

Times Past

Issue No. 19, Winter 2004/5

Storrington & District Museum

Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

A WEDDING AT STEYNING

The love affair that changed Irish history

Steyning Register Office; June 25th 1891. In a simple civil ceremony, the little - known daughter of a clergyman was married to a famous - some thought infamous - politician. She was Katharine (Kitty) O'Shea; he was Charles Stewart Parnell, the ousted leader of the Irish Home Rule coalition in Parliament.

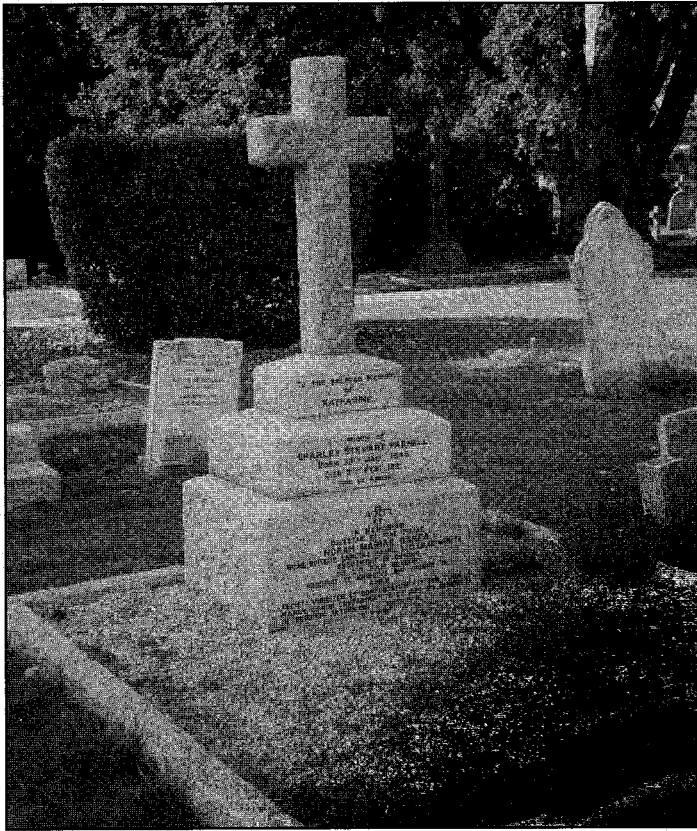
Parnell, a brilliant parliamentary tactician, was able to take advantage of the intense rivalry between the Liberal and Tory parties by holding together a disparate group of Irish MP's who came to be called the Home Rule Party. His main difficulty was in holding back the more extreme elements in Ireland itself where militant activity ranged from "boycotting" to murder. Prime Minister Gladstone, anxious to alleviate the appalling conditions in Ireland, but also to keep the Liberals in office, found himself, in 1886, with a majority in the Commons of 86 seats - exactly the number of Irish members in Parnell's group. So Gladstone introduced a modest Home Rule Bill which was supported by Parnell but caused enough Liberal deserters to vote against it, and the Bill was lost.

Parnell continued to lead the Home Rule group in the now Tory Commons but troubles lay ahead. These were partly of Parnell's own doing - he was an unlikely Irish patriot anyway, in the eyes of many of his supporters. Though born in Ireland and representing an Irish constituency, he had an American mother, was a Protestant and was largely educated at Cambridge. Perhaps of greater moment was his liaison with the wife of a fellow MP - Captain O'Shea. The lovers were traced to a house in Medina Terrace, Hove, and O'Shea filed a petition for divorce, citing Parnell as co-respondent.

Additionally, the English Establishment was determined that the fate of the country would not, in future, be at the mercy of men whom they regarded as Irish rebels. A series of forged documents appeared in the London "Times" blaming Parnell for the Phoenix Park murders. This, coupled with the affront to Catholic opinion of Parnell's love affair with Kitty O'Shea, broke the Irish alliance so carefully constructed by Parnell, and condemned Ireland to violence and misery that has lasted to our own times.

Broken by disgrace and ill-health, Parnell married Kitty at Steyning in the summer of 1891 and the couple began their new married life at Walsingham Terrace (now Dorset Court), Hove. Within four months Parnell was dead and was buried at Glasnevin. Kitty, with her daughter, Norah, lived the rest of her life in Littlehampton. Mother and daughter are buried in Littlehampton Cemetery, where Kitty's head rests on a pillow of her love letters from Charles Stewart Parnell.

E.P.B.



