

Times Past

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STORRINGTON & DISTRICT MUSEUM
Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

A Smell of Rotten Eggs

Joan Ham describes the history of street lighting in Storrington.

The first mains service in Storrington was gas, made on a site in the centre of the High Street. It was over a hundred years ago that an Arundel solicitor, who had made his home and started a practice in Storrington, headed a small company made up of tradesmen to erect and run a gas-works. He was Arthur Mant. The West Sussex Gazette reported on 31 October 1861 that Storrington was the smallest town lit by gas in the country and '... Saturday evening last presented our shops and houses illuminated in a way that has forever put the old lamps and candles, not only figuratively, but literally into the shade'. Their first Secretary was Mr Edwin (Jimmy) Hammond of the famous cricketing family, succeeded by Mr Percy Ayling after many years of service.

The Parish Church Gaslit

In 1871, the parish church was filled for the first gaslit service: lighting had been installed together with gas heating for the winter, at a cost of £59.10s.7d, which had been subscribed by fifty parishioners. The after-sales service seems to have been a goodwill gesture on the part of the manager or shareholders, because after extensive alterations to the church in 1876, during which the school had served as a temporary church, Mr Hammond addressed himself to the rector as follows:-

*The Revd. Geo. Faithfull, Sir,
To lighting and extinguishing the Gas inside and outside the church. As the New Year is fast approaching and only two more evening services in the old, I think the time is at hand when I should come to some definite understanding as regards the lighting throughout the year 1877.*

I have done the lighting at the school and church since the opening. The expense I strike off entirely - but before entering on the New Year I should like some final arrangement with whom it may concern. To light and put out the gas, clean lamps find lights and oil etc. for one year including Lent and Advent and taking all weathers into consideration I think is worth £6.6s.0d. The lighting I will carry on as usual till the 31st December 1876

*I am yrs. obty.
Edwin Hammond.*

Vandals

The introduction of Storrington's first-ever real street lighting also introduced an inviting new target for the local vandals or, as many were regarded then, 'high-spirited young gentleman'. The nuisance got so bad that Mr George French Mant (son of Arthur) brought the full



Above: a Storrington gas standard

FIVE GUINEAS
REWARD

Whereas, between the hours of 6 and 10.30, in the Evening of Tuesday, the 25th September, some person or persons did

EXTINGUISH
CERTAIN
GAS LAMPS

Situate at the Post Office, and also at other parts in Church Street, Storrington, whereby each person is liable on conviction, to a penalty not exceeding 40s for each offence, or in the discretion of the Justices before whom he is convicted, may be committed to Prison for a term not exceeding fourteen days.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that any person giving such information as may lead to the conviction of the Offender or Offenders, shall receive the above Reward of Five Guineas, to be paid on conviction.

GEO. FRENCH MANT.
On behalf of the Inspectors of Lighting, of the Parish of Storrington.
Storrington, 25th September, 1883.

Left: poster offering reward for information on gas lamp vandals, 1883

Right: an interior view of the gas works

weight of his Storrington Prosecuting Society down on them. This was another Mant-inspired organisation imported from Arundel. The local constabulary was very new and suffered the contempt of the local gentry, who wrote to the new Chief Constable at the slightest excuse, and a rapid turnover of village policemen reflected the low prestige and poor conditions they endured. The new gas standards were shot at, used as catapult targets, or were deliberately extinguished after the lamplighter had done his rounds. Wild West style 'Wanted' posters were exhibited, offering large cash rewards for information, varying from one guinea (£1.05p) to the more usual five or even ten guineas. As the poor constable earned 15/- per week (not as much as an agricultural labourer), this shows the extent of the nuisance. There are still several of the old cast-iron lamp posts in unexpected corners of Storrington, and for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, a very beautiful gas lamp was installed in the centre of the square. It is a pity this did not survive.

