

# The Researcher

Newsletter of the  
West Sussex Archives Society  
The Friends of  
West Sussex Record Office



April 2013

## 39<sup>th</sup> AGM

The 39<sup>th</sup> AGM of the society was held at Sullington Parish Hall, near Storrington 13 April 2013.

Caroline Adams chaired the meeting and gave her report, which follows. A full copy will also be included in the AGM minutes. Caroline thanked the committee for all their work over the year. Important events included the mapsale, which raised £631.15. Caroline talked about the continuing changes at WSRO.

During the year WSAS assisted with the purchase of an early map of Worthing and contributed to the cost of staff attending the 'Who do you think you are' live event at Olympia, London. The meetings had been well attended, including the always enjoyable Christmas symposium and two workshops. There had also been two visits to Arundel Castle and a visit to Wiston House, near Steyning.

Alan Readman gave a report about WSRO, and explained the early history of the Society (outlined elsewhere). He thanked the members and the committee for their support over the last year.



No. 81

## Forthcoming Events

### Events 2013

June 8<sup>th</sup> - Wey and Arun Canal Trip.

June 15<sup>th</sup> - Joint event with FESRO. Meeting at Little Halland.

July 6<sup>th</sup> - Tarring Walk with Richard Howell

September 15<sup>th</sup> - A talk on 'Limeburners, Lords and Labourers' by Richard Howell to be held at WSRO

Any queries about this newsletter or questions for West Sussex Archives Society please email [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

Paul Guest, the Society's new Treasurer, presented the accounts. Helen Whittle said that the Journal had been well received but that she was always looking for articles, both longer articles and shorter 'question and answer' pieces. Richard Martin conducted the officer elections. The only nomination for chairman was Caroline and she was unanimously elected. Richard asked the meeting to formally elect Paul as Treasurer and the other committee members for a three year period. All were unanimously elected.

Richard Martin said that the proposed date for the 2014 AGM was 12 April, details to be confirmed.



After the meeting Joe Thompson, Head Carpenter at the Weald & Downland Museum gave an illustrated talk: 'The Carpenter's tale: the Long Gallery at Parham House' and then answered questions.

After the meeting members celebrated the 40th anniversary of the society with tea and coffee and a special cake.

Richard Martin

---

## Chairman's Report 2012-2013

This year is the 40th anniversary of the West Sussex Archives Society. You may, at this juncture wonder why it is only the 39th AGM, but apparently the discrepancy is because there was no AGM in 2006. There was a Special General Meeting in March 2006 to change the end of the Society's accounting year, from 31 August to 31 December. Consequently, there was an accounting period from 1 September 2005 to 31 December 2006, and the AGM was moved from October 2006 to April 2007. So that is why the 40th AGM is not until 2014, rather than this year. The first WSAS AGM was in September 1974. Alan talks about the beginnings of the society elsewhere in this Newsletter.

### Meetings

There have been a total of twelve meetings since the last AGM – there were two extra ones. They included two trips to Arundel Castle in June and September, because the Castle cancelled the original date in May. Because this meeting was the annual joint one with FESRO, this eventually meant that more than forty people got to visit the Castle and its archives. Heather Warne the archivist there, was our host. The other extra trip was the rare opportunity to visit Wiston with Janet Pennington as our guide; the house is not normally open to the public but well worth the visit. Another summer meeting was a walk round the Arun valley with Richard Howell; the weather wasn't brilliant, but the day was good.

There were two workshops run by the Record Office, one on the Poor Law in the autumn last year, and one on Probate records last month, run by Sue Millard and myself.

Talks at the Record Office included: 'Chichester in the 1950s' by Alan Readman, 'Lord Egremont's worst investment' on the Chichester canal by Alan Green and 'Chanctonbury Ring' by Janet Pennington. All of them took place in the reception area, and this seems to work well.

The October conference was held at The Barn in Horsham, and was a really good day with three talks and some excellent discussion, and a guided tour of Horsham's buildings thrown in for free. Finally, the Christmas Get Together was held under scaffolding at the Record Office during Closed Fortnight – the scaffolding was there because the roof windows over the staff desks were being replaced. The staff used to have trouble with glare from sun....

All in all the year had a good set of meetings for which the committee deserve a round of applause. They work hard on your behalf, and give up a lot of free time to do so. Leigh especially deserves mention, as she has been involved in several initiatives, and we were able to take advantage of her advice as well as her time.

