Times Past

Storrington & District Museum

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Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

Dr. Finlay and the Crusader's Tomb

by

Philip Beamont

Some thirty years ago, our Sunday evening viewing was dominated by a series called "Dr. Finlay's Casebook". For several years, each programme concerned two men - a young and headstrong physician and his senior partner - a dour character who loved violins, angling and a "wee dram" at the end of a tiring day in Tannochbrae. The two men were cleverly juxtaposed; Finlay felt that his more recent training entitled him to question any older doctor who adhered to long-established practices, while Cameron urged caution and drew heavily upon his experience of people and their canny ways. Subsidiary characters included the splendid housekeeper, Janet, and the town M.O.H., Dr.Snoddie, whose disqualifications, in Finlay's eyes, included the fact that he was a Lowlander from the Borders.

Their mutual dislike began when an outbreak of typhoid fever was traced, by Finlay, to the milking parlour of a well-respected farmer. Vindicated, Finlay's contempt for accepted medical methods grew apace and brought many confrontations with Snoddie and other - in Finlay's view -expendable physicians. Episode after episode saw him facing towering problems, both professional and personal. He saved the life of a still-born child by plunging it into cold then hot water. He blew up a water-main that was delivering disease to a poor district. He finished an emergency amputation in a coal mine after a roof-fall had shattered his remaining supply of ether. Such skill and courage made for a growing bond of friendship between Finlay (played by Bill Simpson) and Cameron (Andrew Cruikshank).

No doubt some readers may be asking what the above is doing in "Times Past". The explanation is that "Finlay" was , in real life, the autobiographical name for Archibald Joseph Cronin who lived in Sullington, for some years before the Second World War, at the Old Rectory there. He purchased the house from the Rev. Sydney le Mesurier, (father of actor, John, who played Sgt, Wilson in "Dad's Army"). The Mesuriers moved to a smaller home on the Washington road..

The Cronins had come to Sullington hoping to escape the pressures that go with celebrity status; the fame that attends the writer of stories that earned many re-prints and translations into many languages. His first book, "Hatters Castle", was written while Cronin was recovering from duodenal ulcers. The script was rescued by his wife from a waste-heap where Cronin had thrown it after receiving many rejection slips. By 1935, when Cronin's autobiography - "Adventures in Two Worlds" - was published, the much-loved novel had achieved 29 re- prints.

Cronin's hopes for a quiet life in sleepy Sussex never materialised. His family's joy soon passed as invitations began to pour into the Old Rectory for public appearances and charitable activities. At first he wrote glowingly of his new home. ".....a Georgian rectory with great charm and character, an old-world garden, age-mellowed out- buildings, and a glorious view of the downs." Glowing also were his comments on Canon Palmer, although it is unlikely that they ever met " ..... the reverend gentleman ..... who

was matched in eccentricity by his ... lady". Perhaps Cronin wanted to create a dynasty as had the Palmers. But it was not to be. "... if I had expected to enjoy a measure of seclusion, isolated by the privacy of my new estate, I was rudely undeceived. The new world in which I found myself was more frantic than the old. Upon such a one come requests to open welfare centres, garden fetes and charity bazaars; to speak at club breakfasts, gala dinners to broadcast for charitable institutions ..... The list goes on. Joan Ham, in her "Sullington - Domesday to D-Day", tells us that Cronin must write 5,000 words a day to keep up with demand for his books. He resented any interference with this, even asking Farmer Heckes to remove his sheep, as they distracted him!

One of his minor novels was "The Crusader's Tomb", no doubt inspired by the effigy just inside the church door and a gentle walk from his office at the Rectory. The knight who lies there, much the worse for centuries of wear and tear, is probably one of the de Coverts who had been granted the manor in 1316.Joan suggests that the story contains some thinly-disguised Sullingtonians. This is, of course, a ploy often used by desperate writers, but one wonders if such a prickly and reclusive man as Cronin was would have met many locals.

A succession of literary triumphs followed "Hatter's Castle", notably "The Citadel", an unprecedented attack upon the medical establishment, the G.M.C. and those "fashionable" doctors and specialists who had, in Cronin's eyes, sold their principles to the highest bidders. Almost every story had its origins in the author's own experiences in his "two worlds" but, as these dwindled, he returned increasingly to the Catholic faith which he had largely deserted in his golden years. His themes became religious rather than medical - his heroes priests instead of doctors. But the format remained much the same - the young rebel at odds with smug and comfortable bureaucrats.