British Gas

The first Storrington Gas Company seems to have nearly gone broke after World War I, and was sold at a knock-down price; the last of the dynasty, Charles Edward Mant, who had been willed the shares of other members of his family, received £18 for his block of shares. In 1937 the Storrington Gas Company became the British Gas Light Company. The new company acquired the works, two cottages and the site for £11,939. 11s.7d and was at that time supplying Cootham, Crescent Rise, Thakeham and Worthing Road. The process of making gas began in the retort house, where the retorts were loaded with tons of coal. This was heated by furnaces under the floor reached by a thick steel trap door. The gas



Making Gas

driven out of the heated coal rose through a pipe from each retort conveying it to the exhaustor house, where it was pushed through condenser towers where the tar products were removed. It was then driven into a scrubber tower to be washed. The next stage was into purifiers filled with an earth-like substance which removed sulphur. This was turned over at regular intervals until it was saturated and needed replacing, releasing the familiar 'rotten egg' smell, which Storringtonians knew so well! The clean gas was then passed through the station meter and into two large gasholders, one holding 44,000 cu.ft and the other 19,000 cu.ft., from where it could be supplied through the station governor to the consumers.

As they gradually increased and appliances proliferated from the showroom, demand approached the capacity of the little gas-works. The foreman recalled the Christmas when he watched anxiously as the gas-holders sank lower and lower until, just when he thought that emergency action would be needed, the Christmas dinners came out of the ovens and saved the situation! Coal is a rich source of products other than energy, and the local gas-works sold the coke which was raked out of the ovens after the coal had yielded its gas, and tar which was bought by the bucketful to weatherproof fences, sheds, weatherboarding and privies. It was dusted afterwards with sand. (This is only a tiny example of coal by-products, but these were the most useful local ones).

Below: a view of central Storrington and one of the gas holders.



The Last Days of Coal Gas

Nationalisation took place in May 1948, and the works became the property of the South Eastern Gas Board. Most of their employees came to work there after serving in the forces. There were a chemist, Jack Willmott, who commuted between Storrington, Petworth and Billingshurst on a motor-cycle combination, four stokers, a fitter, a yardman, and works foreman, two or three office/showroom staff and a manager. On the 10th November 1958 the Engineer of the Sussex Division wrote formally to the Storrington Gas Works:

Cessation, of Gasmaking at Storrington further, to my memorandum dated 10th Oct. 1958 will you please note that Gasmaking at Storrington will cease at .11,30am today 10 Nov. as Storrington will now receive a bulk gas supply from Portslade works.

In 1962, part of 'the works' site was sold to the Hanover Housing Association and flats were built on the site.

Natural Gas

In August 1970, Storrington was converted to natural gas and lost a considerable amount of

local industrial pollution. There was no mention of the 'rotten egg' smell, and the effluent which used to tip directly into the little River Stor across the road no longer polluted the stream. Also lost was the convenient tar-well, which meant 'that exterior woodwork in Storrington gardens gradually changed colour over the years. The installation of natural gas involved laying pipes across the Downs, diagonally down Sullington Hill and across the fields, to a pressure reduction point in Greyfriars Lane. This small grass and flag-stoned area contains all of the 'works' underground and, like the route of the pipeline, is invisible in a beautiful area. The old landmark of the two gasholders, which Storrington people had lived with for a hundred years, had gone.

It has not been recorded how long it took Mr Mant's company to build their works and install the street lighting and domestic supply from scratch, but North Sea Gas was brought to Storrington in three weeks, and the change-over from Town Gas to Natural Gas was achieved in one day - a credit to the planning and engineering that went into it. The other thing to disappear, was the works and showroom staff who had looked after Storrington gas consumers for so long.

Graffiti at Parham Park

David Bussey publishes for the first time a possible answer to a Parham puzzle.