### **Link between WSRO and WSAS**

The link between the office and the society has grown stronger this year. Most publicly, this was through a Map Sale in September, which took place in the reception area and workroom at the Record Office. A number of volunteers served as volunteers over the three days, and special thanks go to Peter and Jane Dyer, as well as others. The whole sale made £631. At the time, the Record Office had just bought a lovely map of Worthing, featured in the October Newsletter last year, and WSAS was able to use some of the sale proceeds to buy it for the Record Office. It is a small town plan dated in the late 1820s, watercolour with pen and ink. The price was reasonable at £225 (the reference is WSRO, PM 929).

This leads on to another point. The committee were concerned that the Record Office had missed out on an important photograph album because the County Archivist did not have the funds to finance a purchase at an auction, and had to regretfully withdraw from the bidding. The committee feels that WSAS could underwrite purchases to a certain level of funding, which we are as yet still considering, which could be available to supplement the Record Office's own finances. That way the member of staff would have more leeway to purchase a document, if on the day, it proved more expensive than the estimate. (In the end the album had sold for more than our combined finances could manage.)

### **The Membership Database**

There is one place where the link between the Record Office and the Society has been broken, and that is that the County Council is no longer able to support the IT program Access on which our membership database is held. After much consideration and consultation with Clare Snoad and other IT experts, we decided to buy a laptop with Society money, and a proper stand-alone local society program. In addition, we have checked the members' database, and it is now completely up to date.

Caroline Adams

## Hedging our Bets

It might be thought a simple task for archivists in a Record Office to establish precisely the origins of their own Friends Society. After all we have plenty of practice helping people with the anniversaries of their local cricket clubs and amateur dramatic societies.

However, this is one date that we are struggling with. I gave a summary of our findings to members who attended the AGM at Sullington Parish Hall on April 13th and, though they are far from conclusive, we thought it worth sharing them with the wider membership.

The early newsletters of the Society state firmly that it was founded in 1973 without offering any particular evidence. And this is where the research begins. A challenge, of course, as this year would be the 40th anniversary.

An article in the May 1983 issue of the newsletter, celebrating the first ten years of the Society, names Beryl Naunton and Jack Thornberry as the joint inspiration behind the idea. They were both members of the Records Committee of WSCC and at their meeting on 31 May 1973 they proposed a Friends Society be set up. They felt an independent body with an interest in archives would be a good thing. And that this should be created when the Committee was replaced by a new Library & Archives Committee ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

The trail then goes cold until articles begin to appear in local newspapers in December 1973. 'Tracking Down the History of the County' headlines a piece in the *Chichester Observer* of 28 December. This announces that a new group, the West Sussex Archives Society, had been formed to foster an interest in the history of the county, to work in close association with the Record Office and to help purchase for the county important records that might otherwise be lost locally. It would also have a social and educational side with visits to places of historical interest and talks on local history.

The first such talk took place at the Teachers' Centre in Orchard Street, Chichester, on Tuesday 5th February 1974. The speaker was Kim Leslie, who was of course the Education Officer at the Record Office, and his subject was 'the Turnpike Roads of West Sussex'. Transport was clearly in vogue for the second talk, in the same venue a month later, was on 'Railways and Canals', by archivist David Butler.

The first outing was a guided visit to Amberley led by the local historian, Wilfred Cheal, who showed the members round the church and castle. Annual subscription rates were £1 with 50p concessions. Membership had already reached 100 and the inaugural AGM was held at Lancing College on Saturday 7th September 1974. Perhaps the preliminary meeting of interested parties to get the society off the ground had been held in September 1973? More research required!

The first contribution by the Society to buy documents for the Record Office came at this time, too, with the purchase of the papers of the Reverend James Dallaway of Ferring, who is credited as being one of the first historians of the county. With Edmund Cartwright, he wrote the *History of the Western Division of the County of Sussex*, in two volumes between 1815 and 1819. Incidentally, if you have a first

edition of volume two, treasure it. Only 500 copies were printed and apparently 480 of those were lost in a fire at the printers.

So, on the eve of the AGM the present committee of the society was split. Should we celebrate the 40th anniversary of WSAS in 2013 or 2014? Is it the idea and the preliminary deliberations that we celebrate or the first meetings for members? Pending further research and debate, we decided to hedge our bets, and Caroline produced a 40th anniversary cake for the AGM and promised another for next year. I couldn't help noticing that committee members who put their trust in 1974 as the 'proper' start date were nonetheless not averse to helping themselves to a slice of this year's cake!

Alan Readman  
County Archivist.

I do not think we have heard the last of this issue! - Barrie

---

## RECORD OFFICE UPDATE

It seems appropriate to be writing this latest report in the searchroom on a Saturday afternoon while in the library on the floor above Caroline and Sue are leading the latest of the very popular WSAS workshops, in this case on the topic of wills and probate inventories.

