

# Times Past

## Storrington & District Museum Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow

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### Thank You, David!

After the pivotal role he played in establishing the museum and setting up the founding committee of which he has been an outstanding chairman, David Garrett is "moving over" in order to concentrate upon his many other public activities.

It now falls to the "Friends" to carry forward the work he and his committee began. Much of this will centre on the Old School, where our curator – Helen – is confronted with the problem of fitting the proverbial quart into a pint pot.

I look forward to meeting you all when our summer programme of walks begins on the 16th April.

*E. P. Beaumont*

### Curator's Corner

#### *Did you know?*

The Parham herons, the same ones that occasionally visit the Storrington pond, were originally brought from Coity Castle, Wales, by Lord Leicester, Steward in the time of James I, to Penshurst in Kent where they stayed for 200 years before migrating to Michelgrove, 70 miles from Penshurst and 8 miles from Parham.

They remained there for 20 years until the estate was sold to the Duke of Norfolk, who cut down the trees where they nested. They then migrated to Parham. Around 1812 there were 300 birds there, occupying 90 to 120 nests.

*[From Sussex Archaeological Collections,  
Vol. XXVII p112]*

*Helen Whittle*

## MUSEUM OPENING

We are pleased and proud to announce that the Storrington and District Museum will open to the public for Easter!

The door will be open on April 24th (Easter Monday) at 10 a.m. and close at 4 p.m. to inaugurate our first day. After that, for the first month, we will open from Tuesday to Sunday (inclusive) afternoons from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

We will publish future opening arrangements when we have settled down and have a better idea of staffing arrangements and public demand.

The museum will be staffed by volunteer stewards; some members of the "Friends" have already expressed their willingness to give time to this essential job, but if we are to have a regular schedule of opening times, it will be necessary to have as many as possible, so that the duty does not always fall on the same people.

Stewarding a museum is an interesting and rewarding job. It is the museum's first point of contact with the public, the steward's job is to make sure the visit is enjoyable and informative. We want the Storrington and District Museum to earn the reputation of being welcoming and user-friendly, so if you like meeting and talking to people, why not volunteer a little of your time?

We plan to have two stewards on duty at all times when the museum is open, and they will be fully briefed about the museum and how to cope with questions.

If you feel you can help, then please contact our Volunteer's Coordinator, Michael Taylor, on 01903 742218.

*Joan Ham*

# JOMO KENYATTA

## Famous Wartime Resident



1965

**Jomo Kenyatta first came to England in 1929 as official spokesman for his people, the Kikuyu, to try and redress their grievances against the colonial government in Kenya.**

He stayed in England for the next 17 years, during which time he studied anthropology at the University of London and wrote his acclaimed book *'Facing Mount Kenya'*, published in 1938. Kenyatta found odd jobs to finance his mission and lived as cheaply as he could. He bombarded the Colonial Office with petitions, all of which were ignored, but his book was a bestseller, and helped to establish him as something of a celebrity who people wanted to meet and talk to. The book was more than a history of his people's culture – it was also full of propaganda and attacked the whole colonial system.

Kenyatta was now ready to return to Kenya, having, at least, done much to publicise the grievances of his people to the outside world. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Second World War put paid to his plans, and he was unable to return home. He was persuaded to leave London and stay with friends in Sussex, arriving at the

home of Roy Armstrong, a Southampton University lecturer, who lived in the beautiful Sandgate area two miles to the east of Storrington. The peaceful countryside was, in many ways, a home from home to Kenyatta, with its view of the rolling South Downs, its bracken and silver birches, its woods and farmland. He certainly felt comfortable here, and stayed throughout the duration of the war, renting the flat in Roy Armstrong's house. He was given his own area of scrub to clear where he successfully cultivated his own supply of vegetables and kept some chickens. One of the silver birches became his "sacred tree", through which he communicated with the spirits of his people during his more reflective moments.