Behind the panelling in one of the guest bedrooms at Parham Park lies a mystery that until very recently has eluded everyone. It consists of three Flemish charcoal graffiti written in a surprisingly educated hand and presumably the work of those involved in constructing the new enlarged house for the Palmer family at the end of the sixteenth century. The texts read as follows:

Als Adam dalf ende ewe span,
waer was doen hedelen man

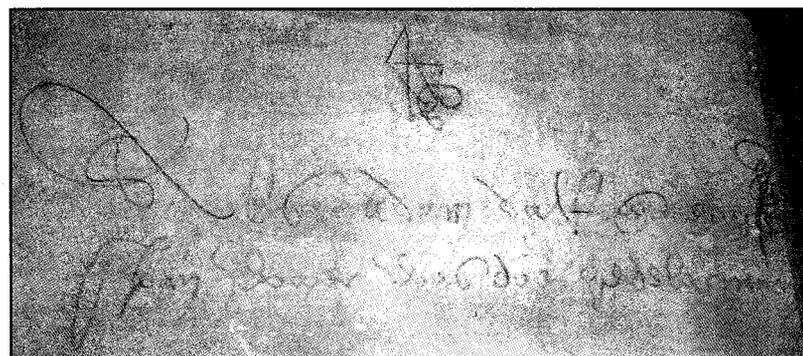
Alst niet gaet naer mijnen wille,
ope ende.... Druck ende Swyge al stille.

Heden leven samen ende morghen
..... Tot eender eerue

With the help of leading Dutch antiquarians and academics, a likely meaning for each of the graffiti has at last emerged.

The first is the easiest: 'When Adam dug and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?' This motto was made famous by the preacher John Ball when he used it as his text in a sermon to stir up rebels during the 1381 peasants' revolt against the poll tax. It almost certainly existed earlier than that, but Ball adopted it to preach the equality of all men before God, and the proverb spread to the rest of Europe.

Below: the first of the Parham graffiti.



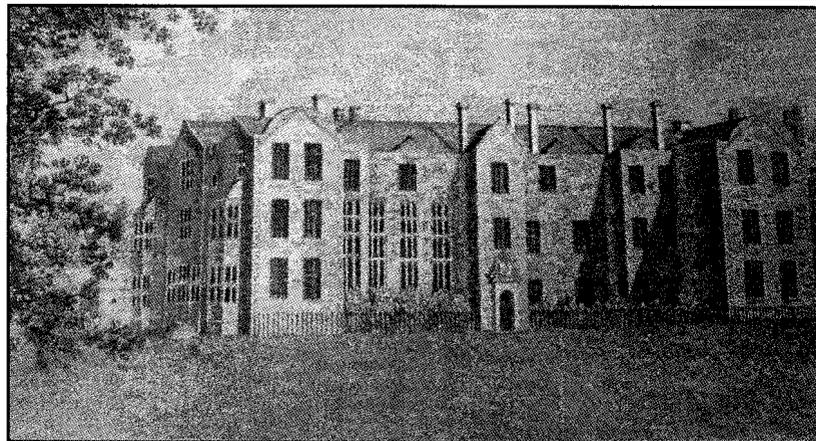
The second graffito also refers to a rhymed Dutch saying: Als niet gaat naar mijnen wille, ick [ont]loope ende miyd druck ende swyge al stille (If things do not go as I want, I walk away, renounce pressure and do not say anything). Readers may be able to think of a similar English proverb: it is not that far from the sentiments of *Pick Yourself Up!*, as sung by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

The third piece of writing is the most puzzling. A rough translation is:

Living today and dying tomorrow.
inherit earlier.

however, it bears quite a close resemblance to another Dutch saying, 'Heden leven ende morgans sterven.' Did this particular graffito artist mean 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die', or was he thinking of the rewards of heaven ('Live each day as if it were your last') Who knows?

It's not clear whether these graffiti are the work of more than one hand, but they encompass an intriguing range of attitudes to life, the first rebelling against authority, the second recommending that trouble is best avoided, and the third suggesting you enjoy or make the most of life while you can.



From the Chair

Make a note of the 15th and 17th May in your diaries. On the evening of Friday 15 May between 6:30 and 9:30 p.m. we are opening the Museum to the public. This is a European venture called *Night Fever*. The Museum Society is inviting members, the Parish Council and the Rotary Club, The Round Table and the Lions to a reception as part of the event.

