



SEPTEMBER 1986

newsletter

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Sue Kirk-Bell
"Tanyard Farm House",
Brook Street,
Cuckfield. H.H. 455526

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THE CUCKFIELD SOCIETY THIS SUMMER

A preservation society can never rest on its laurels or past victories. So what about the Objects of the Society since our June newsletter?

"To preserve and enhance the essential atmosphere of Cuckfield and to improve in every way possible its appearance and amenities"

Firstly, minor details - did you notice a length of our brick pavement disappear, or the Cuckfield seat in the Churchyard go? If not, watch the South Street chain railings and the Whitemans Green trees.

Secondly, major details - planning applications have included one new estate (behind Bylanes), a revised estate (Hatchlands) and several new house sites. And, of course, the Hospital site and Meadowlands haven't gone away,

And what did the Society do - read on under "Environment". And life in the village centre? ACT, the Association of Cuckfield Traders is planning a CUCKFIELD CHARTER WEEK, 15-20th September to get more people into shops - bottles of wine during the week, grand draw and other noisy attractions on the Saturday.

"to stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty, history and character of Cuckfield and its surrounds"

Many have been on the Walks guided by Audrey Cowen. Margaret Holt was our "Guest" guide round Michelham Priory and a festive party tasted ENGLISH wine in the medieval barn at St. George's Vineyard on a freezing midsummer evening. And for those who missed the History of Cuckfield, as seen on stage at the Summer Party Show, not all is lost for the video is available now, £10 from David Spear.

So, summer is not a quiet time, a lot goes on; a lot of time is given by a lot of members and even more members have been involved in the goings on - a preservation society in training for a "call to arms". And as Autumn draws in, a super programme has been arranged by Bryan Cox for our Friday meetings starting on the 26th September. But, before then,

we meet on SATURDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER for the GARDEN PARTY at 'Dumbrells'.

STOP PRESS

CUCKFIELD SOCIETY CANDIDATE STANDING FOR MAYOR OF CUCKFIELD!

Please all vote for Pam Edgerton, this Society's candidate, at the elections in October.

Nicholas Rowe - Chairman

PROGRAMME - 1986

- 13th September - Garden Party at "Dumbrells", Church Platt
- 15th-20th September - Cuckfield Charter Week
- 26th September - Monthly Meeting: "DOMESDAY - SUSSEX"
- 18th October - Mayor's Procession (Society float)
- 31st October - Monthly Meeting: "CUCKFIELD CHURCHYARD MEMORIALS"
- 28th November - Monthly Meeting: "THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY"
- 18th December - Carol Singing

Winter Lectures 1986/1987

September 26th, 1986: "Domesday - Sussex".

900 years on from King William the Conqueror's famous document Dr. Graeme Mayhew of the East Sussex Records Office, Lewes, will give an illustrated talk about the significance of this survey in Sussex.

October 31st, 1986: "Cuckfield Churchyard Memorials".

Mr. Neil Caplan will show slides of some interesting memorials in our Cuckfield churchyard and discuss their family connections including some ancient 'right royal' relations. To complete our Hallowe'en meeting in suitable mood, Miss Maisie Wright and Mr. Richard Moon will join Mr. Caplan to talk about these old families and ghost stories arising in our Cuckfield area.

November 28th, 1986: "The Bayeux Tapestry".

Continuing the Society's 'Norman' theme for '86, Mrs. Margaret Holt will tell us about her visit to Normandy and give a pictorial presentation of the world famous Bayeux Tapestry.

January 30th, 1987: "Nature Conservation in Sussex".

Mrs. Christina Chelmick of the Sussex Trust for Nature Conservation will give an illustrated talk on the work of the Trust in preserving the beauty of the Sussex countryside.

February 27th, 1987: "The Cuckfield Dinosaur and Dr. Gideon Mantell".

Mr. Bryan Cox will talk about the huge extinct carnivorous lizards which once inhabited our Wealden area and how the fossil bones of one ancient creature were found in a quarry at Whitemans Green and became the 'Iguanodon'.

March 27th, 1987: Annual General Meeting

After the meeting Mr. Joe Heyman will again tease our memories with another photographic QUIZ illustrating the details we tend to pass by in our village.

