



Museum News

Steyning Museum Newsletter

April 2012

Museum Diary

- 28.04.12 Spring Coffee Morning
Penfold Hall
10.30 - 12.00
- 29.09.12 Clothes Swap Event
Penfold Hall
2.- 5pm
- 25.08.12 Summer Garden Coffee Morning
Rosebank, Jarvis Lane
10.30 - 12.00
- 27.10.12 Autumn Coffee Morning
Penfold Hall
10.30 - 12.00

200 Club

February Draw:

- 1st prize = Jacque Buttriss (£35)
2nd prize = Jack Campbell (£25)
3rd prize = Janet Brackpool (£15)

March Draw:

- 1st prize = Alistair McKechnie (£35)
2nd prize = Betty Calloway (£25)
3rd prize = John Woolgar (£15)

Spring Coffee Morning

From Gillian Kille

The Spring coffee morning will be held in the Penfold Hall on Saturday, 28th April. It is a bit later this year, but we are hoping lots of you will come along and support us, and maybe bring a friend, we'd love to see you. There will be a plant stall, as well as our usual cake and bric-a-brac stalls. If you have any unwanted books and bric-a-brac items, please bring them along to the coffee morning. Any items not sold will be donated to the St Barnabas House shop charity in Steyning.

Any plants and cuttings you may have will be gratefully received for the plant stall, which did so well last year! To those of you who make preserves etc. please may we call on your

generosity to bring them along, as well as those of you who make and donate delicious cakes for the cake stall. New cake makers most welcome too!

Future Fund Raising Events For 2012

From Gillian Kille

Apart from our usual well attended coffee mornings and a Clothes Swap event on September 29th, the very accomplished Southdowns Concert Band have kindly agreed to support us and put on an afternoon Christmas concert at the Steyning Centre on Sunday, 9th December. Final details are being arranged and more details will follow in our June Newsletter.

Events for 2013

From Gillian Kille

As it was such an enjoyable and successful event, Kaleidoscope and Cantatrice choirs have been invited back and once again they have kindly agreed to help the Museum and perform a concert at the Church of St Andrew & St Cuthman on the afternoon of Saturday 16th March 2013. This will be followed by tea and cake at the Steyning Centre.

Simon Langton of renowned auctioneers and valuers, Denhams, has kindly agreed to run another informal Antiques Valuation afternoon in 2013 – so for those of you who missed this event last September, it's another chance to bring along your treasures and have an entertaining and informative afternoon! Date to be arranged.

We are also in the planning stages of holding a Beetle Drive and possibly an afternoon of bridge with a full afternoon tea. As this latter event will only appeal to bridge players, we will be trying to ascertain the level

of support for a bridge afternoon at our next coffee morning.

Finally, all the above events will of course be open to Friends and members of the public so, where possible, please do make a note in your diaries of any event which interests you. We hope all the events will be really well supported because by doing so you will be helping your local Museum to continue to thrive and exist in the community.

New Exhibition

Our latest exhibition is a fascinating examination of local archaeological finds. One look at the map of local finds and excavations in the Museum display shows that our area has always been a favoured area to settle in and the population have left behind many clues as to the lives they lived. Archaeology doesn't always mean making finds by digging. The exhibition shows us what else it can mean.

In case you missed it, I have included below a copy of the short piece Chris Tod wrote for "*Your Steyning*" about a recent find in Steyning. It has been included in our exhibition, so I hope that reading it here will wet your appetite to come and see the rest of the fascinating display in the Museum.

Men at Work - and the Archaeology they have found

Unknown to us until very recently workman, who were digging an exceptionally deep trench at the east end of College Hill, broke into the side of a sizeable tunnel. It was some 8 metres (c.26 feet) down. Roof collapse made it visible for only 10 or 12 feet in either direction and no obvious artefacts were spotted. The tunnel would have been big enough to walk down, stooping slightly.

Why was it there? What was it for? Nothing quite like it is known and there are no records referring to it.

We rejected the idea of a secret tunnel as that whole part of the parish was fields until recently. There would have been no conceivable reason to expend so much effort and money on digging such a substantial tunnel so far underground.

The tunnel is cut in what, geologically, is called Lower Chalk. It is known that within this (and not necessarily on the surface) can be found seams of hard material suitable for building work - particularly for cladding the inside of monumental buildings. This is guesswork, but it would have made the digging of such a tunnel worthwhile.

School Easter Holidays

From Joan Denwood

Calling all children (and accompanying adults)

Why not pop along to your local Steyning Museum during the school holidays. There will be some extra objects out for you to play with, as well as our usual children's corner with brass rubbings, puzzles, mosaics to use and hats to try on. There will be some historical dressing up clothes for children too.

