

# Times Past

**Storrington & District Museum**  
*Preserving Yesterday for Tomorrow*

NEWSLETTER • Issue No.5 • July, 2000

## CURATOR'S CORNER

The early summer has seen the Museum team rushing hither and yon taking the Museum to a wider public by attending outside events such as the Parham Steam Rally, Sullington Fete, West Sussex Record Office Open Day and even a very small presence at the South of England Show [don't worry if you didn't spot it, we were well hidden on the Sussex Museums Group stand – next to the Weald and Downland stand]. By the time you read this we will also have attended the Storrington Carnival.

The collections continue to grow and, as soon as the furniture situation has settled down, we will be changing all the displays and [you will be pleased to hear] undertaking a comprehensive labelling and information programme. The most notable recent acquisition is a painting of Amberley Church [taken from the Sluice Gates] by local artist Felicia Hett which was purchased by the generosity of the Friends of the Museum.

Now that the Museum is open, albeit in a slightly temporary form as yet, it is time to start to bring together some of the activities which we intend the Museum to provide. Whilst we still desperately need more volunteer stewards at the Museum obviously the opening hours do not fit in with the lives of people who work normal office hours but, hopefully, we can find work for anyone who would like to help. What about the following:

- \* We need someone who is skilled in calligraphy to enter the items from the computer catalogue into our formal accessions book.
- \* We are about to create a team to provide educational services based on the Museum

collections. This will involve creating work sheets for school parties, possibly taking suitable items into schools, activities during the school holidays and generally trying to make the Museum interesting to visitors of all ages.

- \* We hope to get some form of bookshop up and running by the autumn. This will probably consist of providing booklists in the Museum with sample copies of what we have available and then setting up shop once a month on a Saturday morning in the Museum.
- \* We have on-going projects of card-indexing the collections and setting up databases of local families and properties.
- \* We have indexes to the Storrington Censuses and transcripts of Storrington Parish registers. We do not at present have the space to provide a proper research area but is there sufficient interest to start a local mutual-support group for budding family historians? We don't want to tread on the toes of the Sussex Family History Group but if there are enough people interested we have the potential to offer advice sessions.

I will be contacting those Friends who have previously offered assistance with the educational programme in the near future but if there is anyone else with suitable skills and time to spare please let us know. Telephone messages may be left with Linda Anderton on 01903 740188 or you may leave a note at the Museum or at Top Table.

*Helen Whittle*

## EDITOR'S EXHORTATION

Two Millennium Projects – the Property History Register & the Family History Register – are now in active progress. Anyone having relevant information is asked to submit details forms, if required, are available from the Museum

WHERE ARE THOSE AUTHORITATIVE ARTICLES & CONTENTIOUS COMMENTS ?

## WHO WAS THE 'SULLINGTON SHEPHERD'?

The following poem is attributed to A. F. Bell who was probably a resident of the Storrington area or one who enjoyed the South Downs.

The poem is very similar in its theme to the better-known "Daisy" by Francis Thompson: (about whom – more later). In both cases the poet meets a young girl and is presented with either "fairy bread and fairy wine" or "a flower".

I would be grateful for any information about Bell or Thompson. Please send either to the Editor, Mercury Ideographics, School Lane, Storrington, RH20 4LL or telephone me on 01903 744388.

*E. P. Beaumont.*

### *A Sussex Shepherd's Song*

*Up above Sullington watching my sheep  
I felt the morn grow still,  
The bee on the thyme-flower droned asleep,  
The cloud shadow paused on the hill.*

*Up above Sullington, there as I lay,  
Came on me unaware  
A maid stepping out on the Arundel way  
With sunlight hot on her hair.*

*A red red rose she bore in her hand  
At breast a white white rose  
From her parted lips she filled the land  
With a song that no man knows.*

*She stayed and she gave me fairy bread  
A draught of fairy wine  
She clasped her little hands about my head  
And pressed her lips on mine.*

*Laughing she went n'er a look behind;  
The world from rest uprose;  
But ever till sunset thrilled the wind  
With song that no man knows.*

*Up above Sullington – oh, 'tis lone!  
The hills and distant sea,  
The bees, the shadows, by light winds blown,  
They've no more speech for me.*

*For I yearn for fairy wine and bread,  
The breath of a fairy rose  
He lips and her hands about my head  
And her song that no man knows.*

*A. F. Bell.*

## STEWARDS

### *Your Museum needs you!*

The stewarding of the museum is a vital task which requires a lot of people to make it work – the more people we have, the less of a burden the task will be for all those involved

What we would really like to achieve is a rota where no-one has to do more than one two-hourly session per month, unless, of course, they want to!

Unfortunately, at present the burden is falling on too few people, so we really must try and recruit more stewards from among our members

If you feel you can help, then please contact our Volunteers' Co-ordinator  
Michael Taylor on 01903 742218

Stewarding is not difficult and we will be providing a training session in the near future to explain what is required. The most important thing is to make visitors feel welcome and to be on hand to answer any questions they may have.

*Malcolm Linfield*

## THE ENGLISH SMOCK

The appearance on the museum stand at Storrington Carnival of a shepherd look-alike wearing a replica English smock sparked a good deal of interest in that comfortable and practical garment.