Did Cronin ever, anywhere, find the isolation that had eluded him in Sullington? He certainly enjoyed his first taste of New England where ..... "in the gold and scarlet autumn, we purchased a house in Connecticut and settled down for good." But not, maybe, for good because A.J.Cronin, writer, doctor and Dr.Finlay to the millions, died, as a tax-exile, in Switzerland in 1981. He was 84.

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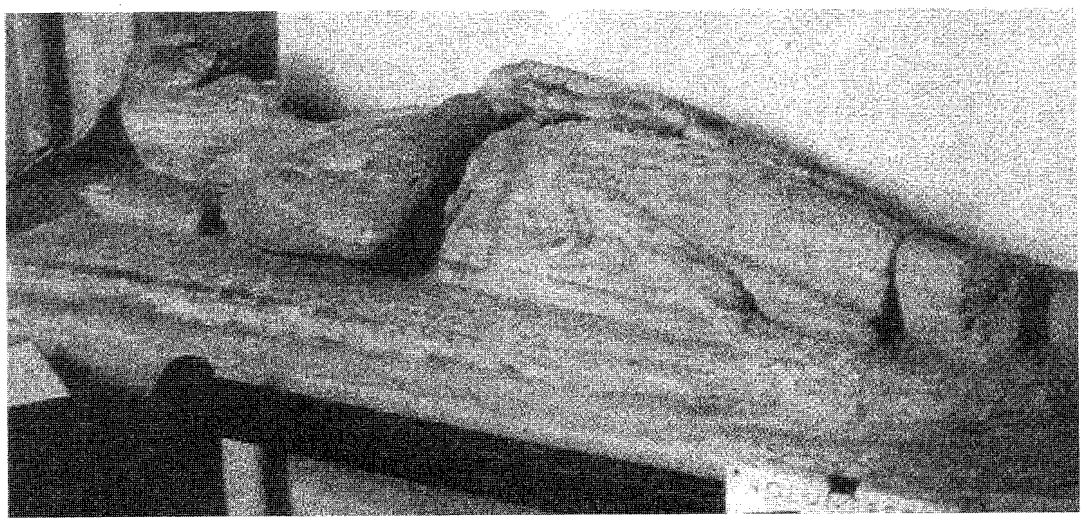

The marble effigy of a knight, Sullington Church
(photo by Joan Ham)

A Rather Sad Day

by

Chris West

I was very chuffed when Philip Beaumont asked me to contribute a piece for "Times Past" - but this pleasure didn't last beyond my mentioning it to the family. Their views were candid and very telling - as only close family can be.

Wife - "That's ridiculous - you know nothing about history and you're not local."

Elder daughter - "what you - who always turns the television off at the hint of a costume drama - and you think Jane Austen should be published by Mills and Boone"

Younger daughter - "But you won't go near a museum unless there are cars or railway engines inside"

Son - "You know nothing about it, Dad - but then that's never stopped you being an expert on anything"

Evidently those who know me best think I am not the ideal candidate for the task in hand. They exaggerate of course - I am proud to hold the Ordinary Level General Certificate of Education in History so I must have known my stuff in 1965 - and I have occasionally enjoyed the odd collection of aircraft as well as trains and cars.

So, having promised Philip that I would "have a go", and spurred on by my son's ringing endorsement this is the result. Different, I am sure, from the usual content of the Newsletter, it adds nothing to local historical knowledge but 1 hope you find it of passing interest.

I am writing this on 17th September when, alongside acres of newsprint regarding the Hutton Enquiry, is the news of the disastrous f ire at The National Motorcycle Museum. The latter seems unfortunate but quite insignificant compared with the matters of death, honour and war being examined at the Law Courts. Except I have the feeling that the big issues in Hutton are being overwhelmed and devalued (in the press at least) by insinuations of who said what to whom and by attempts to salvage doomed careers - whilst I feel we have irretrievably lost a genuine part of our industrial heritage in the f ire.

I have no particular interest in motorcycles although I have "done the ton" as a pillion passenger on a Kawasaki ridden by a relation - better not say just which relation in case there is no statute of limitation for speeding. And I have been to the National Motorcycle Museum and, whilst for me it was an interesting couple of hours, for an enthusiast it must have been an Aladdin's cave.