What is your topic next term? Is there some information on our displays to help you, or something interesting in our shop to help? Come along and have some fun.

Shop News

From

Joan Denwood

We do hope you all like the new wall displays in our shop area. We have removed the old Squires book stand, but still have their very interesting books on the bottom book shelf and on a new zigzag book stand next to it. There are only 2 copies left of Michael Portillo's 'Bradshaw's', from his great Railway Journeys programme! More can always be ordered, so pop along and have a look at our book selection.

End Piece

The Museum shop is now selling Janet Pennington's new book on Chanctonbury Ring and it provides a very good read (for only £12.50) For our end piece this month, Janet gives us an insight into what was involved in writing the book.

Tony Ketteman (Editor)

Almost the first thing I thought about on the morning after the great storm of October 1987 was Chanctonbury Ring. Martyn and I were living at Botolphs in the Adur valley then, and could not see the Ring from our house. Our own roof was still on, though minus some tiles, and the flying glass from our demolished greenhouse luckily had not injured our two pigs. We were cut off by fallen trees for three days, and with no electricity had no way of seeing just what had happened in our local area. I knew the news would not be good.

As we discovered later, the Ring lost about 75% of its trees, and its replanting with 400 trees, mainly beech, in 1990 is now a matter of history. The 'new' trees are growing well, and while the Ring's shape is rather ragged, due to older trees that survived at the southern and northern ends, with a couple in the middle, it will in due course reach that lovely wind-contoured shape that we all knew and loved before 1987, though this may not be in my life-time.

Researching my recently published book on Chanctonbury Ring gave me the opportunity to look at the many aspects of the Ring's history. Some of my earliest memories in the late-1940s are of climbing Chanctonbury Hill with my parents, and later on with my sister Pamela. Of course, the sun was always shining in those far-off days, and wild strawberries and probably wilder adders are a big part of those memories, along with the downland flowers and the varied tree cover on the way. There were, and still are, many different routes by which to approach the Ring, some steeper and more challenging than others, but I always feel that the ancient chalk bostal leading up the north scarpface of the Downs from Chanctonbury Ring Road is the best way (and I have a scar on my knee to prove it!).

I had been thinking about writing a history of Chanctonbury Ring – and of course the Ring means the prehistoric hillfort as well as the trees – for some years, and had been gathering a folder of illustrations and likely documents. As a member of the Sussex Archaeological Society, I knew there were published archaeological articles about Chanctonbury and its local area from the mid-19th century onwards. I thought it would take me about six months to write an article/pamphlet/booklet. How deluded could I be? A good 18 months after I first put finger to keyboard, the research had turned into a small book of 138 pages with 77 illustrations, a bibliography, notes and an index.

First of all, I had not realised that the trees, first planted on and within the perimeter of the Ring in 1760 by sixteen-year-old Charles Goring of Wiston House, had not just consisted of beeches. I had a big tree-planting learning curve ahead of me. To cut a long story short, I discovered that many of the trees had been replaced, replanted and patched at least ten times, if not more, in the last 250 years. The Wiston Estate owner, Harry Goring, was extremely helpful in explaining about the process of 'nurse' tree-plantings, both to shelter the beech trees and also to make them grow tall and straight. I had to read up on at least eight different tree varieties. As I had worked on the Wiston Estate archives for over 30 years I had a good knowledge of the history of the area, but the reasoning behind the planting needed more research.

Then came the archaeology. I was soon soaked in the Neolithic and Bronze Age eras of Chanctonbury Hill – and have given approximate dates for these in my book for

clarification. I knew that the prehistoric hillfort used to be dated to the Early Iron Age, c.500-600 BC, but that this has now been put further back, to the Late Bronze Age, c.750 BC, because of discoveries made during the excavations that took place at the Ring in 1977 and 1988-91. It seems to have been used as some sort of meeting place, and perhaps for ritual events. No evidence of warlike activity there has been found. David Rudling, the archaeologist who worked with his team at Chanctonbury from 1988-1991, accompanied me to the site on two occasions, once on a tremendously bumpy and slippery Landrover journey from North Farm, Washington in mist and drizzle with Richard Goring, the Wiston Estate Manager. It was the first time David had been back for 20 years and he felt quite moved by the occasion.

I was very keen to illustrate the two types of Roman temples that been built within the Ring during the second century AD. After some rather complicated e-mail correspondence with Guy de la Bédoyère (who often appears on *Time Team*) he allowed me to use his drawing to illustrate what the earlier Romano-Celtic temple in Chanctonbury Ring might have looked like. Paul Drury from Kent kindly let me use his drawing of a Romano-British octagonal temple at Chelmsford to show what the slightly later building may have looked like. Neither archaeologist charged me a copyright fee for their work, which was very generous.