Soon after moving to Sussex, Kenyatta took a job as a nursery worker at A G Linfield's nurseries in the neighbouring parish of Thakeham. He was initially put to work in the tomato hothouses, although the shortage of manpower throughout the war meant he would have done many different jobs during the four or five years he was employed at the family firm. The strive to produce as much home grown food as possible meant that companies like Linfields had to devote all their energies to the production of vegetables – however, very few mushrooms were grown as they were considered "devoid of food value".

Kenyatta apparently got on well with everybody, and proved to be a helpful and considerate colleague, willing to come to the aid of anyone who needed a helping hand. One of his jobs was to cook the beetroot before it was sold. During his time in Sussex, he became friendly with a family in Ashington and it was through them that he met Edna Clarke, a teacher. When her parents were killed in an air raid in May, 1941, Kenyatta instinctively offered his help and sympathy and within a year they were married. On 11th August, 1943, their son Peter Magana was born in Worthing Hospital.

Kenyatta was something of a novelty in the Storrington area. Affectionately known as 'Jumbo', he soon settled into Sussex life and was well known in the village. But he was definitely an extraordinary character – flamboyant and gregarious, a showman who delighted in mimicry and whose powers of imagination would hold an audience spellbound as he pretended to stalk and kill a lion. No doubt these exceptional talents helped him to persevere through the long years of frustration and disappointment, but he never gave

up, and despite numerous setbacks, somehow or other, he always managed to keep his dream alive. No doubt, the peaceful Sussex countryside and its close resemblance to his homeland must have been a comfort as well as a reminder of his single-minded purpose. He managed to keep cheerful throughout his wartime exile, a man convinced of his destiny and confident that one day the aspirations of his people would be realized. It would only be a matter of time.

To supplement his farmworker's wage of £4 per week, he was in much demand as a lecturer. Not only did he lecture to British troops under the Forces Educational Scheme, but he also lectured for the Workers Educational Association (WEA), usually about colonial issues.

In September 1946, Kenyatta sailed from Southampton, leaving behind Edna and their child at Thakeham. Once home, as the unquestioned leader of the new nationalism, he soon became fully immersed in Kenyan politics. His primary objective was to show the colonial authorities the dangerous consequences of ignoring the new nationalist movement. However, this is not to deny that he was probably prepared to tolerate a certain amount of violence should the government not come to its senses and fail to grant concessions to the nationalists. Kenyatta's alleged involvement with the "Mau Mau" rebellion during the 1950s has effectively tainted his reputation ever since. It was his failure to gain any concessions after World War II which enabled the militants to come to power, and the result was the tragedy of the "Mau Mau" rebellion: with the enormous loss of 13,547 lives (of whom 13,423 were Kikuyu alone).

Kenyatta's responsibility for "Mau Mau" has been the subject of a great deal of debate, but he openly condemned it on a number of occasions because it threatened to destroy the tribal unity he had been carefully nurturing. Unfortunately, he lost the initiative to the militants who exploited his position as the father of the nationalist movement by elevating him to the position of "leader" of "Mau Mau", whether he liked it or not – even after his detention by the colonial authorities. The tragedy of "Mau Mau" is that it need never have happened – an enlightened government would have seen the folly of continuing to suppress all African aspirations, which made some sort of revolt inevitable.

By 1956 the rebellion was over; more than 11,000 Kikuyu had been killed by the security forces. But all had not been in vain; the revolt ensured that change was inevitable and in 1961 Kenyatta and the other detainees were released.

During negotiations with the British Government in London in October, 1963, Kenyatta took the opportunity to revisit old friends in West Sussex. He visited Roy Armstrong at his wartime home at Highover, Bracken Lane, complete with limousine, cabinet and bodyguards! Politics was apparently not one of the subjects they covered. Arthur Johnson of West Chiltington, who knew Kenyatta very well during the war years stated that he "could never believe that he was responsible for those atrocities in Kenya." His wife said: "We remember him as he was here. We thought he was a very friendly and very nice, charming man who was very fond of children and of animals." Mrs F W Eddolls, in charge of the Linfields' canteen during the war, also said how she found him to be "a very nice and likeable chap" and how she would be very pleased to see him again.

