

Times Past

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STORRINGTON & DISTRICT MUSEUM
Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

Quirky Collections

When we appealed for anyone with a Quirky Collection of any description to let us borrow it for the Museum exhibition, we had no idea what to expect.

Then some months ago we were given a big basket of items which had belonged to an elderly lady—dozens of handbells, honeypots, tiny china animals and teddy bears—and we were off!

Gradually other items started to arrive: here are seateurs, and coathangers—quirky enough certainly—thimbles and feeding cups, curious teapots and Coalport pastille burners, miniscule books, and buttons, and decorative little candles still unlit after fifty or sixty years. Some are impressive: the exquisite Nyon china, and the lovely display of silver button hooks and the antique tools for letter-writing, and for curling and drying hair. Some are astonishing, like the little engraved silver box holding beauty patches, and the long candle snuffer to blow out candles across a wide table, creating a powerful sense of a very different past; and some are redolent of a distant country: the model elephants, the beautiful seashells from the West Indies and the mid-nineteenth-century soapstone statuettes from Jaipur.

And some have still to be identified!

Sue Setford has created a display of articles ranging from 'that's really beautiful' to 'why on earth keep that!' But that's what makes it such a Quirky Collection, and we are grateful to the many people who have trusted us with their 'treasures'.

Do come and see this unusual exhibition, which continues until September.

Pictures courtesy West Sussex County Times

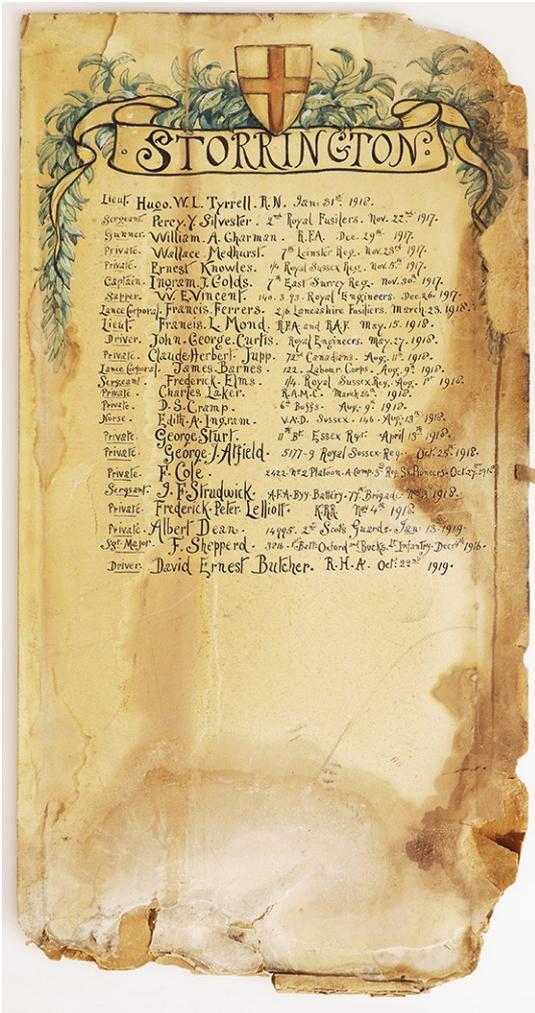


Storrington World War One Roll of Honour

After all the excitement earlier in the year of having the main panel restored/stabilised by Jessica Jacob—it now hangs in the Museum—we were delighted a few weeks ago when Horsham Museum unearthed one of the two side panels. As you can see from the photograph, this too is in a very fragile and damaged state. Jessica will have to work her magic on it before we can put it on display in the Museum. The second side panel has still to be found

What remains quite clear, despite the damage, is the list of names of those who gave their lives, many of whom were researched by the late David Coward for the RBL Book of Remembrance which is kept in St Mary's Church, Storrington. A great deal more research will be undertaken for the WW1 Centenary Exhibition in the Museum (and countrywide) in 2014.

