

# Times Past

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STORRINGTON & DISTRICT MUSEUM  
Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

## Flower Power 150 years of the Storrington Flower Show

Museum Steward Judith Dredge at the Exhibition



The summer exhibition from 14 June to 21 September is celebrating an established, nearly ancient, Storrington organisation that gave birth to the Annual Flower Show. This is the Storrington Horticultural Society, which grew out of the Storrington and Parham Cottage Gardening Society. This society was functioning in 1864 when notice was given of its first Annual Show, to include flowers, plants, fruit and vegetables, and to be held in the Market Room - Storrington. Since the village hall did not exist at this time the Market Room was over the cellar of the White Horse Hotel. The price of admission was 6d for Ladies & Gentlemen (1s.0d if paying at the door!) and 1d for labour-

ers and their relatives. The show was a great success and reported in considerable detail by the *West Sussex Gazette*.

The Flower Show grew in popularity for a few years but lapsed in 1875, and it was not until 1905 that it was revived, with the organisation presided over by Lord Zouche of Parham. 1000 visitors attended this 'first' show, held in the large field opposite the Abbey, with certain classes, like the allotment classes, extended, but others, like the 'cleanest cottage' class, discontinued.

In 1907 there were 660 entries: Lord Zouche's gardener gained 19

prizes and the Banksian Medal. Again the Show lapsed, after 1908, and the next *W.S. Gazette* report was not until the Show of 1928 under the auspices of the newly named Storrington & District Horticultural Society.

A full description of the history of the Flower Show and the associated controlling societies may be found in Joan Ham's reference file entitled 'The story of The Storrington & District Horticultural & Handicraft Society' which is held in the Museum.

The present Exhibition shows artefacts from the early days of the Flower Show through the decades to this year's activities, including 'Storrington in Bloom'.



## A Summer Evening Scrap in Wartime Storrington

### John Crowhurst looks back to his childhood



In summer we used the excuse of the choir practice to stay out as late as possible, instead of hurrying home as we had done in the dark of winter. I recall one evening becoming involved in a scrap with my pal Basil, as I had done many times before, probably because one of us had bragged about something which was only partially true, while the other one knew that he couldn't compete even with the true part. It might have been something like:

*I'm going to have a new bike with a 3-speed and a saddle bag for my birthday next week.*

This actually meant that his mother had probably said that he could ride her old cycle when he was tall enough to manage it.

*You're lying!  
No, I'm not. 'strue!  
Wham!*

Our fights always had unwritten laws about them. We only punched, never kicked, and the

part of our body to aim at was below the neck and above the waist. I don't know who made up these rules but they had great sense to them, at least by comparison with current practice, and it still gave enough scope to settle all the arguments we had. On this occasion it took rather longer than usual to achieve a result.

Down the street from the Church we fought, past the offices of the Chanctonbury Rural District Council, past the vet's (Charlie Mant, who also doubled as the leader of the local station of the Auxiliary Fire Service), past Stone's the hairdresser (he took bets on the horses and sold new bikes as sidelines), past Gaydon's the genuine cycle shop (was he in league with Charlie Stone or was he too busy to worry about the competition because by day he was recharging accumulators and by night he was an ARP Warden, as well as church organist in a neighbouring village?).

Outside the Forge Tea Rooms we

stopped our ring craft and slick footwork and just slugged it out, then on again to Seldon the Butcher and Greenfield's haberdashery department. It must have been a draw at that point because we set off again up the other side of the street, passing Parsons (the chemist), Gingell our butcher (we were very loyal, but you had to be when you owed the tradesmen money most of the time), Tanner's (tobacconist and confectioner, who managed to tempt us away from Gowing's very occasionally), Weir's shoe shop, the Manor House Hotel, and so back to the Church.

When we had battled up and down Church Street three or four times (it seems now), one of the local adults took a hand, but instead of telling us to grow up and clear off home, he went to my mother with the story that Basil and I were fighting to the death and one of us would shortly land the fatal blow. Within seconds Mother appeared in Church Street, finished the bout, and sent me scurrying home with the threat of an even greater (verbal) lashing to come from Father, who always doubled as the ultimate deterrent.

As later events showed, I never was able to get out of a fight with any dignity.

*(John Crowhurst has sent the Museum a long and detailed memoir of his wartime childhood in Storrington with many interesting episodes.)*



## Missed Opportunities Episode Two, described by Ian Ferguson



The recent exhibition, 'Transport – a Moving Story' highlighted two of Storrington's greatest missed opportunities: In 1863 we saw the Railway-that-never-was (see *Times Past* No. 45), and a century later we have the By-Pass-that-never-was.