My lifelong passion has been for Morgan - first and last of the real Sports Cars - you may have seen my white 2 seater 4/4 parked in the village. Had it been the Morgan factory in Malvern that had been razed to the ground I think I would have been devastated so, today, I have considerable sympathy for enthusiasts of Triumph, Norton, Enfield and the rest. To see so many historic machines, which yesterday were highly polished and in perfect running order, reduced to charred wrecks must be heartbreaking.

There are however, other, more important, parallels and comparisons here. The almost total loss of the motorcycle industry has long been slated as the prime example of the decline of British manufacturing and this morning's f ire just seems to add insult to injury. That Morgan, with an annual output of only around 700 cars, is now among the largest of the very few British owned car rnanufacturers also speaks volumes about our dearth of manufacturing capability

Decline in respect of the value of Engineering is at the heart of many of the economic ills of this country - just look at the state we have allowed our railway infrastructure to get into. Daft though it was, Rail Privatisation is less a cause of the present woes than decades of ineffective trackwork maintenance. We need museums such as those at Beaulieu and York to show how we once engineered great projects and, more importantly, how we must do so again.

In particular such museums must be used to encourage our most able youngsters to take up Engineering as an interesting and worthwhile career. Their teachers. also, should visit to improve their appreciation of the work of Engineers - for only then can they begin to enthuse their pupils to follow the Engineering profession.

Tangible museum exhibits like Mallard and Bluebird together with such icons as the Forth Rail Bridge and Concorde, which are still earning their keep, are surely more inspirational than any amount of case law. And who would possibly want to become an accountant after an afternoon at the National Accountancy Museum?

But to return to historical exhibits in our area - have you been on the tour of the Brighton sewers? Whilst not to be recommended for sufferers of claustrophobia it is not particularly unpleasant in the respects you might imagine. If for no other reason, the tour is worth doing to admire the artistry of the brickwork - indeed what the Victorians did for us. Again teachers should take their pupils to this example of living history - it might just convince some of the long-term worth of a career as a Civil Engineer. And whilst they are there they might ponder this. Potable water supplies and public sanitation, which we take for granted, are probably the most significant long term benefits we can bring to the Third World.

Today's fire brings into sharp focus the fact that we can only minimize the likelihood of the loss of the irreplaceable. We cannot exclude the possibility of such loss altogether - unless, that is, we hide all our treasures from view - and what would be the point of that ? So, wearing my Chartered Engineer's hardhat (you'd never have guessed would you) my message is - look to your fire defences and install a good sprinkler system.

I am afraid, though, my family's verdict is all too accurate - I am an historical Philistine. Apart from those dedicated to my own enthusiasms museums remain for me rather dull and dusty places. But I do know that the Father of Modern Kenya once lived in the village where I now live - and I would not have known this delightful, bizarre piece of local trivia without the efforts of the enthusiasts at the Storrington Museum and for this I thank them.

WINTER PROGRAMME (2003/04)

January 15, 2004 :-
"West Sussex in the 20's " by Martin Hayes.

The Museum will be open for viewing the exhibition "Storrington School days - a look back at this Old School."

February 12:-
"Electricity, 100 years in the home" by John Narborough.

March 11:-
"Windmills in the South East" by Jim Woodward Nutt.
The Museum will be open for viewing the exhibition "Reginald Fairfax Wells - designer, builder & potter".

REGINA v. STORRINGTON
WHEN IS A ROAD NOT A ROAD?

by Joan Ham

Vestry minutes are records of the fore-runners of the local councils. The name suggests the 'parish pump' nature of matters dealt with at such meetings -little local matters that hardly made ripples outside of the parish or village concerned, although they might have been seven day wonders to the inhabitants. Just such an item was recorded in the Vestry
Meeting of March 1871 in Storrington, when Mr Albert Lee and Mr Rowland James were elected Surveyors of the Highway. These gentlemen with the Waywardens were responsible for local roads, a thankless task in any age and one more often receiving brickbats than bouquets from the users of roads.