On Sunday 17 May, we have our **Tudor May Revels** at the Old School from 10:30 – 4:00. Queen Elizabeth I with her Ladies-in-Waiting has graciously accepted an invitation to attend the event and will give audiences a.m. and p.m. There will be a display of Tudor clothing and how it is made; herbs and food from that period will also be featured. The Partridge Pluckers will provide music and dance throughout the day. You can be photographed in the stocks or try on Tudor armour. There is a prize for the best model of a Tudor timber-framed house made by a child aged up to 11 years. Yes, there is something for everyone, do come along. Please join in the spirit of the day by dressing in Tudor costume: you do not have to be a Lord or a Lady – a peasant, a sailor/pirate or a serving wench will do. We hope as many members as possible will come along to enjoy the many attractions on offer that day.

I am pleased to announce that a computer has now been installed in the Museum as part of a future multimedia display, showing the web pages, slide shows, family history data and a random slide show of photographs.

A seventeenth century image of Parham Park from Rodney Gunner's fascinating talk on the house's archaeology given to the Society in February

Museum Society Committee

Chairman: Meg Everitt

Secretary: (vacant)

Treasurer: John Wharmby

Programme Secretary: Pauline Archibald

Membership Secretary: Trisha Cook

Education Officer: Jill Atkins

WebMaster: Michael Leeming

Curator: Gina Wilmshurst

Archivist: Joan Ham

Members: Gena Grenney, Cindy Waters

Website: www.storringtonmuseum.org

Museum telephone: 01903 740188

Editorial Team

John Wharmby, David Bussey, Philip Beaumont

Officers Reports to AGM 2009

The Chair reported that last year was again a successful one for the Museum Society. It was hoped that by the time of the AGM that the Licence securing our tenancy at the Old School will have been signed. This can lead to our Accreditation.

Museum. - Our new blinds, which were painted so beautifully by Alison Milner Gulland, act as an advertisement as well as giving pleasure to passers by. The four exhibitions been varied and well received, We have received various new artefacts during the year and are about to acquire 12 Roman coins which at present are with treasure trove. We have acquired a further room and lobby, the room is to be used as a store for artefacts and archives, the lobby for general storage. Sue Stepford has joined the Curatorial team to assist Gina Wilmshurst, Our Curator, Sue has been successful in being awarded a "Sharing Skills" placement at Horsham Museum, organised Renaissance SE, to develop her curatorial skills. We now have a display board in Storrington Library.

A Health and Safety Policy and a Fire Risk Assessment are being prepared. We would like to thank Paul Twine for his expert advice in these matters. Meg Everitt and Michael Leeming attended a one day course in Working on Good Governance of Museums which was most helpful.

Queen Elizabeth and her ladies-in-waiting have continued their progress. The highlight of the year was a visit to Rye in October at the behest of the local museum. It was a wonderful place to do a historical re-enactment. One gets many interesting responses from children, in Rye, a small boy suggested it would have been much better for Henry and Anne Bolyn to have had a divorce.

Our Committee and members of the Society are the life blood of the Museum, they provide vital funds through their subscriptions, are our ambassadors, they also bring endless hours of voluntary labour bringing many skills and talents which are all brought together to make the Museum function. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the committee and the stewards for the efforts you have given to the Museum this year. As Jeremy Knight, Curator of Horsham Museum has pointed out, just think what the bill would be if all the volunteers were paid staff!

We have had to say goodbye to two committee members during the year, Helen Whittle, our former Curator, and Trish Colebrook, many thanks for their contribution. Philip Beaumont, our Vice Chair, is retiring through ill health. Philip was Chair of the Museum's Friends Committee and then Chair of the present Society as well as writing countless interesting and informative articles for "Times Past" over the past nine years. His contribution to the Society has been enormous; his laconic sense of humour introducing speakers or bringing the committee to order will be remembered by all. We will all miss you, Philip.