Bryan Cox

GARDEN PARTY - Saturday 13th September 1986

Noon to 2.00 p.m. in the garden of "Dumbrells", Church Platt, by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. John Rolling (if wet in Church Hall).

Tickets at £2.50 will include a Ploughmans Lunch and a glass of wine.

Tickets available from Pauline Hadida (413036) or Nicholas Rowe (452235).

ENVIRONMENT I - minor details

Brick pavements - Many of Cuckfield's heritage of brick pavements are in a terrible condition, particularly in Church Street and High Street (central). They need relaying level - they are dangerous. West Sussex County Council Highways (responsible for maintenance) agreed with the Parish Council that these would be done first - but suddenly instructed sub-contractors to lift the Hatchgate Lane to London Lane length in Broad Street. An emergency meeting was held "on site" with your Chairman, Parish Councillors and District Councillor confronting the West Sussex County Council Surveyor. The outcome of this BATTLE is a QUID PRO QUO. In return for "losing" this length, the West Sussex

County Council agreed that no other length of brick pavement from London Lane to South Street to Whitemans Green would be repaired or replaced with anything but matching clay brick paviors. Also, the immediate saving made would be spent on repairs in the village now.

Both this preservation society and the Parish Council strongly object to the substitution of concrete blocks for our traditional clay brick pavements. It would be so easy to lose the beauty and richness of this natural material and so unnecessary, as perfectly good bricks are readily available when the old ones come to the end of their life. In Broad Street, W.S.C.C. insist they cannot keep cars off the pavement because of the garage and shops and the pavements, therefore, have to be "roads". So, with the road widening, due at Hatchlands, we felt retreat to more defensible lines a sensible tactical move.

South Street "Chain Walk"

Although we don't own these railings, the Society has always kept them "under its wing". Soon you should see them repainted by the local decorator at the Society's expense - £250.

High Street handrail

Legal details are nearly complete now for the Parish Council's handrail outside "Highbury". It should be up in time for the winter ice 1986/87. The Society is contributing £100.

Bus Shelter, Meadowlands stop

Another Parish Council project coming shortly. We have offered £200 as our contribution to this.

The Cuckfield Seat in the Churchyard

The Society has arranged for the great commemorative seat south of the Church to be rebuilt at a cost of some £1,100. The District Council, Independent State and Parochial Church Council are making substantial contributions - final figures in our next newsletter. The rebuilt seat should be in place in early September.

The Edith Payne Free Library

After three years of red tape, the Library has finally been granted charitable status. Memories of a past battle? We have now handed over to them their funds which we have administered on their behalf.

ENVIRONMENT II - Planning Matters

There are on average 2/3 planning applications in Cuckfield each week. The Parish Council, as a Statutory body, is always consulted by the Mid Sussex District Council. Thus, this preservation society gets involved only when the broader setting of Cuckfield and its heritage are threatened or the more detailed setting of the conservation area or listed buildings come under threat.

This Summer we have expressed concern over applications to build new houses next to listed buildings, objected on principle to applications for "backland development" on the fringe of the built up zone and asked that "making good" be a condition of consents involving damage to our lamp posts or pavements.

We objected to the first application for the "Hatchlands" development because we believed too much was crammed in - 36 units in place of one house. The second "Hatchlands" application was judged by the M.S.D.C. before the consultations were received. We did try to get the "gazebo" there saved - it is over an ice house - but have not succeeded.

We have had meetings with both Parish Councillors and District Planning Officer about the Hospital site and about the By Pass/High Weald AONB. The worry on the latter is infill and an approach to the Countryside Commission is being considered.

But our strongest objection (apart from Meadowlands which is at Appeal) has been to the new estate proposed north of Bylanes. It is contrary to the District Plan, is in the High Weald A.O.N.B., outside the Built Up Area and over the watershed. If this application succeeded, the precedent would be set to build on every field north, south, east and west of the poor village and the imagination boggles.