Please come and see the panels and let us know if any of the names are known to you. Any information at all would be appreciated.



Obituary: Philip Beaumont



Philip Beaumont (left) with David Coward
Picture courtesy The News, Portsmouth

Philip Beaumont, who died in July, was a member of the founding group set up to establish a museum in The Old School as a millennium project. He and his wife had come to live in Storrington when he retired from the post of Head of History at Forest School in Horsham. Philip played a vital part in the first decade of the Museum. From the outset he was Chairman of the Friends Committee, which raised money and supported the Museum being created by Ron and Joan Ham. In its first year the Friends had 273 members, £3,000 of funds raised, stewards organised and *Times Past* launched, all achieved under Philip's guidance. When the Friends Committee merged with the Museum Committee in 2005, he became Vice-Chairman and subsequently Chairman of the new body, The Storrington and District Museum Society. Not least among his many management skills was a capacity for keeping discussion to the point and running meetings to time.

Philip was an editor of and frequent contributor to *Times Past*. His last article, 'The Weald, what happened to it and why?' was published in Summer, 2011, and followed an extraordinary range of pieces, including 'Burpham's failed highwayman', 'Elgar's wartime escape in West Sussex' and 'Dr Finley and the Crusader's Tomb'. He chaired talks and discussions at the Museum with courtesy and wit, and it was sad that ill health reduced his involvement from 2007.

Life at Storrington Museum: some notes from Mary Wilson

Looking at recent editions of Times Past, it occurs to me that we do not always keep our membership (whom we value highly) fully informed of our activities, so this article is mainly in the nature of a précis of our efforts over the last six months so that those not quite so involved know what the Museum they support is doing.

There have been three temporary exhibitions so far this year: 'Storrington Re-Viewed' presented photos from our archive set against ones taken from the same spot today. They made a fascinating interactive screen show and static exhibition. 'Flutter-bys and Fly-by-Nights' comprised wonderful photos of butterflies lent by the Butterfly Society, and cases of macro- and micro-lepidoptera collected over the years by Bob Palmer. As well as letting us feature his unique collection, we are so grateful to Bob for giving us his time on Open Days, showing some stunning slides, and sharing his immense knowledge.

'Quirky Collections' has just opened and is featured on the front page of this issue.

The final temporary exhibition this year will be 'It's a small world!', which will feature various small rooms and houses. This exhibition, starting in October, is in early stages of preparation and if any member has any item they think would be appropriate, then please do contact Sue Setford at the Museum.

These exhibitions take an enormous amount of time and effort to create (and dismantle), and we are lucky to have such a talented and dedicated curatorial team who do this over and over again throughout the year. You may not know that on the opening day of each exhibition, and on one or two other occasions during the year, we serve lovely home-made lunches and teas, and there is usually a good tombola or raffle which help defray our expenses—mainly the rent of course.

During the winter months, on a Monday evening once a month, the Museum Society welcomes speakers on varying subjects. So far this year we have had Ron Keridge with the history of the penny from Roman times; Dr Sally White's talk on the Patching Hoard of Roman gold and silver, and Tony and Lizzie Gilkes revealing 'A Policeman's Lot'.

In the summer we have walks or visits instead of talks,

and so far members have been around Bramber and visited the Coultershaw Beam Pump Museum near Petworth. Visits are planned to Amberley in August and a perambulation around Storrington in September.

On 22 August we have the Junior Archaeology Fun Day, which is very mucky fun for youngsters (and parents) making pots and mosaics and trying out mediaeval food.