An ambitious West Sussex County Council commissioned the 'Storrington Plan No. 1' in 1953 and adopted its report in 1956. This was an incredibly thorough examination of every possible aspect of village life. The passage that interests us, in the Transport and Communications Section, is delightfully simple:

*At present all traffic is forced to pass through the village shopping centre....A By-Pass is proposed in the County Development Plan and is programmed for completion after 20 years.*

Hooray! Good, clear, analytical thinking. Obvious solution.

WSCC gave this long and mature consideration—a good 12 years—and issued the 'Storrington and District Plan—First Review' in 1965 and adopted it in 1968. As a result of the mature thought:

*At present all traffic is forced to pass through the village shopping centre....A By-Pass is proposed to the south.*

Maybe not a lot of difference but the report goes on to add some details of the proposal and, more importantly, supports it with a detailed line for the road in accompanying maps.

So where will this By-Pass go? Unhindered by notions of Country Parks, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty, Sites of Scientific Interest, Green Belt, etc., the line takes advantage of the open country to the south of the village. Starting at a new roundabout at the Washington crossroad area, an improved line past Clayton Farm and Hampers Lane would lead to the first new junction around the Barns Farm Lane area. The By-Pass would swing off south, leaving the A283 to continue its old line to and through the village. Successively crossing Sullington Lane, Chantry Lane, Greyfriars Lane, and the Amberley Road, the new road would rejoin the A283 near the Parham House entrance.

No details are given but there is no indication of anything too ambitious—no dual-carriageway, simple junctions where lanes are crossed—but hopefully a free-flowing relief road for the village.

Sadly the story ends there. Another half-century later any analysis would yield the same conclusions, the same plan, the same line to the south, the same desperate need...and the same result!

## Mary Wilson takes another Heath Common Walk with Jean MacWhirter

We decided to walk down Hampers Lane from the north and pool our memories of it—Jean's from her childhood and mine from 1960 onwards. Of course we did not keep to our plan but diverted immediately, walking instead to Chancton Copse to see if we could find any remnants of Sandpit Cottage, where Hugh de Selincourt of *The Cricket Match* fame lived. He died in 1951, and soon afterwards the land was developed. Instead of one cottage there are now at least four large houses. Having more or less established where the cottage had been we returned to Hampers Lane, walking past Agg's sandpit on the left, now providing a very necessary and convenient passing place for traffic to and from Rock Road.

On the right we passed Hazelwood Copse—Takatori, now Enigma, on the corner was a Japanese-style house and garden. Jean's mother-in-law, Dr E. A. MacWhirter, a Storrington G.P., recalled visiting a patient there and having to kneel down on the floor beside a futon to make an examination.

We turned from our path again and went up the track to Rose Bay, remembered as a small red brick house where Jean went to play in the 1930s. Especially remembered was an old lorry chassis with a metal driver's seat, and lo and behold it might be the very one supporting a garden shed! The house itself was unrecognisable.

Returning to Hampers Lane we went past Eastwolds, unknown territory to both of us. Eastwolds and Rose Bay sit on Longbury Hill, a piece of land running behind Vera's Walk from Hampers Lane to George's Lane, and where Vera

Pragnell's crucifix once stood. It gives a name to several dwellings in the area: Longbury Hill House, Longbury Covert, Longbury End, Longbury Cottage and Longbury Chine, all in a semicircle round the hill.

Opposite Eastwolds, set well back, was a wooden dwelling named Wayside where Albert Saunders and his wife Daisy lived. He was an authority on vegetables. My friend Fred had a running battle with him at local flower shows over potatoes which were Mr Saunder's speciality. Acres of potatoes were dug up to find six exactly matching specimens without mark or blemish!

Next on the left we passed Capel. Jean visited Ernest Cooper and his wife Sadie when they lived there. He was a very generous very unpredictable man. The family I lived with stayed at his London home in Wimpole Street. My friend Mary worked during summer holidays in the early fifties at his health food shop, also in Wimpole Street, mixing carrot juice drinks and beetroot salads. He was the artist William Roberts' main patron and we both recall visiting other houses Ernest lived in, full of Roberts' paintings, and seeing one at the Tate, 'Trooping of the Colour'. To me he was someone different, not like anyone in my more conventional family. I remember him once sitting in the kitchen dressed entirely in white *à la Ghandi*, having just returned from a trip to India. Exotic! Capel has always seemed like a fairy tale to me, being half hidden in trees and made of wood like a Swiss chalet.

Walking on we passed Tranquil and came to the triangular copse at the junction with Bracken Lane, which

seems to belong to no-one.

On the north side of the twitten leading to Vera's Walk is Heath Barn, where Jean remembers attending concert parties given by a renowned concert pianist, Iso Elinson. He and his wife Hedwig came to West Chilton from Germany as refugees in 1930. Jean went to school with their daughters, Anna and Marga.