Littlehampton Cemetery - Grave of Kitty O'Shea and her daughter

FAMOUS RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT - No.3

Maude Petre

A little while ago the subject of Father Tyrrell came up again and Joan asked me if I could discover some information about the rather mysterious Miss Petre who was his staunch patron and friend during his last years at Storrington. I set out expecting to find a rather retiring maiden lady, a little in love with the unattainable Catholic priest. A glance at her entry in *"Who was Who"* indicated that she was educated "at Home", which did nothing to prepare me for what I eventually discovered. I was in for a surprise !

Maude Dominica Mary Petre was born 4 Aug 1863, the fourth daughter of Arthur Charles Augustus Petre of Coptford Hall, Essex and his wife Lady Katherine [or Catherine] Howard, youngest daughter of William, 4th Earl of Wicklow, KP. She died 16 Dec 1942

Maude was born into an English Roman Catholic family related to the Dukes of Norfolk, the leading

English lay Roman Catholic family. Although educated "at home", Maude started writing theological works whilst still in her teenage years, was a founder of Westminster Cathedral, worked as a nurse both in England and France during WWI, was a prominent member of the "Modernist" movement within the Roman Catholic faith and befriended the controversial Jesuit priest, Father George Tyrrell, whom she provided with a home in his last years and became his literary executor as well as publishing a major biography of his life and work. She also spent some time at the Abbaye de Pontigny in France when she was involved with the International Centre for Students.

There are two major studies of her life's work, *"Maude Petre's Way of Faith"* by Clyde Crews and *"Unresting Transformation"* by Ellen Leonard. Both these deal with her later life and her own particular philosophy rather than with her background and personal life. Her own books *"My Way of Faith"* which makes a short reference to her father and her biography of her great, great grandfather *"The 9th Lord Petre or Pioneers of Roman Catholic Emancipation, by his great, great, granddaughter"* also contain a small amount of autobiographical information but do not really place her within her family. There are also numerous entries on the Internet as well as a comparatively recent re-publishing of one of her works *"My Way of Faith"*.

In her day she was perceived as a controversial figure, undoubtedly because of her association with George Tyrrell and other major figures in the Modernist movement, although she herself would probably have considered herself basically orthodox in her faith. She set out to question and, having questioned, seems to have found herself at peace with the Church, although, in her modest request that her funeral should avoid controversy, seems to have recognised that the Church may not have been at peace with her ! Her Will asks :

"to be buried in Storrington churchyard in the plot belonging to me between the grave of Arthur Bell and the wall and I leave all religious arrangements to my Trustees desiring only that there be no controversy with religious Authorities in the matter and that all religious ceremony be omitted if objection be raised by the said Authorities. I particularly desire that my

funeral shall be conducted with as little expense as possible and that only a small inexpensive cross shall be erected on my grave"

The "Catholic Who's Who 1938 states :

"Born 1863 *Temperament of Doubt; Where Saints Have Trod; Devotional Essays. Joint author of The Saints Orbit; Letters of George Tyrrell; The Fascist Movement in Italian Life [translation with introduction and comments]; Human and Political Idealism – a series of essays on Lammenais.* Known for her charitable works; founder of Westminster Cathedral. Assists in the direction of the International Centre for Students at Pontigny."

And there is a "Publisher's Note" in the 9th *Lord Petre or Pioneers of Roman Catholic Emancipation, by his great, great, granddaughter Maude Domenica Pètre*" [SPCK 1928] :

"The point of view from which this book is written is not that of the Society which publishes it. The Literary Committee of the Society have taken the responsibility of publishing the book in the hope that

it will contribute towards the cause of Christian Reunion."

Maude inscribed the book "To my father; Loyal, Charitable, Just", an epitaph which seems equally appropriate to herself.

Although in later years she divided her time between London and Storrington, as well as her interests overseas, she played a part in local affairs and left bequests to Storrington Village Hall, Storrington WI and the Sussex County Hospital, Brighton and is also credited with starting a cottage hospital in Brewer's Yard in 1915 where the house she provided for Father Tyrrell is also to be found.

For an unmarried woman of her time Maude seems to have led a life of unprecedented energy and creativity. There is little doubt from her own writings that she was indeed in love with George Tyrrell, there is equally little doubt that this was never expressed in more than the Platonic sense.

H.M.W.