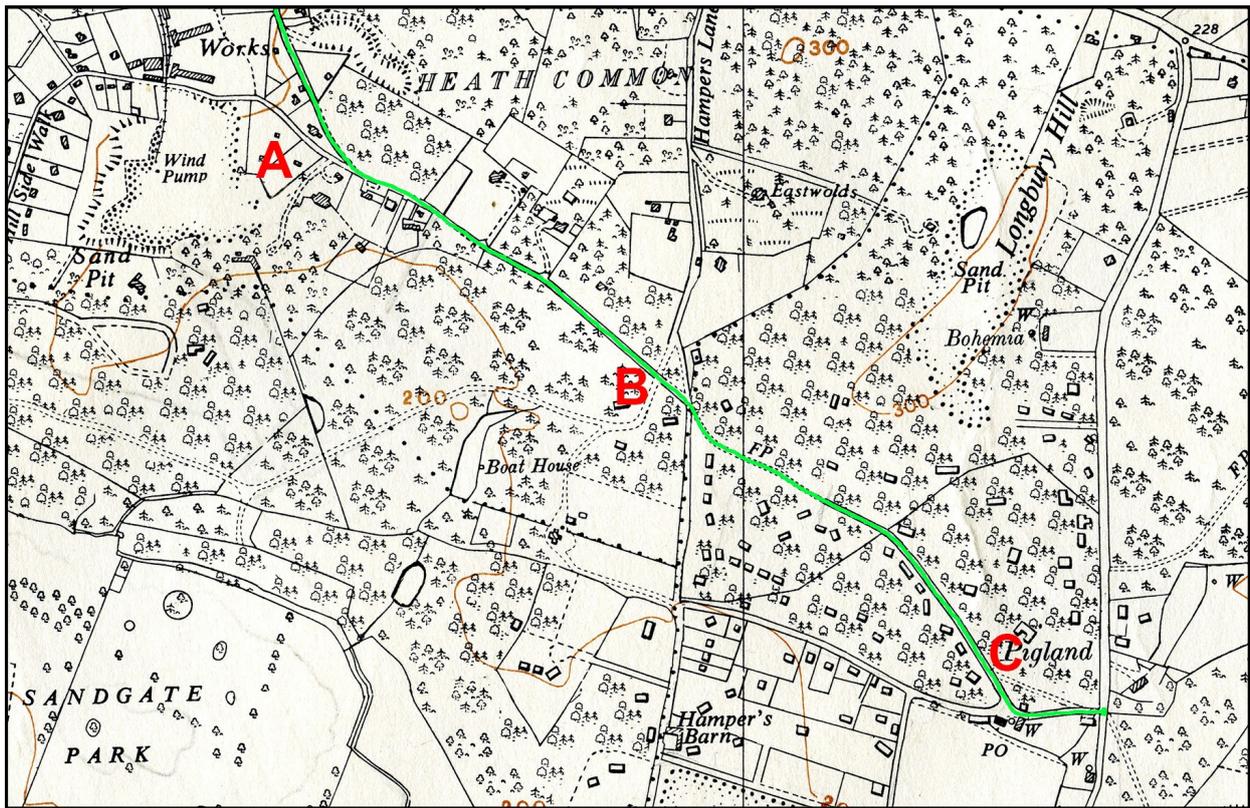
On 20 October Meg Everitt and Michael Leeming will once again be organising the Family History Day, which is aimed at helping anyone interested in researching their family background.

In between all these activities much patient work is done by the curatorial team, who are constantly sorting out all our artefacts as well as dealing with the day to day enquiries that come to the Museum via telephone, internet and visitors, about families, houses, smugglers, unusual items, and so on. And that's not all. Volunteers visit residential homes, schools, and any organisation which shows interest in our activities, to show artefacts and talk about the Museum.

Running the Museum and trying to make it interesting, as you can see, takes much time and thought from a core of dedicated volunteers, from the Committee members dealing with finances, social activities, publicity and education, through to the curatorial team and the Web Master who is responsible for our wonderful website, and not forgetting the putters-out of chair and washers-up after functions. Our perennial problem is the size of our premises and storage facilities. We visited Fishbourne Conservation Department and also a conservation session at Lewes Museum, picking up valuable tips from both. As a consequence an expert came from Fishbourne to assess some of our more fragile items, and really came to the same conclusion as us—we need more money to improve and safeguard our facilities and artefacts. We are working hard to try to find it!