To the south of the junction on the right there was once a large plot on which stood Sandycot, owned by Miss Russell. This house was set back on high ground, probably where Wildcroft now stands. This plot was divided into three, and one of the houses bears her name. More recently there was an audacious burglary at this property—the thieves said they were roofers and took what they wanted through a skylight.

Opposite Wildcroft is Trevarth, where an Irish lady lived. She had a daughter to whom I was grateful, for she and a friend made a seat at the bus stop on the main road.

From here down to Sandy Lane is the Sanctuary area, bought by Vera Pragnell in the 1920s and given away in roughly third of an acre parcels, so the houses on the left are all more or less as they always were. On the right, however, much has changed. This land was sold off from the Sandgate Estate soon after the First World War in larger parcels and so has developed differently.

Walking down the hill I remember that there was a dinky little 'railway' to carry goods—coal, wood—up the steep rise to Casita. Opposite this used to be Hambro,





*Sandycot, c.1927*

now Willow Cottage. Several people commuted daily to London from Pulborough Station. I wonder if Hambro's owner was a banker?

At Moorlands on the left lived an old gentleman called Bob who made beautiful house name signs and collected Staffordshire pottery. To the right the big plot on which Point Nine and Keepers Mount stood has been subdivided and now there are four houses here.

We walked up Blueberry Hill (in the fifty years I've lived here I have only been up there twice). We wanted to see if we could find any sign of Keepers where Sandgate Park's gamekeeper lived, but of course we couldn't. Keepers was a country club when I first came here. The noise from their generators and the music was overwhelming, but the club did not last long.

The house has been demolished and three bungalows stand in its place.

And so we reached the junction with Sanctuary Lane, If only Pixies Corner Shop were still here. It made a hub for the area and gave it cohesion. Now I know hardly anyone apart from my immediate neighbours.

I talked about the changes from Sanctuary Lane to Sandy Lane in an earlier walk. Further down all of Badgers Holt is new, carved out from Barton Spinney and other adjacent properties.

Little Barton, the home of the late Dr Gusterson, was probably built alongside three others by Reginald Wells before he bought land at Roundabouts and further developed his very personal style of

housing. Dr Gusterson is not forgotten, for he was Consultant Anaesthetist at Worthing Hospital and founded St Barnabas Hospice. He opened his garden every year for the National Garden Scheme. Later owners of these properties are now building elegant houses which would have been like palaces to the first owners of Vera's land.

Jean and I walked on past the pit where seventy-eight new houses are being built. We went into two houses, one of five and one of four bedrooms. When Vera came here there was no running water, no sewage system, no electric light. These new homes have two or three bathrooms, and the rooms are large and airy, with every modern convenience. How times change!

## The Merclesdens of Merclesden

*Inspired by John Wharmby's article about his family tree, William Marsden has sent the Museum an article about his own roots, which is summarised here.*

The Marsdens of Chelmorton took the name of a Derbyshire village in which some of them lived in the 18th century, but their origins, as so far traced, were in the north-east corner of Lancashire, near Burnley, in the 12th century. This was the century following the Norman Conquest which took over from Anglo-Saxon England. The first name on the family line that has been relatively recently traced is Peter de Merclesden. He appears as 'Pietro' de Merclesden in the Pipe Rolls of Clitheroe Castle and the Pontefract charters. As for the family surname, this was 'Merclesden', the name of two villages in the area where the families lived. The name was spelled in a variety of ways, and some two centuries later it morphed into 'Marsden'.

### *Pietro de Merclesden*

Pietro's year of birth is recorded as 1154, the same year that King Henry II (who shortly before had married Eleanor of Aquitaine) came to the throne on the death of Stephen, whose reign had been weak and anarchic. King Henry got a grip. This first record of the Marsden ancestor coincides with the starting decades of the Pipe Roll record system created under the new King. These annual returns to the Royal Exchequer were introduced in 1155 and continued until 1835. We learn that Pietro de Merclesden's wife was Hellena and that they had four sons: Hugh, Peter, Osbert and Richard. Pietro's year of death is uncertain but was probably about 1220, some five years after King John signed the Magna Carta.

It is difficult to gain a picture of the lives of these very distant ancestors and their families. However, on the basis of one or two records, an impression emerges of the functions and status of a person and perhaps even a hint of their character. Such is the case for Pietro de Merclesden. He is called in one Manor document 'Pietro the Chaplain' and in another 'Chaplain to Roger de Lacy'. That implies education and quite a close relationship with the Lords of the Manor, the de Lacys, who were a powerful Anglo-French (or Anglo-Norman) family with a fearsome record.

A more recent discovery, exciting for a researcher, is



*The Keep of Clitheroe Castle*

that Pietro was actually married to a member of the de Lacy family, namely Hellena de Lacy. That clearly helps to explain how these Marsden ancestors managed to enjoy the favour of these conquerors and local rulers.