IN MEMORY OF HATCHLANDS

The end of the Summer term at Hatchlands was a sad moment for Cuckfield and very sad,

not only for present pupils and parents, but for generations of children, some now Old Age Pensioners, who remember well how happy their schooldays were there. Miss Vera Steele, who was Head Mistress from 1923 until Mrs. Bentley took over in 1954, once said to me that as long as children enjoyed their first year at school, there would never be problems and happiness has always been the hallmark of Hatchlands. This certainly has not meant any lack of discipline, nor a low standard of education. Both have always been excellent. I know Hatchlands will be sorely missed.

It was in 1922 that Mrs. Steele moved her school from Burgess Hill to Cuckfield. In those days it catered nearly entirely for boarders, some 22 in number. Many of them had parents living abroad and most of their holidays, as well as term time, would have been spent with the Steele family. There were only about 3 or 4 local day pupils.

In 1923 Vera Steele took over from her Mother. It was a real family affair. Her sister, Winnie, did the cooking. Dolly Steele, who had been governess to the Leverhulme family and later became an invalid, used to read stories to the children. Hilda Steele moved to "Kewhurst" in Haywards Heath, which she ran as a boys' preparatory school. The brother did all the school repair jobs, gave magic lantern shows and was probably chiefly remembered by pupils of that era for the monkeys, which he kept in the conservatory! There was also a parrot, who kept shouting, "Yes, Miss Steele" and usually either a German "Fraulein" or a French "Mademoiselle" to instruct in languages.

Our family's involvement with Hatchlands covers the period 1943-1958, all five of our children enjoying every minute of their time there. By this time there were a good few day pupils, boys as well as girls in the kindergarten, but still a full quota of boarders. In those days Hatchlands had a playing field and netball court on land across the road. Mr. Steele kept chickens and there was a big vegetable garden. The bus company had been persuaded to have a "Stop" outside the school and I can still picture Miss Barden escorting her flock across the road to put them on their bus for home.

One of the nicest things about Hatchlands has always been the dedication of the Staff. In our family's day it was Mrs. Cushway, Miss Barden, Miss Wiles, Miss Cook, etc. and Mrs. Bevan doing the cooking of those delicious lunches. Through all the years since Mrs. Bevan retired there has been "Pat" in charge of the kitchen department and I know from present day "Mums" the teaching staff are still in the finest Hatchlands tradition.

Both Mrs. Bentley and her daughter, Jocelyn, who succeeded her as Head Mistress, believe as did Miss Steele, that children only realise their full learning potential in a happy atmosphere and that has been achieved all through the 63 years of Hatchlands existence, a proud record.

On behalf of all parents, past and present, and their families, thank you Hatchlands. You will not be forgotten.

Phyl Bowring - July 1986

New England Wood Trust

The Public Meeting of the New England Wood Trust will be in the Church Hall on Tuesday, 7th October, 1986, at 8.30 p.m.

Matters for discussion should be submitted in writing to the Hon. Secretary, R. Burns, "Monkton Cottage", Ardingly Road, Cuckfield, ten days prior to the meeting.

R. Burns - Hon. Secretary

The Independent State of Cuckfield

Our annual Independent State swim for the ten years old and under, took place on August 6th at "Little Mizbrooks". Our luck with the weather held and we had gloriously hot sunshine for the swim, the Scavenger Hunt, the Picnic and the Sports. Rain only started to fall as the iced lollies were being sucked at the end of the prize giving. Forty children took part and the money they raised will go to the P.T.A. of Cuckfield C. & P. School. Please collect from your Sponsors as quickly as you can, swimmers, so that we can hand over the cheque without delay. Our most grateful thanks to Keith and Jenny Ingram for letting us have the run of their lovely home and to all our kind helpers, who ensured that the day was fun for everyone.

Now we look ahead to October and our Annual Mayor's Election. Full marks to the Cuckfield Society, who have already nominated their candidate, Pam Edgerton. Pam is Cuckfield born and bred, with ideal credentials to represent the Independent State and we hope that the Cuckfield Society will campaign hard for her and give her their full

(and financial) support. Remember he or she who collects the most penny votes gets elected, but every single penny raised goes into our charitable fund. No expenses are ever deducted. Polling ends at midnight on Friday, October 17th, at the Mayor's Jazz Evening in the Queen's Hall and the Mayor's Show Procession will parade round the village on the following afternoon, Saturday, October 18th. We hope the Cuckfield Society will, as usual, be entering a float. We want to make this year's Mayor's show bigger and better than ever.