Come and join us! Come to the Quiz Evening on 12 October with Stephen Turrell or visit the 4th Pro-Am Art Show and Sale on 16-17 November. Or just come and see us at the Museum and maybe get involved. You will be welcomed with open arms!

Rock Road to Paradise, Jean MacWhirter



This, the second of 'Mary's Walks', starts at the Rock Road end of Bracken Lane. As we slowly make our way we try to remember how it was, inspired by a photograph (opposite) taken by my father, Roy Armstrong, in August 1930, before his own house was built. The photo shows very few houses but on the O.S. map (above) dated 1961 most of the 20 properties along its length can be seen. Today there are 75!

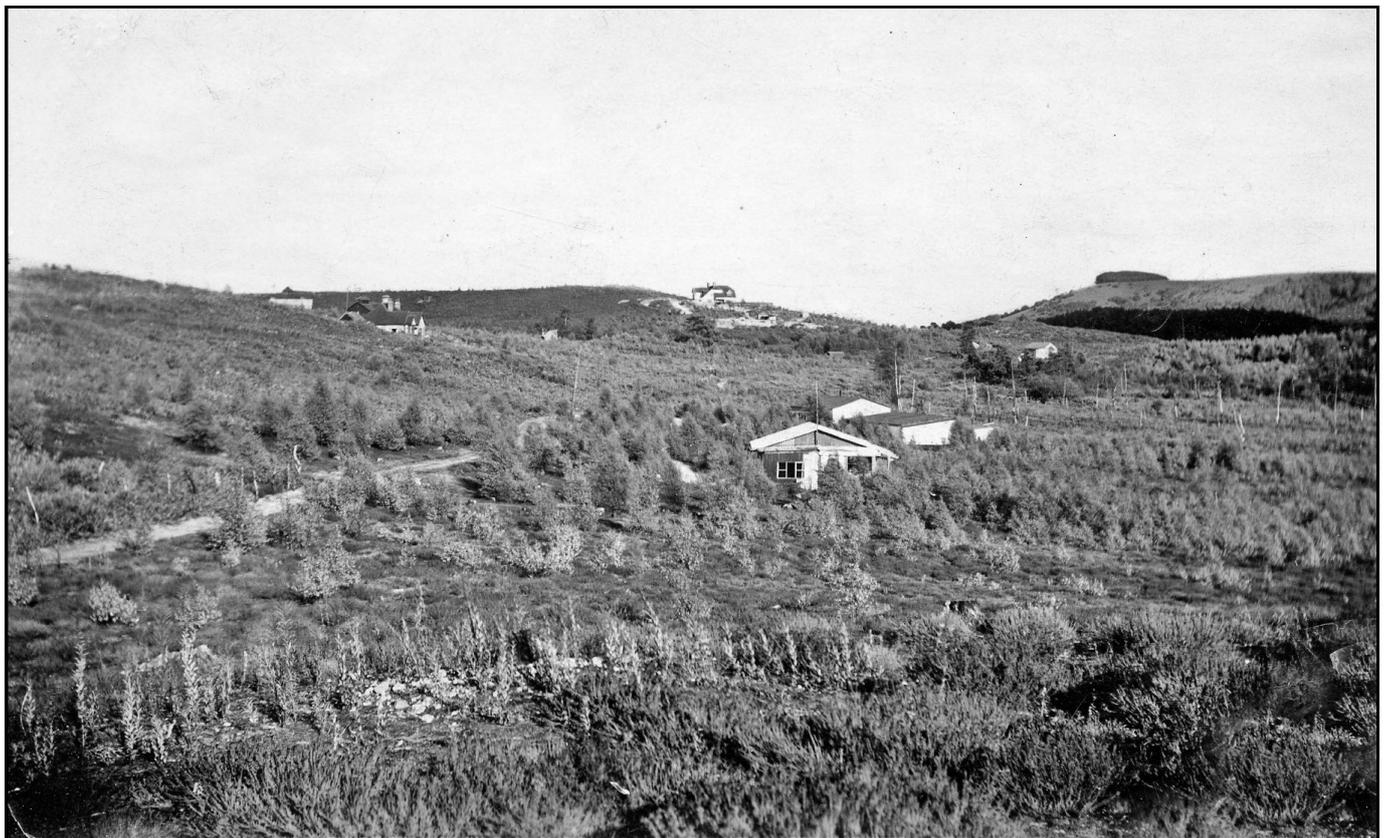
A Simple Life

From mid-1930 we had electricity, and a mains water supply had recently replaced the wells, one of which we will pass on our left (look to see how deep it is). Drainage was into individual septic tanks which were emptied periodically by the local council. In hot weather the smell could be very unpleasant. At this time very few families had a car or telephone but because of my father's occupation we were fortunate to have both. Some of the older houses were simple buildings constructed of wood or cheap bricks, many without a damp-proof course. These have all changed in some way, by adding extensions, second skin, or complete re-build. One recently re-built was Brakefern, one-time home to Miss Lena Dowman (her ration book is in the war cabinet at the Museum). The bungalow was very small—three rooms and an outside w.c. Providence Cottage, again a re-build, on the other side of the lane is remembered for having a box fixed on

the gate for the collection of silver paper. Children saved every scrap for the pleasure of posting it in the box. Delta at the junction with Hillside Walk (now a footpath but previously the main track before Bracken Lane was extended to Rock Road) was a timber bungalow built on stilts—not the present-day Colt house. Mrs Wright lived here. She was a much-loved local character: always wearing a sackcloth apron, she was what was described then as a charlady. A true Cockney, she hadn't lost her East London accent and called everybody 'duck'. Mrs Wright had a large collection of cats, hens and geese and probably ducks as well. The geese were a problem to the young girl on a bicycle who lived at a house nearby!