The de Lacys had come from Normandy with, or just after, William the Conqueror in 1066 and were given extensive lands by the conquering King. They built the castles of Clitheroe (near to Merclesden) and later Pontefract in Lancashire. Clitheroe castle was given its royal charter at much the same time as Pietro de Merclesden was living in Merclesden. The remains of the castle rest to this day on a limestone cliff above the town. Pietro de Merclesden's eldest son Hugh, like his father, had a close relationship with the de Lacys, and in the next generation, according to the Pipe Roll of 1245-6, Adam de Merclesden, a grandson of Pietro, came to hold the Manor of Swynden in Great Merclesden under the lordship of John de Lacy. That Manor became something of a seat for the Merclesden/Marsden generations that followed. Pietro's son Peter (second on the family line) retained his father's title as 'Chaplain' to the de Lacy's.



## Dress Show and Afternoon Tea

### John Wharmby reports



On Wednesday 28 May I went along to the Museum to do my Stewardship stint and then for the next few hours I didn't know what hit me. I had 'chosen' the same time as the Dress Show and Afternoon Tea arranged by the

Museum, in conjunction with Louisa Austin dress shop in Church Street, which has existed there since 1975.

Patricia and Cindy spent the early hours preparing the room and food for the tea, and what a tea it was! Cheese scones, various savoury tartlets, and many types of sandwiches formed the first course. Then came various delicious fruit pavlovas, ginger-breads, chocolate butterfly cakes, drizzle cakes, coffee cakes, and, of course, drinks of tea, all elegantly served.

Sue, who has owned Louisa Austin for the last ten years, came, with the models, Mags, Pam, Linda and Margaret, to lay out the dresses, tops, skirts, trousers, jeans, jackets, and hats of all types, together with costume jewellery, in the changing room. There were about twenty different brands of clothing, giving a tremendous range of items.



agreed that Patricia had organised a very successful function, which raised more than £300.



The afternoon began with tea for the forty-odd visitors, and then the show began. Two of the models came into the main hall dressed as described in the Programme. They promenaded through the tables and went around the room answering visitors' queries and letting them have a closer examination. As they left the room the next pair of models entered in the next selection of outfits. This process continued for 48 outfits!

The afternoon ended with the ubiquitous raffle, and everyone



## Museum News in Brief

### **Stewards' Annual Lunch Party**

A warm sunny July afternoon, a lovely garden, a sizzling barbecue, and a delicious buffet lunch. What more could we ask?

**The sole purpose of the annual Stewards' Lunch is to say thank you to those volunteers who give their time every month to keep the Museum open to the public. Without their input the Museum would not survive as it is, and we are most grateful to them all for giving up their time so regularly.**

It is always a happy occasion but being able to hold it in Pauline Archibald's lovely house and garden makes it a very special event. We presented Pauline with a basket of plants as a small thank you, even though it was a case of 'coals to Newcastle'. But we are truly grateful to her and can't think of anyone else who would be so serene in the face of the 'crew' who move in with mountains of food and drink and equipment and turn her house upside down. And she produced the most beautiful dishes of poached salmon.

Roger Colebrook cooked dozens of sausages to sizzling perfection on the barbecue—he really has this down to a fine art.

A lot of hard work behind the scenes, but if the Stewards enjoyed the occasion then it was more than worthwhile.

### **Village Shows**

Village Day in May was, as it often is, cool and very windy. Our small gazebo would have blown away if Paul and Sue Setford hadn't brought a wheelbarrow load of housebricks to help anchor it down! The old photographs of Storrington were a great attraction, as were displays of the Old School project and Roll of Honour research. We had over 80 visitors to the stand.

We had even more success at the Duck Race Day on 21 June when we had the advantage of sunshine and a bigger gazebo with a smart new display stand. We attracted more than 250 visitors to look at our displays and talk to volunteers about our latest projects.



### **Stuart Duncan's Sponsored Walk**

On Saturday 2 August Stuart and his brother-in-law John walked 23 miles around the Storrington Museum area boundary. They started at the crack of dawn and arrived back at around 3.30 p.m. to be welcomed by supporters, some of whom had taken a more modest heritage walk around the village. Tea and cakes were welcomed by everyone who had taken part.

We expect the day will have raised around £650 for Museum funds—a record amount for us. We do thank all our supporters who sponsored the walk—we are more than grateful for such a generous response. It was a tremendous effort on Stuart's part and to raise such a sum was a wonderful result.

### **News Flash**

On Tuesday 11 November 2014, the World War One Storrington Roll of Honour triptych will be unveiled on the wall of what was the Market Room, adjoining the White Horse Hotel, where it first hung nearly one hundred years ago. Details of the ceremony will be advertised nearer the time.

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