FAMOUS RESIDENTS OF THE DISTRICT - No. 4

William Penn in Sussex

by Malcolm Linfield

Earlier this year, on October 14, we celebrated the 360th anniversary of the birth of William Penn (1644-1718), undoubtedly the most famous of the early Quakers and one of the greatest people to have ever lived in our local area. Among his many achievements was the foundation of his utopian colony in America where people were allowed to worship without fear of persecution. Yet he also spent a large part of his life in Sussex - his mansion house at Warminghurst was his family home for nearly 30 years - and it was here that he formulated so many of his ideas, including the Constitution for his colony of Pennsylvania.

Until the establishment of proper Quaker Meeting Houses, Friends would assemble at other members' homes, and after their arrival at Warminghurst in 1676, the Penn household was also made available for this purpose. Warminghurst came into the area of the Horsham Monthly Meeting, and when Penn left England in 1682 for his first visit to America, he took with him many Quakers from the local area. In 1691 he helped to buy a property at Coolham, some four miles away, where the Thakeham Meeting House was established. Subsequently known as the 'Blue Idol', this famous building is still used to this day as a place of Quaker worship. It receives many visitors, often from the United States, who, among other things, come to savour the atmosphere so redolent of Penn's era.

Penn found it difficult to stay in one place for any time and was continually travelling. His visit to

Pennsylvania in 1682 kept him away for some two years. After his return to England he remained at Warminghurst until 1691 when he was forced to go into hiding due to the uncertainty of his political affiliations to the previous King, James II. James was a Catholic who had hoped to restore the Catholic faith as the established religion, and he found people like Penn very useful in his attempts to undermine the religious settlement that had followed the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. But James' removal from the throne in 1688 made Penn's position very difficult.

Lack of space prevents any detailed analysis of Penn's beliefs and achievements, so the main purpose of this article is to try and find out why he chose to make his home in our area. The fact that his wife Gulielma, whom he married in 1672, had inherited a considerable amount of property in Sussex must have been a factor in their decision to look for a place to live in the county. In fact, Gulielma's father Sir William Springett had died during the siege of Arundel Castle in 1643, where he was fighting for the Parliamentarians. Apart from the magnificent views of the South Downs, the Jacobean house at Warminghurst was very spacious – if somewhat ugly – and particularly appealed to the Penns for its location in what would have been a fairly remote part of Sussex. And yet, despite the privacy and seclusion it offered during times of political unrest, it was close enough to London – no more than a day's journey away – for Penn to get quickly to the capital when he needed to. It has been claimed that the Warminghurst house and estate came to Gulielma Penn as a family inheritance, but there is no evidence to support this.

Another consideration for Penn was the presence in the locality of a strong and flourishing Quaker community – he was among Friends! He could help in many various and practical ways, not least by making available his large house for Quaker meetings. In fact, in July 1677 he organised a huge meeting of several hundred Friends at Warminghurst – much to the disquiet of the local gentry.

Increasingly disillusioned with the religious intolerance they experienced in England, Penn looked to the New World as a place where he could put his enlightened ideas into practice. Friends were routinely arrested and thrown into the fetid filth of the local prisons for refusing to swear oaths of allegiance to the King. Many died from the diseases they contracted. Yet their faith must have amazed their tormentors: they blessed their gaolers as they were dragged away, prayed for their souls and forgave them for treating them with such cruelty. Whilst living at Warminghurst, Penn formulated his plans for setting up a new colony where people could worship as they pleased. Luckily for Penn, King Charles II and his brother, James Duke of York, owed him a considerable amount of money for loans made to them by his father. Admiral Penn had advanced some £15,000 to the Government towards the construction of new ships, which was an enormous sum at the time. Penn was therefore in an advantageous bargaining position to negotiate with the King for a large grant of land adjoining the colony of New Jersey, and in March 1681, Charles signed a charter granting permission for the project. The name of “Pennsylvania” was chosen in memory of Admiral Penn for his indirect – yet essential – role in making William's dream a possibility.

When he set out in the ship ‘Welcome’ in 1682, he took over 100 emigrants with him, many from West Sussex. Ironically, by depleting the local Quaker community of many of its supporters, he effectively weakened the movement in Sussex. However, it is very difficult to quantify the overall effect of taking so many of these people out of circulation. It is certainly true to say that nationally the Quaker movement began to decline during the 18th century, but a change in the political scene meant they were no longer persecuted for their religious beliefs, effectively diluting their zeal to change the World. Their industrious nature - centred upon thrift and honesty - created prosperous businesses. Yet, ironically, this increased affluence destroyed the religious fervour that had so much appeal in the previous century, and the universal goals disappeared. No longer willing to court controversy or offend, the eighteenth century Quakers became more circumspect. The pursuit of private ends became more important to them, and hundreds must have drifted away as the beliefs of a previous generation lost their relevance.