Jean MacWhirter retired from the post of Membership Secretary last year and she now feels it is time to retire from the Committee. Jean is a founder member of the Society and as she is now leaving the Committee, it is the Committee's wish that she be made an Honorary Life Member for her outstanding contribution to the Society. Thanks also to your husband, Ian, as he too has given endless hours of his time to the Society as well.

Kate Wise, our Secretary, is also leaving the Committee. Kate joined to become the Secretary of the Friends Committee but was soon thrown into the task of rewriting the Constitution when it was decided to amalgamate the two museum committees. Kate led the working parties and we would have been lost without her guidance and understanding of these matters. Latterly she has take up the task of negotiating the Licence with the Hooper Downer Trust, again a long and difficult job. Of course she has been Secretary as well. On behalf of us all thank you Kate. You are a hard person to replace. As Kate was unable to be with us this evening, a bouquet of flowers was delivered with a card expressing the Societies appreciation for all she has done.

Michael Taylor is not a committee member but he has produced the monthly Stewards rota since it began and paid for its distribution each month. A framed print of West Street has been given to Michael in recognition of doing such an important job for so long. Patricia Wilks has kindly offered to take up this role. We have not as yet found a replacement for Kate, we also need a new Vice Chair and a Publicity Officer. A long list of retirements but none-the-less new blood is coming forward and besides Sue Setford and Patricia Wilks who

have already been mentioned, we have Rene Harwood to assist Pauline Archibold and David Bussey who has joined the Editorial team for Times Past. So don't feel shy if you think you can help, please step forward, we would love to have you.

We would also like to thank Brendan Johnson for all his work in preparing the room for our meetings

The Hon Treasurer reported that this year has seen a satisfactory stabilisation of the activities and financial situation of the Society, support from local and West Sussex Councils has enabled us to undertake the activities we can handle – the restriction being time and man-power. We have acquired two small rooms for archival purposes and are in the process of fitting them out. This has been made possible by the award of a grant from West Sussex Council.

Your committee has tried to employ budgetary financing which has resulted in an approximate balancing of the accounts, the apparent profit of £1,833 having recently been spent on the above archival storage furniture.

Gift Aid income remains constant at about £220 per year and is a useful contribution.

Members' support, both financially and in stewardship activities is appreciated and we hope that we will be able to count upon this support continuing.

I propose:-

The subscriptions remain unchanged at the present level.

Mrs Jenny Waterhouse be appointed Independent Examiner of this year's accounts.

The Archivist reported that the best news of the year is the acquisition of two small rooms for archive and artefact storage, which are very much needed for our growing collections. These rooms now have shelving, so that the archives can be stored in the best conservation conditions. To date, our general catalogues contain 3457 photographs and 2668 documents, books and artefacts. We have had 30 queries in 2008, all of which have been answered. Appointments have been made to meet some of the people contacting us, where more information was needed than could be given in a letter or phone call. The indexes have been kept up-to-date, but it is a time consuming job among all the other things that need to be done, cataloguing new items, conserving things we already have, dealing with enquiries, publicity and exhibition planning. A very good relationship has been built up with the West Sussex County Records Office, which has often resulted in help and benefits to the museum.

The Membership Secretary reported that, overall the membership is in a healthy position with 135 members, including Honorary Members. We have gained 15 new members this year and lost 7, but that is still an overall gain of 8 new members. Standing Orders were introduced this year to try and simplify the payment of members' subscriptions. 40 members have elected to pay by this method and it is hoped that more people will sign standing orders next year. On the membership form is a section headed 'skills' and many members have filled this in and we now have a database of those members willing to help with various Museum tasks.

The Programme Secretary reported that the past year has been busy, with regular and varied activities organised to keep the members interested and in friendly contact, and at the same time to assist in raising the funds needed for the day-to-day expenses of the museum, and these have been loyally supported.

Last Summer season commenced with a Quiz Night in April, organised by Trisha Cook, Jill Atkins, and Cindy Waters, in the Village Hall, with Fish & Chip supper, which was very popular and profitable, so we hope that it might be repeated in the future.