Glow-worms in July

To resume our walk: we are at point A on the map, above the lane where the photograph was taken, the track on the left being the start of Hillside Walk. Bracken Lane is obscured at this end. As you can see the sandy lane had banks of heather, and young birch saplings reach to the top of the hill. Nightingales and nightjars were commonly heard and glow-worms could be seen in July. The big house on the hill on the left is Casements, later called Scots Corner, with Uplands just beyond. The house dominating the skyline is Heath Barn on Longbury Hill. Chanctonbury Ring can also be seen.



A Turning Point

The late 50s/early 60s was a turning point in the area. Miss Bunbury of Uplands, a house we shall pass later on, died and left a legacy to her church of several acres of heathland. She had a keen interest in all aspects of wildlife and had hoped the land would be used as an area of peace and contemplation, with a shelter at the top of the hill with fantastic views towards the Downs. The Church Commissioners thought otherwise and sold the land for building. Bunbury Close, now seen on the left, presumably was named by the Parish Council, which was the final insult.

At about the same time, land to the south of the lane beyond Peace Cottage was being developed, including Bracken Close. These were generous plots, one-third to one acre in size. My father titled one of his slides, taken from the same point as the earlier photo, 'The New Estate'! Of course all this new building meant that mains drainage was put in, the lane widened and surface dressed with tar and chip. Later, road signs were added to cope with the needs of modern day transport.

Peter Bonetti was one of the new residents in Bracken Close. He was goalkeeper for England and Chelsea Football Club, and this added a celebrity touch to the neighbourhood. Peter's parents owned the garage and

filling station near the new roundabout in Washington. It is said that their popular and successful business put Mr Setatree's garage further down in Washington village out of business. We shall never know.