The long history probably began in Anglo-Saxon times, the word 'smock' meaning "shift" or "chemise". Starting as a very plain, shirt-like garment, simply made by peasants. Extra fullness soon developed to accommodate men engaged in occupations of a strenuous nature. The complex stitchery, smocking to give fullness, and elaborate embroidery did not develop until the eighteenth century reaching its zenith in the nineteenth. By then machine looms and inexpensive materials enabled country people to procure clothing at comparatively small cost resulting in the demise of the practical and beautiful English smock

Several varieties in the "cut" of smocks were used but virtually all were made up from square or rectangular sections avoiding curves. Most smocks were reversible with a small opening at the neck to allow the wearer to pull the garment over his head, although a few opened like a coat. A piece of material of a very durable nature, some three feet



wide and three times the length required by the wearer was torn or cut into three equal parts. Two of these formed the front and back, the third piece again being divided into three, two for the sleeves and the third for the collar, shoulder straps and gussets.

Some say that the embroidered patterns on smocks varied in different counties and this is probably partly true, but it is more likely that patterns were used to denote the trade of the wearer, to help farmers at "hirings" looking for carters, woodsmen, ploughmen, shepherds or whatever. It is said that a gravedigger's smock had embroidered crosses! There was some variety in colour on a county basis but, for normal work, natural coloured cloth was preferred, with white for Sunday best and black for pall bearers.

This is clearly a subject for in-depth research and no doubt much has already been carried out. Most of the information here and the instructions for the fabrication of the smock, which appeared at the Carnival, were obtained from a monograph prepared for the National Federation of Women's Institutes circa 1926.

*Geoffrey Robinson*

## J.W. BRAMHAM – LOCAL ARTIST

In the growing collection of paintings which the Museum is gradually acquiring, there are a number by local artist J.W. Bramham – one of them, in oils, was kindly donated by his widow Kathleen and shows the view from their home at "The Studio", Manley's Hill of the land on which Foxmead is now built. Kathleen also donated a painting by Vivian Rolt, a previous occupant of their home – in fact, "The Studio" was originally built for him – which portrays a scene of a waggon and horses on a Downland track near to Storrington. The other Bramham paintings came from the Margaret Turner Collection, and include two commissioned works, both at Hormare just before the houses were built (1969). There is also a fine painting of Church Street (1965) and the Sand Pit at Chantry Lane.

I recently visited Kathleen and she kindly supplied me with the following biographical details of her late husband: "John William Bramham (1905-1990) was born in the North of England. He trained as a fitter, attended the

Doncaster School of Art part-time for 6 years and was finally awarded a bursary to the Slade School in London. From there he became Art Master at Maidstone Grammar School, but early in the War, went to Chatham Dockyard. In 1942, he was sent out to Simonstown Dockyard, South Africa. After the war, he was appointed teacher in Fine Art at the School of Art in Johannesburg, where he remained for 15 years, exhibiting regularly at the S.A. Academy during that time.

In 1960, he returned to England and bought The Studio, Storrington. He lived there for 30 years, teaching and painting. He held an Exhibition there every other year and exhibited annually with the Society of Sussex Artists in Worthing and was usually represented in other shows around the County. He also regularly supplied the West Sussex Gazette with local sketches.

Sadly, he lost his sight and was partially blind for the last years of his life."

*Malcolm Linfield*

## FRIENDS' NEWS

Much has happened since the last issue of 'Times Past' – the Friends have had their first major fund raising event (the Spring Fashion Show at Rydon) which took place on 10th May and on the following Friday, the Museum was officially opened by Richard Childs, the County Archivist.

Both events were a great success – the Fashion Show raised over £1700 (thanks once again to Carole Kemp-Potter and the shops who took part), whilst at the official opening it was particularly gratifying to see the amount of support and enthusiasm for the museum project, both at county and local level.

The Friends had the privilege of conferring the very first 'Honorary Life Memberships' to Joan and Ron Ham for their "outstanding contribution to the Museum" - let's face it, without them it could never have happened!

Another memorable moment was the presentation of an Accessions Register, kindly donated by Lady Emma Barnard of Parham House.

We would like to remind all our members that the first Annual General Meeting will be taking place on the evening of 14th September – a copy of the Agenda and a Membership Renewal Form for 2000/01 is enclosed with this newsletter. In order that we can update our records, we would be grateful if you could confirm/update your availability as a volunteer on page two of the form.

Please do come along and make your voice heard. We are also looking for someone who would like to take on the role of Membership Secretary – nominations to me in writing, please, not less than 7 days before the meeting. We look forward to seeing you on 14th September!

*Malcolm Linfield*

### WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME 2000\01

The following lectures have been arranged to take place at the Old School, School Lane, Storrington - starting at 7.30 pm. As usual, the price will be £2.50 (£1.50 for members) on the door. Obviously, there will be no charge to attend the AGM!

#### **Thursday, 14th September**

Members' Evening - Annual General Meeting (Members Only).

Followed by talks on the origins and progress of the Museum by Joan Ham and Helen Whittle.

To include Members' Displays and a glass of wine.

Members are requested to bring along any interesting objects they would like to put on display.

#### **Thursday, 12th October**

"Amberley Castle" by Dr. Annabelle Hughes.

#### **Thursday, 9th November**

"History of the Fairground - the Showmen of Ashington" by Robert Harris.

#### **Thursday, 14th December**

"The Sanctuary at Washington - Communists and Mystics" by Chris Hare.

#### **Thursday, 11th January 2001**

"Worthing as a Seaside Resort" by Dr. Sally White.

#### **Thursday, 8th February**

Magic Lantern Slide Show from the Greenfield\Turner Collection by Martin Hayes  
with commentary from the curatorial team.

#### **March 8th Thursday**

"The Women of Wiston through the Centuries" by Janet Pennington.

**Deadline for contributions to the next Newsletter – 30th September, 2000  
To – The Editor, Mercury Ideographics, School Lane, Storrington, RH20 4LL**