Later on we had a wonderful evening walk on the downs behind Storrington under the guidance of the County Archaeologist, John Mills, through the good offices of Joan Ham, and another evening expedition was to Waminghurst Church and its lost manor house, with Rodney Gunner of the Worthing Archaeological Society, ending up at Gina Wilmshurst's house for refreshments as the sun went down. In both cases the weather was unusually kind for last summer.

We were again blessed with a singularly beautiful day for the Stewards' Lunch, to which the Committee invited those who faithfully manned the Museum throughout the year, to show appreciation of their services, and in the autumn there was another opportunity for the Stewards to meet together socially at a tea party at the Old School, and these functions provided a valuable opportunity to share views and discuss ideas.

In September our charmed status with the weather gods failed, but there was a break in the rain just long enough for Joan Ham to lead a Saturday afternoon walk around historic Church Street in Storrington before tea at the Old School, and the fact that the heavens opened for the Family History Day in October did not deter a

very good attendance from far and wide to make use of the help on offer. The popularity encourages us to make this a regular annual event.

The Winter Programme of lectures commenced with an account of "Southern Smuggling", by Margaret Henderson, who had taken a party of us around Chichester the year before, and in November Geoffrey Meade gave a very knowledgeable account of the development of the Sussex coastline, to be followed in December by a light-hearted entertainment by Chris Hare and his lady helpers with readings, songs, and sketches from Sussex in the past.

Our Christmas Supper at the Chardonnay Restaurant at Washington was very well-supported, and appeared to be enjoyed by all, and in the New Year we had a talk on the "Raising of the Mary Rose" by John Morgan in January, and in February Rodney Gunner returned to tell us of the investigations which he and others of the Worthing Archaeological Society have been making into "The Lost Village of Parham". Following on from these last two lectures and the interest they aroused, Rodney has offered to arrange a visit to Parham for us in the near future to see the area which they are exploring, but has not yet given a date, although I hope that it will be possible to include this in your new membership programmes.

In addition, we feel that members would enjoy a visit to Portsmouth Dockyard to see the "Mary Rose" in its present position, prior to its being moved, so it is proposed to arrange a coach trip on 29th June, with tickets also giving admission to the other dockyard attractions, and the cost for the whole day is likely to be in the region of £20-£25 depending on the numbers - the more bums on seats the cheaper it becomes! If you are interested in this outing, and if you have friends who might like to join us, would you enter your names (on the list in the hall) without obligation, so that we can assess whether the outing would be viable. It just remains to thank everyone for supporting all the activities over the past year, which I hope that you have enjoyed as much as myself, and for your loyalty in attending the lectures, often through hell and high water this winter, which has made it all worthwhile for the committee and myself.

The Education Secretary reported that she had been in contact with the local Primary and First Schools to offer them the loan of some of the museum's resources – the Second World War Suitcase, Grandmother's suitcase, Victorian Washday items. So far, one school has borrowed the Second World War Suitcase. Queen Elizabeth I (aka Meg Everitt) and her Ladies-in-waiting have graced Ashington and Rudgewick Schools with their presence. A competition had recently been organised for the local school children to design a poster for our forthcoming Tudor May Revels, to be held on 17 May 2009. We had some attractive entries and have chosen three winning posters, which will be printed and used to advertise the day around the area. We also wish to involve local children on the day. This will include a fancy dress competition (Tudors and Pirates) and a colouring competition. The schools will be visited to inform the children about the various attractions we have arranged for the day.

The Web Master reported that the web site had continued to be updated. The site had been visited over 1,260 times in the last six months and has generated a number of queries outside the area and from abroad. A 'Museums and the Web' course had been attended at SCIP in Brighton which was very useful. Our site was favourably compared with that of a major museum who's web site was professionally produced and had an annual budget of £3,000. Our budget is \$12/month for web hosting. We have been given a new computer through the good offices of David Bussey. We intend to put it in the Museum to give a multimedia display of the web site, various slide shows on specific subjects, family history data and a random slide show of photographs in the Museum.