Anyone who has ever sat through routine committee meetings can imagine the groan that arose when letters were read from Mr Emery of Hurston, (a lane leading away from the main Storrington-Pulborough route to a farm, mill and a few cottages, eventually emerging at Wiggonholt on to the road it left at Hurston; Another branch goes into W.Chiltington).
:Letters on behalf of Mr Emery were read from a solicitor, Mr Edmonds of Worthing. demanding that the ratepayers or Surveyors of Storrington, "... forthwith to repair with metal and put in good order the High Road leading from Hurston Mill to Old House, Monkmead Gate and Roundabouts, also Hurston Hill in the parish of Storrington..unless the said roads are put into repair legal proceedings will be taken"

The Vestry had been through all this many times. Mr Emery, as the tenant of the mill was an interested party. It was his wagons and his customers' traffic that had to use the muddy rutted lane. There was a stream which crossed a low part of the lane, adding to its appalling condition in wet weather. Mr Emery had grown tired of applying to the Vestry for improvements and being told that it was not a parish road. The Vestry was even more determined that the ratepayers should not pay for Mr Emery's wagons' easier passage and had had more than enough of correspondence about it. If he threatened them with the law, let him understand that they were not to be intimidated! They informed Mr Edmonds that in the interests of the parish, "...should any hostile proceedings be taken they would take such steps as shall forever put an end to the litigious feeling which has existed for many years."

Three years' impasse ended in Petworth at the Quarter Sessions of April 1874. The Vestry lost that battle, but the war continued. Mr Dalbiac proposed that the Waywardens seek Counsel's advice whether it was advisable to try again at the Sessions or the Assizes. A show of hands supported him, and the Vestry even put the matter to the people paying the bills and held a Parish Poll. The result was 131 votes for and 42 against Mr Dalbiac's resolution, and in the meantime, the Waywardens had been advised to move for trial at the Assizes. The Vestry fastened their colours to the mast and a board on the turnpike, advising travelers that "...there was no road for Carts and Carriages..." but only a track for foot passengers and a bridleway."

Mr Emery was furious, but powerless to prevent them. Mr Mant, the Storrington solicitor, was instructed by the Vestry to prepare the brief and take the necessary steps in the action
Regina v. Storrington.

And so to the Spring Assizes of 1875. The hearing was before Mr Justice Denman
and a special jury: Mr Day Q.C. and Mr Merrifield, instructed by Mr Edmonds for the prosecution, and Mr Serjeant Parry and Mr Lumley Smith, instructed by Mr Mant appearing for the defendants.
The first day began with Mr Merrifield opening the pleadings and Mr Day stating the case for the prosecution. The first witness called was the surveyor for Lord Leconfield's estates, Mr Henry Thomas Upton. He was sworn, and produced a large plan which he had prepared, which caused Mr Justice Denman to observe that his copy was not so large, and wanting to know what the difference was. He had been supplied with a copy of the defendant's plan, but was assured that all the relevant roads were shown on both plans; the prosecution's map showed more of the general parish. Time was then devoted to agreeing the disputed roads on the two maps.

Some interesting facts about 19th century roads emerged during this, and subsequent questioning. The prosecution's map revealed that part of the "road" was three or four parallel tracks. There were frequently gates across which could and did hinder passage, the first one between the turnpike and the disputed section. There were two or more gates down to an old bridge, and then another, after which, the road was admitted to be a wapple or bridle road.

At this point, a juror spoke up to ask for a definition of a wapple road,, and was informed by Mr Serjeant Parry that there would be witnesses who would define it for him. The surveyor was questioned in detail about the condition of gateposts, whether there might have been staples on the opening side, and whether there were tracks at the sides of the gates. He also gave evidence of the level of the road compared to the land on either side, to establish whether it was cut down or worn down, and as to the road surface, whether stones had been used in soft parts. Mr Upton agreed that it was very usual to find public roads split up into several tracks across common or downland. "If the centre course is worn out they diverge to the right or left" he said. He also agreed that these tracks were very ancient. Becoming specific again, he told the court that the road was out of repair between the turnpike and the Old House. This was not contested, merely the liability.

Questioned further about stones found on the road, stones which had been dug out of the warren for repairs, (where there was a gravel pit) he agreed that this material was used to repair public roads. Part of the disputed track was across a field ploughed up by Mr Emery, but the stones appeared there, as elsewhere; nearly a mile was admitted to be "soft". Referring to gates placed across roads, Counsel established that these were within particularly short distances, and extracted the agreement of the witness that they were "...certainly not for the convenience of carts and carriages." He was pressed to say whether Mr Emery had a key to the gate, and whether his lambing fold was erected with hurdles across the road. The judge intervened to suggest that it was a waste of time putting these questions to the surveyor, when other witnesses would be called with personal knowledge of the situation. Mr Serjeant Parry also established that he was professionally employed by Lord Leconfield, who, together with Mr Emery, were the prosecutors of the indictment. He read a letter of 8 March 1871 from Mr Edmonds, requiring the parish to repair with metal about four miles of road.