Odd Names

Near the end of the lane, just visible amongst the undergrowth, is an old five-bar gate (B). A sign read, 'The hunt is requested not to use this path.' This was an ancient carriageway leading to Keepers Lodge and through the Sandgate Estate to Water Lane. Many house names have been changed under new ownership. Is Finders anything to do with Keepers? A pun perhaps, and we both wonder what is the origin of Tumps and Woolloomooloo. Heatherlands is more obvious, as is Downlands"

We come to Hampers Lane and cross to make our way up the twitten on Longbury Hill to the lane now called Vera's walk, which was named after Vera Pragnell, whose life is well documented elsewhere. Vera's husband Dennis Earle brought organisation to her bohemian lifestyle. He sorted the tenancy agreements and built a house for his mother-in-law, Lady Pragnell, The Gables (now called Badger Cottage) a house for themselves, Little Thatch, and Sleepy Hollow Hotel (C). The Gables was subsequently owned by the Rev. Hall and his niece Miss Constance Unwin, a friend of mine for many years when she moved to Harrogate. The lovely



Sleepy Hollow Hotel Nr. STORRINGTON
LTD.
 SUSSEX
 Is an Artist's Country House at the foot of the South Downs
 on a wooded private estate. Beauty and Comfort, Courtesy
 and Peace.

azalea bed seen through the garden archway was Miss Unwin's creation.

At the junction with Sanctuary Lane ahead is the house which was Heath Common Post Office and Sanctuary Stores (sadly closed in the 70s) where Mr and Mrs Colley and later Mr and Mrs Atkinson ran a fantastic service with prompt deliveries. Milk came daily from Storrington, and other deliveries were made weekly by the fishmonger, baker, and greengrocer. Some local inhabitants supplemented their income by growing vegetables, keeping poultry or, in one case, repairing bicycles—odd bits of which are still being dug up in the present owner's garden!

To the left of the Old Post Office is the public phone box mentioned in Mary's previous walk and the cottage which was Vera's Guest House. The symbolic statue with open arms from the old entrance was in the back garden, but not seen today. We are told it is being restored.

We continue to Georges Lane and cross into the lovely National Trust property, Warren Hill – known locally as Paradise.

Editor's Note: Jean's father, mentioned in the text, was Roy Armstrong, a University lecturer and founder of the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum.

Storrington Village Day

Village Day last year was not a great success for the Museum—we attracted very few visitors and the amount raised just didn't justify the hard work put in all day by the few volunteers involved.

So this year we were uncertain about it, but eventually decided that it was important for the Museum to be seen to take part in this community event so we decided to treat it as a PR exercise and not attempt to raise funds.

Stuart Duncan put together a pictorial display of the research work carried out so far into The Old School, and some members of the HLF project team (see next page) were there to answer questions. We also had photographs of the Storrington WW1 Roll of Honour and the recently discovered side panel, so there was plenty for visitors to see. In the event we had nearly 100 visitors to the stand.

The weather could not have been much worse—cold, rain and gale force winds which carried off more than one tent (but not ours!)—so we feel to attract this number of visitors made the effort by all the volunteers who took part well worthwhile.

From Mike Grizaard (Chairman)

At the last Committee meeting two new members were unanimously elected: Terry Fraser and Cliff Wilks are both very supportive members of the Museum Society and both have been Museum stewards for some time.

Terry is a member of the group who are working with Stuart Duncan on the The Old School HLF project. Apart from her researching skills Terry is also a great cook and cake-maker and can always be relied upon to produce something delicious for Museum functions.

Cliff recently became one of the co-Editors of Times Past and also produces the monthly schedule for Museum stewards. He's a dab hand at d.i.y. particularly carpentry and his latest project—a floor model of The Old School as it was in 1930s—will be on display when the HLF Lottery project is unveiled on 2/3 November.

