, as we did, or as an ‘Armchair Walk’ in the booklet Tricia Hall published in 2009 – a good text and charming illustrations by the author

THE 18TH CENTURY IN WEST SUSSEX

Alan Readman gave a masterly presentation to our 5 November meeting: a packed hall heard an expert account of life in the county 200 to 300 years ago, as revealed by the archives in West Sussex Record Office. Maps, estate accounts, deeds of land transfers, farm records and the Poor Law records all told the story - of a county completely dependent on agriculture.

He said that in the early 1700s that agriculture was still largely the old strip farming, in common fields, with crops mainly for local consumption: poor roads made it difficult to get produce to London and other big towns. By the early 1800s both arable and livestock farming

had become much better organised – in large single fields, with scientific management, and with turnpike roads and canals giving much better access to London markets.

Much of this reorganisation and development was driven by the large landowners – such as the Dukes of Richmond and Norfolk, and the Earl of Egremont. They lived lives of great luxury, with innumerable servants, in their large country houses set in grounds landscaped and painted by the leading figures of the age. But they were often interested in the science and engineering that could increase the productivity of their estates.

Much was also due to the farmers who leased their land from the aristocratic owners. They began to run their farms like businesses, as can be seen from the detailed records of farm management that they left behind. They too studied the application of science: soil improvement, rotation of crops and selective breeding; and from 1750 to 1815, at least, made a great deal of money.

The farmworkers were less fortunate. They were usually hired by the year and if not re-hired could find themselves on ‘parish relief’ – often a demeaning regime of mindless work on parish roads, or later, in the workhouse, for bare subsistence. Labourers who had moved their home to find work would be deported to their parish of origin if they lost their job. Crime, political agitation, even rioting, followed on from this – culminating in the Swing Riots of the 1830s.

One enlightened approach to a solution was emigration, especially to North America. This was sponsored by some of the great landowners like Egremont, by parishes, and by private associations. Another approach was widespread toleration of smuggling – the black economy of its day.

Alan Readman warmly invited members to come and see the records at Chichester, where he is a senior archivist. The County Record Office was open six days a week and all visitors were made very welcome, whether for local history or family history research.

THE HENTY FAMILY IN FERRING AND WORTHING

The Group joined forces with the Worthing History Forum on 27 April for a presentation by Ed Miller and Tony Brook on the family at the heart of the C19th history of our area. The family came from Littlehampton in the C17th and settled in Ferring and Tarring at the end of the C18th, although the Tarring branch soon emigrated to Australia. George Henty was the key figure, building up not only the estate in Ferring but also starting the bank, based in Worthing, and buying the brewery in Chichester which bore the Henty name.

Ed Miller traced the family history through to the C20th, and Tony Brook concentrated on the Hentys’ business interests in Worthing. As partners in the bank, Edwin Henty senior and his brother George were very much involved in the development of the town, including the coming of the railway in the 1840s, and in many social and civic activities. Edwin was a magistrate and eventually Chairman of the Bench, and financial adviser to a dozen or so philanthropic and other voluntary associations, and George was a Town Commissioner (comparable to a Councillor before Worthing Council was established). Edwin’s sons, Edwin

junior and Arthur sold the bank soon after their father died but continued as Directors of the successor bank for many years. All this time their father's brother George and his family developed the brewery in Chichester, and pubs all over Sussex.

Ed said that the name 'Henty' lives on in Australia, and of course in the pub in Ferring, which took that name in 1927 – partly in memory of Edwin junior but also because the Henty & Constable Brewery continued to own it.

THE NEW YEAR WALK

by Keith Richards

On the 8th Jan we held the usual New Year walk which this year was from the village centre across the fields to East Preston and back along the sea front. The walk was very well attended, we counted 33 people in all. The weather was once again very kind to us; although it had been very wet resulting in muddy conditions (Keith and at least one other person managed to slip over), the day stayed fine. The walk took the anticipated two hours, with additional time for a refreshment break as usual but at the Bluebird not as planned due to numbers of people walking. A successful morning and due to the pleasing numbers who attended, 2012 New Year walk will probably take place on about the same date again rather than the earlier Bank Holiday.

CARRYING COALS TO CHICHESTER

One of our walks this year was along the Chichester Canal, part of the 'navigation' which once connected Portsmouth to the Thames. Twelve of us under the expert guidance of Adge Roberts walked the tow path from the sea lock at Chichester Yacht Basin to the Canal Wharf near the city centre. The weather looked very threatening but turned out, as it often does this side of the Downs, fine and sunny – a 'golden October' day.

Adge gave us an excellent commentary at each bridge site and other points of interest on the history, engineering and management of the canal. The name of the principal backer, Lord Egremont of Petworth House, is commemorated in one of the bridges (of which only a section remains). He lost most of his money because the canal was rather late in the field (it opened only in 1823) and was soon eclipsed by the railways.

At Hunston, the main canal carried on westwards towards Barnham, Yapton and Ford (where it joined the Arun) but that section ceased to be navigable in 1847, is now filled in, and in some places built over. We took the Chichester branch, which continued to be used (though to no great extent) until 1906. Now this is used by pleasure craft operated by the Canal Trust, and fishermen, and the towpath makes an excellent footpath and cycle path.

The bridges were all swing bridges, so as to allow sea-going, masted, vessels to pass through easily (apart from the one for Selsey Tramway, a lifting bridge) but those over roads were replaced with arch bridges once the canal fell into disuse. Only the last bridge before the city wharf remains, reconstructed from original materials as a swing bridge. This is 'Poyntz' Bridge, named after another major backer. Adge had worked on the restoration of many of the bridge sites but this was his pride and joy, and the one for which he continues to act as 'steward'.

There are frequent events along the canal, including the 'dry' stretches and Adge keeps us up to date with them. If you would like to know more e mail him on adgeroberts@yahoo.co.uk

YOUR HISTORY GROUP

Membership: Over 100 members had paid their subscriptions by October. Only another 50 to go.

The Committee: Chairman – Tim Baldwin, Secretary – Ed Miller, Treasurer – Peter Bentley: other members – Adge Roberts, Hugh and Janet Faithfull, David Garnett, Eileen Godfrey

Meetings

4 November 2011: Tony Brook on **Dr Dixon, Worthing's health pioneer**

9 December: **Christmas Social** with **Ron Kerridge** (co-author of *Ferring Past*)

3 February 2012: **Sussex on Film 1900-1950** with Cliff Mewett

4 May 2012: Ed Miller on **Ferring Manor House and Grange**

3 August 2012: Chris Lewis on **House Names and History on the Sussex Coast**

2 November 2012: **Sussex Bonfire Societies** with Keith Leech

7 December 2012: Christmas Social (with special guest presenter)

A full programme of meetings will be arranged for 2013.

Walks and visits: are arranged 'off-programme', to be notified at meetings, by e mail and by poster. Please give us your e mail address if you have not had any e mails from us, and we will let you know..

Research: There is still a great deal to do to build up our knowledge of Ferring's past – from ancient times to recent decades. If you would like to get involved, or if you would like some help in researching the history of your house, please contact the Secretary on 01903 502267.