Probate records are key sources for family historians and of course it is genealogy that brings many of our searchers to the Record Office. An indication of the immense appeal of the subject is the continuing success of the BBC television series *Who Do You Think You Are?* Partly to capitalise on the 'glory' of our own contribution to the show in the John Bishop programme in December we decided this year to have a stand at the *WDYTYA? Live* event at Olympia on 22-24 February.



It is good, I think, for the Record Office to be seen at such events and for our staff to see for themselves how big a concern family history has become. Whilst our records are used for many other purposes, we need to ensure we serve this growing community and take advantage of the opportunities the business of family history offers to us. Of course the *Live* event is not without expense and we are very grateful to WSAS for contributing to the cost of this year's trip.

One way we are trying to engage with family historians is through the monthly coffee time sessions that we hold on the first Wednesday of each month. These have benefited this year from increased publicity and we find we are having to repeat each session to meet the demand from the public. This has brought more visitors into the Record Office and helped our income generation.



We are also seeking to promote awareness by greater partnership working. In recent months this has extended to presenting regular outreach events at The Novium, the new museum in Chichester. These we do, on the last Friday afternoon of every other month, and they have become increasingly successful. Our January presentation, with slides and film, was on the local family firm of Shippams, using records from the collections here. Alongside this, we put on a display of photographs and documents in the Record Office and an article in the

Nostalgia column of the *Chichester Observer*. All this produced an enthusiastic response from the public and an additional deposit of records from the company now producing the Shippams brand.

Revitalising collections, by promoting awareness and use of the documents in such ways, is something we are actively pursuing at the moment. The new Heritage Lottery Funded project on the First World War, organised jointly with the Library Service, is a means by which we can do the same with the superb archive of The Royal Sussex Regiment. Over 140 volunteers have signed up to this project and some are already working on case studies and helping with the digitisation of the documents. The HLF project with Chichester Festival Theatre has also just begun, with the appointment of Gillian Edom as its Archive Training Officer, and soon teams of volunteers will be at work on the extensive theatre archive.

One combined initiative which is nearing completion is the Movies and Memories HLF project with Screen Archive South East, the Regional Film Archive, of which we are joint lead partner with the University of Brighton. This has been using film of the seaside towns of West Sussex with elderly people in day centres both to stimulate memory and enhance our knowledge of the films. Reminiscence work is just one of the many ways that archives can touch people's lives and we are reminded of this daily by the many compliments the service receives about the help given by the staff in the searchroom, through its research service and via outreach events.

I am writing this before the AGM of the Society in April but it gives me an opportunity to thank the Committee for all the work they do through the year on behalf of the members and in support of the Record Office. There is so much to do in arranging meetings and events and I am very happy to offer this vote of grateful thanks on behalf of the staff and the users of the Record Office.

The Society was founded in 1973 'to increase interest in historical records, particularly those of the county of West Sussex, and to make people aware of the need for their preservation'. It has carried out this role for 40 years now and, in such an anniversary year, it is an honour to applaud its very valuable contribution to preserving and promoting our county's wonderful archival heritage.

Alan Readman – County Archivist

# Events Review

## Memories Come Flooding Back

I am under no illusions that the 25 intrepid souls who braved the torrential rain and flooded roads may well remember the February meeting more for the extreme weather than the interest value of the afternoon.

But for me, giving a talk on *Chichester in the 1950s* was an exercise in pure self-indulgence so, whatever the conditions outside, I was very pleased to have the opportunity to present it.

In doing so I was paying homage to Harry Guermonprez, little known perhaps outside the walls of the Record Office, but someone who has left the county with a rich archival legacy in not one but two ways.

He was a photographer by trade, first in Bognor where he managed one of the chemists and photography shops owned by Edward Cleaves and then in Chichester where he set up Chichester Photographic Services.

In the 1930s he founded the Bognor Regis Film Society and his wonderful collection of cine films of the area is now preserved by the Regional Film Archive, Screen Archive South East, of which the Record Office is lead partner with the University of Brighton.

After the war, with his new business in Chichester, he created a second archival treasure for us in the form of hundreds of glass plate negatives taken in and around the city, many of them for the *Chichester Observer*.

Collecting them, from the loft of his business premises in Whyke Lane, was one of my first jobs when I joined the Record Office in 1975. Of course in those days they did little more than occupy strongroom space as we had no easy way of printing them. Now a good proportion of them are digitally scanned and the superb prints provide us with a marvellous photographic record of Chichester in the fifties.