I did, however, have to pay copyright fees for the portraits of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (National Portrait Gallery) and of George III (Scottish National Portrait Gallery). I was delighted not to have to pay fees for the use of drawings from the British Library, the Council for British Archaeology, Leeds Art Gallery, the Local Studies Library at Worthing and the Sussex Archaeological Society, all of whom went out of their way to let me use their paintings, drawings and photographs in my publication. Steyning Museum and the West Sussex Record Office at Chichester were both frequently on my ports-of-call list during my research, and as you can imagine, my thanks to everyone at two of my favourite research venues are profuse – and no fees there either...

The worst part of producing the book, in retrospect (apart from the stiffness engendered from numerous forays to and from the Ring by every route possible) was the index. This was quite hard work, rising at 5am each day for over a week to write more than 700 cards by hand, in order to get the index finished in time for publication in November 2011. Gilbert White's remark, in a letter to a friend written in 1788, spurred me on:-

I am still employed in making an index – an occupation full as entertaining as that of darning stockings, tho' by no means so advantageous to society.

I do not agree with him, of course, as an index is extremely advantageous to those reading a book about Chanctonbury Ring, and even though I used to enjoy darning woollen socks...I still have my darning mushroom.

Searching for wells and ponds in the vicinity of the Ring with my sister Pamela and brother-in-law Bob (Platt) was an interesting exercise, and since publication I have discovered the site of another well on the Downs not very far away. The old story of the watering of the young trees had always worried me, that of the young Charles Goring walking up to the Ring every day for months, if not years, with bottles of

water; this just did not ring true. So I spent much time looking at the nearest water sources for the Ring, both on the ground and in documentary form. I then had to investigate horse-drawn water-carts, their designs and carrying capacities. The intricacies of the actual place-name Chanctonbury was a complicated journey, and I was surprised to find that the name we all know so well was not applied to the Ring until c.1794.

What I had not reckoned on was finding out about the murder of monk on ‘Changebury Hill’ on 23rd June 1330, and needing to read up on the various rites that took place on St John’s Eve all over England in medieval times. This date, of course, is Midsummer Eve, and I guess we all have a story or two about what we think, or know, went on at Chanctonbury Ring on that date over the last few decades, but I shall not be discussing that here... I first read about this murder on a summer evening in 2010; it was part of an article in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* published in 1860. Guess which evening I was working away in my study on this? Yes, it was Midsummer Eve, 23rd June, so St John must have been looking over my shoulder. It was a very eerie moment when I glanced up at the calendar – the hairs rose up on the back of my neck. I then had to chase up the documentary evidence for the murder, being helped with this and the medieval Latin transcription by Christopher Whittick of the East Sussex Record Office.

The research done by the Wiston History Girls’ group, of which I am a member, on a collection of 18th and 19th century letters relating to the Wiston Estate over the last few years, was also extremely useful, as well as fun. The description of Chanctonbury Ring in the spring of 1868 as the *Grand Mamelon* (the Big Nipple) by the grandfather of Sir Anthony Eden was one of many amusing discoveries we made. Another surprise was that in 1866 the Revd John Goring of Wiston House had toyed with the idea of building a Swiss Cottage in the Ring for his children. Charles Goring the Ring-planter was revealed through the letters as an enthusiastic, humorous and prolific poet. Many local people know his moving poem to Chanctonbury Ring, written in his old age, 68 years after his tree-planting in 1760.

Well, I could go on for pages about the pain and pleasure of researching the history of Chanctonbury Ring and its magical hill. I wrote about its numerous visitors, and the outpourings of novelists, poets, musicians, diarists, travel-writers and many more over the last two hundred years. This, the last chapter of the book, was the most soothing part to write, and I much enjoyed revisiting many of my favourite authors, and discovering new ones.

To me, the Ring seems full of the ghosts of past and present visitors over the last three or four millennia, including my much younger self. It is easy for me to remember the dark, mysterious place it used to be, before the great storm, when all external sounds were muffled, as one entered what appeared to be another world (not to mention the slight shadow of the Devil lurking as the light faded). The overwhelming feeling today is of a happy place, with spiritual undertones, all much enjoyed by visitors. On my recent forays I saw walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, families, children in buggies, babies strapped to fathers’ chests, dogs accompanying their owners, people picnicking and sunbathing, or sheltering from strong winds, all admiring the far views on every side. Long may Chanctonbury Ring, in its many forms, survive.