I now apologise for mentioning Christmas when Summer holidays are still with us, but please would you note on your diaries the date of this year's Christmas Dinner and party for older citizens - Thursday, December 11th, in the Queen's Hall. I shall be making my usual appeal for waitresses, chauffeurs, "washers up" and for gifts of mince pies and Christmas puddings and for kind cooks living nearby to bake jacket potatoes and to boil the puddings. I am sorry to be looking so far ahead but there won't be another newsletter between now and then. I can start making lists of helpers any time you like to volunteer. Just send a note to me, Phyl Bowring at Cleavers Cottage or 'phone me (H.H. 454094). That is all that is needed.

Thank you in anticipation and thank you to the Cuckfield Society for so kindly allowing us space in their newsletter.

Phyl Bowring

The Mid-Sussex Local History Group

The Mid-Sussex Local History Group is affiliated to the Federation of Local History Societies. It was started in December 1983 by Mrs. Diana Hawkes and other members of a local history class, which had been held in Cuckfield for some years.

The Group meets once a month for coffee with a lecture from 10.15 a.m. until mid-day. In addition outings are arranged to places of historic interest in the district and sometimes to farther afield.

A party of fifty members and friends went by coach in June to see the Bayeux tapestry and stayed overnight in Caen. At present members are working with "The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings" on a survey of Mid-Sussex barns.

The morning meetings are the more convenient for retired people but anyone free in the mornings can join also. Particulars of membership may be obtained from the Membership Secretary:- Mrs. Jean Morris, "The Chestnuts", Courtmead Road, Cuckfield.

A new amenity for Cuckfield

Southdown Bus Company has started a new half-hourly mini-bus service which should be of interest to Cuckfield residents, particularly the elderly without cars. It runs from Cuckfield Hospital via Cuckfield High Street and Broad Street to the railway station, then on to South Road and Ashenground Road to St. Francis Hospital, where it turns round.

It starts from Cuckfield Hospital at 10 and 40 minutes past the hour and from Haywards Heath station to Cuckfield at 23 and 53 minutes past the hour.

The service started on 27th July on a trial basis and we understand that it will be discontinued if there are not sufficient passengers. Therefore, we ask members of the Cuckfield Society to make this new venture known and to support it, whenever possible.

* Due to shortage of drivers this service has not yet started.

Maisie Wright.

The Summer Show - 4th July

As the curtains opened it was raining. Thunder and lightning was flashing and an old man was sitting on a chair next to a table with an egg-timer on it. The old man was wearing a white sheet and he had a long white beard and said a very good speech. Then we saw some tiger men witch had rings round their noses and bats to hit people.

Then the old man did another speech that was brilliant

Emma Cockburn - Aged 8

So one eight year old member described this year's Summer Show.

The die was cast after Christmas 1985 when a small sub-committee, ably led by Pauline Hadida, elected Brian (alias Norman) Chasser, to produce a cabaret to be performed at the Society's Summer party. The theme was "Cuckfield through the Ages" and although the

most successful of ten sketches made the 900th celebrations of Domesday at Battle look amateur, the Ages were adequately covered from 1 million years B.C. to 1986.

The Society would like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Pete Chandler of "Kingsleys", who opened their house and garden early in the evening to accommodate 200 for pre-dinner cocktails. At 8.00ish, the tables in the Queen's Hall began to fill up and a three-course meal was served by an army of boys and girls who, as usual, worked tirelessly throughout the evening.

After a shaky start, caused by someone pulling out the plug, the lights finally went up at about 9.10 p.m. and old Father Time began an intermittent soliloquy, written most ably by Mr. Chasser in blank verse and remembered to the surprise of all and, more especially, to the surprise of old Father Time himself.

The programme was divided into two, with an interval after the enthronement of Queen Elizabeth I. A cave man "song and dance scene" was followed by four well known Senators dancing a Roman jig to a familiar tune. The conquest of 1066 was portrayed by Normans, hundreds of them, brought in at enormous expense from every corner of the globe. A team of elegant "Rookies" was marched off to the French wars by a past Chairman of the Society and a rather lewd piece about Elizabeth I's explorers was rounded off with a truly excellent plain-song chorus of "Gaude - te".