It was during his first visit to America that Penn made a peace treaty with the Indians, promising them friendship and protection; he had no desire to confront or exploit them. His family remained at Warminghurst during his absence, and were no doubt extremely pleased to see him once again when he returned two years later. Various warrants were issued to arrest him, but his connections with the Court and the status of his father appear to have protected him and he was never arrested or imprisoned in Sussex.

The Quakers were left alone under James II (1685-88), but after William and Mary accepted the throne, the persecution of nonconformists was actively resumed. Sadly for Penn, things began to go badly wrong for him during the 1690s. Arrest warrants for High Treason were issued against him, and he fled to exile in France, although he was still able to spend isolated periods at his Sussex home. He was also losing control of the government in Pennsylvania, perhaps not a little surprising on account of his long absence. And on top of all this, he experienced a number of personal tragedies – his beloved wife Gulielma died in 1694, and then came the loss of his favourite and most promising son Springett in 1696, possibly from tuberculosis.

His second marriage in 1696, to Hannah Callowhill obviously brought him much personal happiness once again, but at a cost, and they moved back to Warminghurst, despite Hannah's dislike for the place. But Penn's new commitments – a second family, the purchase of new homes in London and Bristol – as well as disappointing returns on his land in America, meant that fortune as he slipped further into debt, his health began to fail and he lost political control in Pennsylvania. He died on 30 July 1718.



he was becoming financially stretched. He returned to Pennsylvania for a second time in 1699, but by the early 1700s he owed considerable sums of money. This precipitated the end of his links with Warminghurst, for in 1707 he decided to sell the house to raise much needed funds. His son Billy, his wife Mary and sister Letitia, opposed his decision but Penn had little choice in the face of mounting debts. He received £6053 plus £2300 for timber and stock. Sadly the remainder of his years were a continuation of declining

So, what is left of Penn's strong links with West Sussex?

The Blue Idol: this famous building, which he helped to found, still exists today and is still used as a Quaker meeting house.

The Ifield Meeting House: the earliest in Sussex and where he attended a number of meetings, which is still a Quaker meeting house.

Penn House at Steyning: Penn occasionally preached and worshipped here. The house still exists but is now a private home.

Warminghurst: sadly, the house which Penn owned for more than 30 years is no more. It was purchased in 1707 by James Butler, who proceeded to build himself a new mansion to the east – he then demolished Penn's old house, determined to remove all traces of the old Quaker.

Penn's links with Sussex were greater than anywhere else; he spent the larger part of his life here and it is the only place he mentions by name in his will.

Famous Residents of the district
No. 5
FRANK KNIGHT

Frank Knight was a very remarkable man. He came to the area from Kent just after the 1914 - 18 war and lived in Chantry Mill Cottage (since demolished), later moving to Hillside Walk. He was a man born with daunting handicaps, his legs were useless below the knees, which were padded so that he could walk on them. He had no hands, his arms ending at his elbows. He was a builder and contractor.

Just after the 1914 - 18 war there was a great demand for houses, and according to a magazine article on him,

"With craftsmanship which speaks volumes for his knowledge of the work, and with an instinctive ability to meet the requirements of the house-hunter, Mr Frank Knight ... has succeeded in applying the best of the old building traditions to the requirements of modern times. In the delightful part of Sussex just north of the South Downs and off the Storrington-Horsham Road, on sandy soil and amongst silver birches and heather, Mr Knight has constructed a number of bungalows [*Crescent Rise*] which fit admirably into the landscape.

It might add to the interest to say that Mr Knight was the man to produce the cement stone bricks and tiles used in his work some seventeen years ago and although physically handicapped ... up to within the last three years Mr Knight made all his own joinery for his work, but since his teeth have worn down and have been extracted he has had to relinquish that work and devote his energies to other work.

For the last nearly sixty years Mr Knight has tried to show others what can be done by trying."

Frank Knight used to drive about in a little pony cart although it was said that he was not kind to his pony. He started to build houses along the Worthing Road boundary of the old Sandgate Estate about 1922 - 23 and bungalows near the tile works.