The next witness was Mr Richard Coleman Emery, prosecutor of the indictment. He admitted that no repairs had been done to the road for the past ten years, but claimed that the parish had repaired until 1866 at their expense, since when it had deteriorated. He described, when requested to do so, the repairing of soft roads. This consisted of throwing the sides into the middle and packing in the ruts with hard material such as flint, rock and stones, "...the same as they use on the turnpike roads". There were a few places, he admitted, where there were not traces of the road being hardened. Emery named the waywardens, Mr Thomas Challen, Mr Edward Mant, Thomas Charles, carter, and Edward West, corn merchant, saying that in their time, he observed men employed by them, throwing the sidings into the middle of the road and "... grubbing in the tracks". He himself had ^been a waywarden in 1865, and had ordered repairs; he carried loads of gravel and stone for the purpose, by Mr Heath's order and for Mr Terry. This had involved payment for the use of his horses and carts. He took over as waywarden from Mr Heath in 1863, and continued repairing the road for two more years, when the Vestry disputed his accounts.

Time was devoted to questions about the parallel tracks across the waste, and Emery's ploughing of one in 1871. Mr Justice Denman made the revealing observation:-
"This sounds very like one's general notion of a Sussex road in the older times, but that will not settle the question of whether it is a High Road or not: but it's very like a Sussex road in the olden time, neither a High road, nor not a High road."

Mr Merrifield turned his attention to traffic on the road, and Mr Emery claimed to have seen
"... people on horseback, horses, waggons, carts, carriages, millers' carts, doctors, butchers, drapers and grocers."
This was not specific enough for Mr Serjeant Parry,

who in rigorous cross-examination took everything he had mentioned singly, and demanded to know how many of each and their names, and whether they would be called as witnesses. Switching the attack, he then established that Mr Heath was a tenant of Lord Leconfield when, as waywarden, he ordered the repairs to the road. He was also a close neighbour of Emery, and would have been the one to pay him for the work, but Emery could not produce accounts or receipts. A further point brought out, was that since 1835, a bridge had carried the disputed road over the stream. Mr Day's questioning concerned the accounts submitted to the Vestry, and under Statute, allowed or disallowed by the justices.

"Now," said Mr Day, "I call for the parish books".
Asked by Mr Justice Denman to be precise, he demanded those for the weekly accounts of the waywardens.
"I shall shew they existed", he stated.

The next witness sworn in was Edward Sayers, clerk to Mr Edmonds, the attorney for the prosecution. He had been shown and had examined parish books, but had seen none for 1835; this led him to the assumption that several books were missing. Mr Sayers agreed that reference was made to these missing books, and a balance had been brought forward from the labour book with red cover." Although those references went back to 1818, he had not found those books. The 1839 book referred to work done by contract. The judge asked to be shown the book and noted certain sums of money and days' work with the men's names, "... one with the illustrious name of Tom Lillywhite" [*the highwayman*?] Further perusal led him to comment, "It is not very businesslike, because there are no dates. Then at the end there is this, "Parish of Storrington annual abstract of accounts for the year ending 25th March 1840. Receipts, Expenditure." He continued reading, "We whose names are hereunder signed agree to the above accounts", then there is Emery and Greenfield, surveyors. Lee, Brigden, Challen, Duke and Dixon." After some discussion as to the nature of the evidence of the books, there was agreement between prosecution and defence to accept the information from them by consent, and Mr William Death was sworn.
He was the High Bailiff of the Petworth district of the Sussex County Court, and had known the indicted road for about 27 years. He testified to driving along the road in that time to get from the Pulborough Road to Thakeham and Storrington. His business involved a good deal of travelling. Mr Death was asked whether he ever met others using it, and agreed that he had, and had sent his own men that way. He did not assume it to be a private road, but agreed that gates across roads were far too common. He said he had never been obstructed or interfered with in his use of the road, but as sheriff's officer, asserted when asked if he knew most people thereabouts, "Yes: and more know me than want to know me!",
which led Mr Serjeant Parry to observe drily,
"I suppose no one, scarcely, would think of turning a sheriff's officer back: it would be a very rash thing to do."
With this parting shot he was released, and John Gibbs was sworn.

John Gibbs was hired to drive carts, or as the shorthand writer took it down,
"Yes, they are higher carts."
He lived just below Mr Emery at Winterfield, and had known the road for 50 years. His evidence was of the use of the road by carts and "I never knew anybody but what always went that way."
Much time was taken up by Mr Serjeant Parry trying to persuade Mr Gibbs to say how many times carts went along the road, but however he re-phrased or suggested numbers, he could get little more than, "Not very often".