The Heritage Lottery Funding Project



Ella Hutt, former teacher at The Old School

The aims of Heritage Lottery Funding, apart from providing the financial support for a project, are to foster inter-community relationships and to improve research skills. This certainly has been achieved with The Old School project. The small group of volunteers involved, infected by Stuart Duncan's energy and enthusiasm, has been following many lines of enquiry, and no aspect of The Old School's past has been considered too unimportant to justify close investigation. Many visits have been made to the County Records Office, and many meetings held with experts able to advise on the skills necessary to carry out research successfully. The group is becoming expert in ferreting out long forgotten information and are acquiring skills that will stand the Museum in good stead in the future. To have the funding to enable them to do this work and gain these skills has been invaluable.

If you attended The Old School, or have friends who did, please let us have your memories of school life, It's your stories that will bring this project to life.

On Saturday 14 September there will be another chance to see the results of some of the research, and an opportunity to meet some ex-pupils, as well as Ella Hutt who taught the infants in the 1950s.

Soon decisions will be made with the Hooper & Downer Trust on the exact form of the permanent exhibition to be created at The Old School. H & D have had the interior redecorated and new curtains are about to be hung. By chance our new neighbours in

The Horsecroft have transformed the boundary of their garden adjoining us, so that the courtyard has never looked smarter.

So all is focused on the weekend of 2/3 November when an exhibition revealing the results of all this endeavour will be open at The Old School. There will be plenty of publicity nearer the time but do make a note of the date. All members will be particularly welcome: this exhibition will be like no other ever held at Storrington Museum.

After that weekend? Then the volunteers will turn their attention to creating a book to record all that research!

Alan Simmonds' Evacuation Memories

In *Times Past*, issues 40 and 41, we published the first two parts of Alan's experiences as a young boy evacuated early in World War II from Dulwich Village Infants' School to West Sussex, where he and his brother were billeted at 'Martins', owned by Admiral Sir Charles Little, the Second Sea Lord.

In the remaining pages of his evocative memoirs the two boys continued to spend the wartime years at several addresses in the Storrington area. The picture painted is of a world now very distant, but not an unhappy one, where children were free to wander the countryside. The winters might be cold, but there was always local produce to eat and plenty to interest curious youngsters.

We are not proposing to publish further parts of Alan Simmonds' work, but it will be available on the Museum Website. Full of incident and references to places and people many readers will recognise, it is an account many of you will enjoy reading as a whole.

Ian Ferguson on the Museum's Map Collection

The one-hundred-odd maps in the Museum's care offer a wide range of choice of age, scale, coverage and purpose. For example, at one extreme we have copies of maps of the County of Sussex from the 1800s, where Storrington is barely distinguishable, to detailed street plans of the village of the present day.

Ordnance Survey productions make up about half the total and include all four normal scales – 1", 2½", 6" and 25" to the mile – and between them they record the evolution of the village from 1888 to 1960.

A more detailed study of the village may be had from the dozen or so maps and plans showing specific characteristics, such as street and field names and ownerships, estate holdings and boundaries or parish boundaries. Some border on the amateurish and all are generally more historical in date, starting with the 1860s.

Under the general heading of 'Storrington' you will find coverage for Hurston, Kithurst, Heath Common and Cootham. Neighbouring areas such as Parham, Chiltington (both West and Common), Sullington and Thakeham are also quite well covered.

Amongst the remaining maps are several very interesting ones produced for a specific purpose. My favourites are a small but very detailed set giving the proposed route for the planned railway line extension in 1863/64 between Steyning and Pulborough as it passed through Storrington.

Two other items are also of great interest and raise more than a few questions. In 1956 W.S.C.C. pro-



Jean MacWhirter and Ian Ferguson with the map collection

duced 'Review Plan No. 1' for Storrington, which is a painstakingly thorough review of the village, complete with maps and photos under the headings of Land Use, Topography, Services, Communications, and Farm Units. This was followed in 1968 by 'First Review', again with very detailed maps and plans but in a different format. This time the presentation took the form of Western Section and Eastern Section, with a Supplementary Plan for Central, East and West Sections. Obviously a laborious and worthy effort. I wonder what became of the good intentions?

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