The interval gave a chance for many double and treble performers to change and allowed an impressive re-entry by Old Father Time to the tune of 2001. Charles met his Nell Gwyn at the "Rose and Crown" and Prinny, ably assisted by Mr. Dench, jumped into bed with Mrs. Fitz-somebody at the "King's Head", who later turned out to be his wife. The arrival of the railway in Mid-Sussex was celebrated by a Victorian singalong, led by the same distinguished team that gave us Neptune and the Mermaids in the 1983 show.

"The flappers flirt and flounce and swing their beads. Such gay young things, sweet pleasure is their all" introduced the penultimate scene of four well-known characters in the annual drag act. The grand finale was a Southern region commuters' chorus, with strong Caledonian connections, which rounded off a splendid evening, well rehearsed and presented and one which will be remembered, at least by the cast of thousands for many a long day.

The Society is exceedingly grateful to Mr. Edward Lawrence, who stepped on to the piano seat late in the day and did a wonderful job to bring the whole show to life and to Mr. and Mrs. Bonn, who allowed us unlimited rehearsal facilities at Mill Hall School. Our thanks also to our vice-president, Mrs. Robin Fox, for arranging the loan of lights once again.

Peter Cockburn



Eddie Lawrence, who played the piano so excellently for us at our "Summer Show", would like to draw our attention to the three courses he is running at Marle Place, Leylands Road, Burgess Hill. They are "Opera" (a ten-week course) and "Gilbert and Sullivan" and "Verdi and his music" (both one-day courses). Further details may be obtained from Eddie Lawrence (H.H. 412361) or Marle Place (Burgess Hill 6355).

Best-Kept Village Competition

Congratulations to Hurstpierpoint on winning the competition for the best kept large village in West Sussex, in spite of the fact that during the past few months most of the village High Street has been dug up!

In addition, Lindfield was awarded third place in the Two Counties Championship.

Editor

CUCKFIELD PARK FAYRE

After a week of pessimistic weather forecasts, all concerned took the improvement on Sunday, the day before the Fayre, as a good omen. This was in spite of even gloomier prognostications put out by the pundits on Monday morning - 'rain will break out before lunchtime and there's a cold, wet afternoon in store' cheerfully announced Mr. Noble Denton, whose local weather forecasts are a regular feature on TVS Oracle.

The cricket club had keyed itself up for weeks preparing for the great day; talk in the pavilion concentrated not on cricket, but on what Tom, Dick and Harry were doing on the 25th. The crunch was coming - could tiny Cuckfield hope to keep mighty Pluvius and all his works at bay until 6.00 p.m.? Only time would tell!

In the event the weathermen were proved correct and we had continuous rain, light at first from mid-morning as final preparations went on, increasing in intensity as the afternoon wore on. Undaunted by the conditions, visitors began to arrive well before 2.00 p.m. and by the time Edward Fox opened the Fayre there was already a good crowd, which grew steadily larger. The Club greatly appreciates Edward's support despite the weather and is particularly indebted to the owner of Cuckfield Park, Chris Jaques, and his family for allowing the grounds of their home to be used as a venue. Even in the heavy rain, the mansion's magnificent setting provided an added attraction. The veteran cars were popular with many, particularly as their fine garage proved to be one of the few dry spots! Tea and beer tents were kept busy, but, not unexpectedly, sales in the latter fell far short of what, on a hot day, would probably have been a sell-out. The cricket bat which was autographed by the 1986 Sussex and Worcester county teams was won by Mr. J. Mantell of Crawley.

The Club has been greatly heartened by the magnificent support given so generously by the local community and by many others from further afield. A net profit of about £2,500 has been added to the Pavilion Rebuilding Fund; the Cuckfield versus Pluvius 'challenge' was not washed-out in any sense. Indeed, the home team made a good score and, at the end of the day, felt they had gained many new supporters.

Ray Heavens

The Editor wishes to thank all those who have written articles for this Newsletter.

It is hoped to publish our next Newsletter in January 1987. If you have any news items or photographs for inclusion, please let me have them by the end of December.

Leslie Everson
20, Leyton Lea
Cuckfield.