Pressed by the judge to make a guess and save time, he replied that he didn't know. Asked finally if he was on friendly terms with the Emerys, whom he admitted knowing, he replied with finality,
"I can't hear, I am deaf."

Henry Lillywhite aged 63 followed him. He had been foreman to the Emerys for 24 years, having been born and brought up on the estate. He said he had seen the road used by the public in carts, wagons, driving and walking. He had helped with road repairs,
"... by my master's instructions when he has been paid by the parish to take the hardening on the road ."

He recalled seeing "Parish men" regularly in the winter, doing road work, mentioning Tom Slaughter, John Andrews, Thomas Searle, Emery Butcher and Joe Hillier by name. He had seen Mr Heath and Mr Emery giving them instructions as to repairs. He was urged to name people he had seen using the road other than Mr Emery's own traffic, but the names he produced under pressure were either dead or not in court. Finally, Mr Serjeant Parry put it to him that he did not know that there was anyone in court who could support his assertions and replied
"No, they drive there when they like."
"So your master said" retorted counsel, "If it rested with you and your master, we should make very short work of this case!"

Another elderly inhabitant was sworn. He was William Charman aged 83. He worked on Hurston Place for a great number of years, and after his marriage lived in a cottage on Hurston Farm. His memory proved erratic. Although the turnpike was made in 1810, he said he did not remember it, but when asked if it was made before his recollection, said, "No it was not."
He remembered taking a load of wheat to a Mr Jupp at Petworth sixty years before, but did not remember if the turnpike was then made, although further questioning recalled to his mind that the direction he took with the wheat had been
"... off the turnpike road, by the Old House and up the Warren."
Mr Day asked him again, when he brought that wheat along, was the turnpike road made?
"I cannot tell you" the old man replied.
Mr Justice Denman suggested that it was a road before it was a turnpike road, to which Mr Day agreed. William Charman did acknowledge that it was a "roughish road".
Regarding the indicted road,
"No, I never recollect nothing stopped."

The court reassembled after a short adjournment

(*as we will in the next issue* - Editor)

CURATOR'S CORNER

According to a recent edition of the Daily Mail, the works of Agatha Christie are no longer in favour with the reading public and the writer of the report speculates that this is because the cosy, middle-class world in which the stories are set has little relevance in today's society. It is tempting to wonder whether, in fact, the same society ever, really, did exist, except perhaps for a very small percentage of the population. Could it fairly be said that the society in which some of the currently fashionable "whodunnits" [or is that term also now passe?] are set really exists ? [and if it does, what does that say about us all ?] Terry Wogan is not alone in wondering how the small populations of the Midsomer villages survive when so many are wiped out in each episode of "Midsomer Murders" !
The point I am [trying to] make is that we live in an ever-changing world. Sometimes change seems to happen more quickly than at other times, but that is almost certainly dependent on the standpoint of the individual. If one's home life is static, it doesn't necessarily mean that the world outside our front doors will stay the same. Each day brings new beginnings and endings which will have great impact on some and none at all on others. The recent sad loss of Father Kevin Cassidy closes a chapter in the local scene covering almost half a century and many local people of all denominations will have their own favourite "Cass" story.
As most of our readers will be aware, the next few months are a critical time for the Museum and, in the meantime, we can only hold our breath and "wait and see" what the outcome may be. Until then there is little that can sensibly be done to further future projects, other than make outline plans for what we would like to do. We are accumulating a number of family trees and, in due course, a volunteer will be needed to index the names from these and assimilate them into both the general card index and a new family history index [as part of our original Millennium project]. We have acquired a computer and, eventually, it is hoped to be able to have all our indexes available, in the Museum, as a searchable database. I will also be looking for someone to catalogue both the Library- and archive- collections. These are currently included within the main Museum catalogue but, with both collections growing at a very fast rate, it is now becoming desirable that they should have their own, independent catalogues to facilitate faster retrieval and more positive identification of possibly duplicated material.
It is vital at the present time to keep the profile of the Museum as high as possible in the local consciousness. Please, especially during the approaching holiday period, bring as many visitors to the Museum as possible, especially if you have not visited recently. Spread the word to anyone who may not know we exist [and, amazingly, there are still local people who ask "What Museum?"]. If you belong to another local group who would like an "out of hours" visit then we will be happy to arrange this – please contact Ron or Joan for further information.

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