He opened his first sandpit in the Thakeham road to make roofing tiles for them. This pit became registered in 1938 as *Thakeham Tiles Ltd*. In the

1920s he opened a second sandpit in Chantry Lane also making roofing tiles and concrete blocks. It was taken over by the *Marley Tile Company* from Kent, who made a valuable contribution to D-Day by constructing parts of the famous Mulberry Harbour.

In addition to his building and joinery work, he had other talents. Taught to draw and paint when young, he was a fine artist using a brush or pen strapped to his arm, or using his mouth, and could write beautifully. In 1890 Raphael Tuck & Sons held a prize exhibition for art students and amateur artists at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours Gallery in Picadilly; Frank Knight was awarded a diploma for his painting.

He is also remembered as "playing about" with photography and radio" in those days when the amateur could really experiment such things, and even advance the science. He bred canaries in a large aviary and kept bees. His son helped him with his twenty to thirty hives which he had in his last years. He died in 1939, having firmly established that there was no such word in his life as "can't".

Joan Ham



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I understand that in the village quiz, held at Trinity Methodist Church on Saturday, October 26, one of the two teams entered from the "Friends of the Museum" won over 16 other village teams.

Obviously the "Pre-histories" had a long history of knowledge - congratulations !

A Friend

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*Letters to the Editor should be addressed to
"Woodside", Melton Avenue, Storrington*

Tel. 01903 744388

Obituary

Martin Thomas Roberts, Ph.D.
January 27, 1927 - August 28, 2004

Martin was the first editor and printer of "Times Past" and a firm supporter of our museum. An organ scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, he went on to teach at the Royal Naval School of Music at Deal. But it was in the field of natural sciences that he gained his Ph. D. and lectured at, among other institutions, King's College, London.

Later, he started a printing business at the workshop almost opposite the Old School; he called the business "Mercury Ideographics" - a title that he must have guessed would attract attention.

A memorial service was held at the Parish Church on September 14 and was well attended by friends who had benefited from his help and kindness.

CURATOR'S CORNER

The good news is that it looks as though we are staying put in the Old School, at least for the next few years, although it may still be some months before things are finally "signed, sealed and delivered". This means we can now, tentatively, get things back into gear and push ahead with the various projects which have slightly taken a back seat for the last year or so.

Once the paperwork is finally settled we can then start work on applying for registration as a fully-fledged Museum. This will mean we will be eligible for a much wider range of grants and other assistance than has been the case in the past.

The downside is that there will be a considerable amount of paperwork and "bureaucracy" to deal with along the way, in order to satisfy the relevant authorities that we comply with the standards required. We already meet most of the criteria to obtain the first level of registration but we do need someone who has the time and ability to deal with the forms and to liaise with the various official bodies along the way.

None of the existing Committee has the time or energy to deal with this and I am looking for someone, perhaps recently retired from business, who would be willing to take this on. If you do not wish to make a long-term commitment or to get involved with the day-to-day running of the Museum that is absolutely fine - the registration process is split into a number of stages, each of which is "self-contained", giving scope for someone to deal only with one stage and then move on if they wish to.

If you feel that you would like to help the Museum and that you are happy collecting information, completing forms and liaising with official bodies I will be VERY pleased to hear from you !

H.M.W.

FRIENDS' NEWS

The remaining part of the FoS&DM winter programme is :-

December 9, Thursday

"Quakers in West Sussex" by Jane Le Cluse.

Plus wine & present stall..

December 22, Wednesday

Museum Supper - Now fully booked.

January 13, Thursday

"The Greatest Britons ?" - a discussion in which you will be able to nominate your candidate and, we hope, speak on that worthy's behalf. We shall begin by asking you to write your nominee on a voting slip and these will be collected and counted for the end of the discussion. There could be some surprises !

February 10, Thursday

"South Downs in the Past" by Peter Brandon.

March 10, Thursday

"Images of Rural Life, 1920 - 1950" by Alison McCann of the W.S. R. O.

Membership:-

All renewals and membership applications should now be sent to :-

Membership Secretary, FoS&DM

*c/o "Woodside", Melton Avenue,
Storrington*

Tel. 01903744588

We are still short of Stewards for the Museum so if you feel that you could assist would you please contact the above address or telephone.

The exhibition at the museum early in the New Year will be :-

January/ February :-

"The Museum - the story so far"

Finally MANY THANKS to all those members who have already renewed their subscriptions for 2004 - 5, and a special THANK YOU to the many who made an extra donation, and / or signed a Gift Aid to enable us to obtain a contribution from the Tax Man. This year we will have to contribute to the rent for our use of the Old School so every pound is vital !

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