In 1964 Kenya became a republic within the British Commonwealth with Kenyatta its first president. He had come a long way from his days as the friendly, helpful nursery worker at Linfields' nursery! His first act was to welcome the frightened whites to stay in the country. Despite the nine years he had been kept in detention by the colonial government, he was able to forget his own suffering and offer the hand of reconciliation. He also knew the importance of maintaining stability in Kenya if foreign capital was still to be invested in the new state. Despite the years of violence of "Mau Mau", Kenya soon became a model of harmony and stability. Foreign investment boomed and the economy flourished.

*Malcolm Linfield*

**The Friends of  
Storrington & District Museum**

If you are interested in either membership and/or the activities of The Friends', please do not hesitate to contact The Secretary, Malcolm Linfield, on:

**01798 813391**

## SPRING FASHION & BEAUTY EXTRAVAGANZA!

In partnership with five Storrington businesses – *Louisa Austin, Body & Face, Elite Hairdressers, Iguana and Papillon* – the Friends' are helping to organise an exciting Spring Fashion & Beauty Show, to take place at Rydon School on **Wednesday, 10th May** (doors open at 7.30pm).

Come and treat yourselves to an evening of pure self-indulgence as each shop puts on a show to display its products and services, to include make-up and hair-dressing demonstrations as well as some of the latest fashions.

Tickets cost £10 and are available at all the participating shops, and at Top Table, and will be on sale from 15th April. Please buy your tickets early to avoid disappointment!

Your ticket price will include a glass of wine or soft drink during the interval. Fabulous prizes have been kindly donated for the raffle, including vouchers from all of the shops taking part and some other surprises which will be revealed on the night.

Please come and support this event; not only will you enjoy a wonderful evening's entertainment, but you will be helping the Museum too since all the proceeds from ticket sales are to be generously given to the Friends'. This is an extraordinary partnership and we are most grateful to the businesses involved for their generosity of spirit in supporting us in this way.

### FRIENDS' NEWS

The Friends' lecture programme has proved very popular in its first season, and from the many comments received there is no doubt of the genuine enthusiasm and support for the new Museum. All the talks have provided a fascinating insight into aspects of Sussex life which have all but disappeared, from the shepherds tending their flocks on the Downs to the inns and alehouses where people went to enjoy themselves.

For the Summer months, the Friends' have organised a series of local walks, all with an historical theme. Apart from the first walk, these will all take place on a Thursday evening and begin at 7.30 pm. There will be a standard charge of £1.50 per person.

**Sunday, 16th April:** Storrington Village walk with Joan Ham and Helen Whittle. Meet in the square at Mulberry House 11.30am.

**Thursday, 11th May:** Chris Hare will lead a walk around Washington. Meet at Village Hall car park. Chris's new book on Washington will be available in the small hall afterwards.

**Thursday, 15th June:** Janet Pennington will lead a walk around Steyning. Meet at Penfold Community Centre car park.

**Thursday, 13th July:** Amberley Village walk with Robert Hutchinson. Meet at the Church.

**Thursday, 10th August:** 'Local Archaeology' – a guided walk with Con Ainsworth. Meet at Chantry Hill car park.

And finally: **Thursday, 14th September** will be the Members' Evening (free entry) to include the first Annual General Meeting and a talk on the origins of the Museum. Come and celebrate the achievements of our first year with a glass of wine; there will also be some displays from members. Meet at the Old School 7.30pm.

*Malcolm Linfield*

*Deadline for contributions to the next Newsletter*

*30th June, 2000*

*To – Mercury Ideographics*

*School Lane, Storrington, RH20 4LL*

#### **From the Editor**

With the opening of the Museum comes the incentive to expand the content and scope of the Newsletter.

As the first steps to this end it is intended to include a correspondence column, so please write about any relevant matters. Also, it is hoped to include one or two extended articles in each issue about local history, artefacts or any pertinent subject – so pick up your quill and pen your masterpiece!