It was photographs from Harry's collection and footage from the Film Archive that gave me the material, and the excuse, for a talk on what is my favourite decade, the 1950s.

Only those who recall Saturday mornings listening to Uncle Mac's *Children's Favourites* on the wireless, packet of Spangles at the ready, reading the weekly *Eagle* comic, will have an inkling of the childhood innocence of growing up in that decade. It began with rationing and shortages continuing the post-war austerity and ended with Harold Macmillan telling us we have "never had it so good" as economic growth and consumer spending took off.

Harry's images of the busy streets and shops in Chichester certainly bore this out. Tea shops abounded, self-service supermarkets sprang up, household goods multiplied and teenagers spent their time after school listening to pop records in the little booths in Storry's music shop in North Street. And everyone remembers the overhead shuttle at Geerings drapers shop that whisked your money away to a cashier and reappeared with the change.

A quirky little film called *Did You See Our Jalopy in Chichester?*, made to promote *Hiawatha* at the Granada Cinema in East Street, reminded us how packed the streets were, with four lines of traffic, one parked and one moving in both directions. The policeman on his plinth directing double-decker buses round The Cross brought back more memories.



The post war rise in the birth rate put pressure on schools as Harry's pictures of packed dining halls and new building work proved. The 'baby boomers', supported by the Welfare State and Butler's Education Act, were already making their mark!

A picture taken at the finals of the Chichester 'Ideal Girl' competition in November 1955 raised a smile. The accompanying report in the *Observer* revealed that the contestants were judged on 'deportment, neatness of appearance and ability to serve teas'.

Some would demean nostalgia and say 'within living memory' is not 'real' history but I have to say I disagree. Photos and films bring the memories tumbling back and over the years I've had some moving occasions using archives such as these in reminiscence sessions at day centres and homes across the county.

So I couldn't resist ending the presentation with *Shippams Guide to Opera*. A real show stopper!

Alan Readman.

---

## WILLS AND PROBATE WORKSHOP

What better way of spending a rainy day in Chichester than learning about and handling wills? On Saturday 16th March about 15 people attended a workshop on Wills and Probate run by Caroline Adams and Susan Millard.

Caroline began by describing the wills available in the archives. There were various church courts in Sussex but fortunately all the wills from the different jurisdictions are now in the archives and can be seen on microfilm. Other wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) have been digitised by the National Archives and are available by email almost at the touch of the button. This could prove an expensive hobby but unusually the price of copies has actually gone down from £3.50 to £3.36. Caroline distributed a useful handout that explained the various ways of

finding wills in the archives.

Daphne Norton then described the work of the WSAS inventories Project.

Volunteers are transcribing inventories village by village. Daphne's map of completed villages is gradually being filled up but there is still plenty of work left to do. She showed us slides of various inventories including the needlemaker's in Chichester and talked about how transcribing inventories had led to her own interest in collecting household tools.

In the afternoon, we split into two groups – one practising palaeography by looking

at wills and the other working with original wills. The group using original wills were trying to help Caroline establish whether there was a pattern of initial preambles differing from year to year or area to area. I am not sure that we helped her in proving any theories but it was a very enjoyable experience especially as we were allowed to handle original wills dating from the seventeenth century.

Altogether it was a very well organised and successful day. Caroline and Susan managed to cope well with the restrictions of space and tea and coffee were thankfully available to refresh us after our palaeographical endeavours. If nothing else, this day really increased my admiration for archivists and their work.

Sue Williams

---

## THE BOOK SALE: SEPTEMBER 2013

We are holding another book sale to raise funds which can be used to assist the Record Office.

### **Can you help please by donating books for this sale?**

The books should be on local history, preferably of Sussex, or general history, or books on related subjects, such as law.

We have a real need for books in these categories, having sold so much of the Record Office's existing stock in the last WSAS book sale in 2011.

Please hand in any books you can spare to Reception at the Record Office. We are ready to receive them now!

Richard Mant

## Events Programme 2013

---

**Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup>** an opportunity to travel a stretch of the Wey and Arun Canal aboard the canal boat Zachariah Keppel. A 2-hour trip on the Wey and Arun Canal, with guest speaker on board, and with tea at the Onslow Arms on return to Loxwood.



The journey will include going under the new road bridge at Loxwood and through the new lock, something we have not done before. The Zachariah Keppel has a toilet on board.

Arrive at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood, at 1.45 pm latest please. Park in the canal car park behind the Onslow Arms. Boat leaves Loxwood at 2.00 pm and returns at about 4.00 pm.

Please return your slip at your very earliest opportunity as few places are remaining

---

**Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>**. Bishopstone, Little Halland (at Norton) and Bishopstone Church. Joint visit with FESRO. MEETING AT 14.00 at Little Halland at Norton, formerly the home of the clergyman and poet James Hurdis.

PARKING is limited. Please share cars if possible. Full details of the parking arrangements will be sent with confirmation of your booking.

**Numbers will be limited so please book early.**

The visit will be led by Philip Pople, a resident of Bishopstone and well known local historian and Christopher Whittick, archivist at ESRO. Philip will show us the house and Christopher will introduce us to the life and work of James Hurdis. After about an hour we will return to visit Bishopstone and the church and at 4.30 a cream tea will be served in the adjoining village hall (formerly the village school).

Charge £8.00 per person. **Payment by cheque to FESRO**, sent to East Sussex County Record Office, The Maltings, Castle Precincts, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1YT **with an SAE** for return of your tickets and further information

---

**Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup>**. A walk around West Tarring with Richard Howell ending in the Tarring Fig Gardens. Long before the growth of Worthing, the village of Tarring was once one of the most important market towns in the area. Now surrounded by 20th Century suburbia, its ancient High Street has miraculously survived more or less intact. This walk lasting just over an hour will look at some of the ancient buildings, talk about the lives of some of the people who once lived there, and will include a rare opportunity to visit the remnants of the Fig Gardens, for which Tarring was once famous.

Meet at the entrance to St. Andrew's Church, Church Road, Tarring BN13 1HQ at 2.30.

---

There maybe occasions when members wish to attend an event but feel they cannot due to transport limitations. Please do not be deterred, we would encourage you to book the event and indicate with your booking slip that you can only attend if it is possible to obtain a lift. Could we also ask please, that any members coming to an event who feel they could give a fellow member a lift let us know with their booking slip. We can then do our best to marry parties together. Thankyou.

---

### *WSAS Committee*

*Caroline Adams - Chairman*

*Richard Martin - Vice Chairman*

*Paul Guest - Treasurer*

*Stella Elliot - Secretary*

*Barrie Keech - Newsletter & Website*

*Helena Millen - Information Manager*

*Helen Whittle - Journal Editor*

*Richard Mant - Committee Member*

*Joy Eccleston - Publicity Manager*

*Leigh Lawson - Administrator*

*Richard Howell - Committee Member*

All contactable using [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

# Booking Slips

Any query about any event please contact: [wsascom@btinternet.com](mailto:wsascom@btinternet.com)

---

Saturday June 8<sup>th</sup>. A 2-hour trip on the Wey and Arun Canal, with guest speaker on board, and with tea at the Onslow Arms on return to Loxwood. The journey will include going under the new road bridge at Loxwood and through the new lock, something we have not done before. The boat is the Zachariah Keppel, with toilet on board. Arrive at the Onslow Arms, Loxwood, at 1.45 pm latest please. Park in the canal car park behind the Onslow Arms. Boat leaves Loxwood at 2.00 pm and returns at about 4.00 pm. Tea in the Onslow Arms on return. **PLEASE BE QUICK THERE ARE JUST A FEW PLACES LEFT**  
Cost to members £15 and £17 for guests.

Names of members attending.....  
Tel No.....Email, or home address.....  
.....  
Names of non-members or guests.....  
Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, to the Honorary Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN

---

Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>. A joint event with the Friends of East Sussex Record Office(FESRO) taking place at Bishopstone, Little Halland (at Norton) and Bishopstone Church.  
MEETING AT 14.00 at Little Halland at Norton, formerly the home of the clergyman and poet James Hurdis. **Numbers will be limited so please book early.**  
Cost £8 per person.

Names of members attending.....  
Tel No.....Email, or home address.....  
.....  
Names of non-members or guests.....  
Amount paid, **cheques made payable to FESRO**.....

**Please return slip by Friday 31st May to FESRO**, East Sussex County Record Office, The Maltings, Castle Precincts, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1YT **with an SAE** for return of your tickets and further information.

---

Saturday July 6<sup>th</sup>. A gentle stroll around Tarring of approximately one hour with opportunity to see the old Fig Gardens for which West Tarring was once famous.  
Meet at the entrance to St. Andrew's Church, Church Road, Tarring BN13 1HQ at 2.30.  
Cost £3 members £5 for non-members

Names of members attending.....  
Tel No.....Email, or home address.....  
.....  
Names of non-members or guests.....  
Amount paid, cheques made payable to WSAS.....

Please return slip by Friday June 21st, to the Honorary Treasurer, WSAS, c/o West Sussex Record Office, County Hall, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1RN