



# MUSEUM NEWS

Steining Museum Newsletter

December 2015

## Museum Diary

- 19.03.16 Annual General Meeting  
Penfold Hall  
2.30pm
- 09.04.16 Spring Coffee Morning  
Penfold Hall  
10.30 - 12.00
- 12.11.16 Autumn Coffee Morning  
Penfold Hall  
10.30 - 12.00

## 200 Club

### October Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Jeanne Pragnell (£35)  
2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Jo Thornton (£25)  
3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Maggie Hollands (£15)

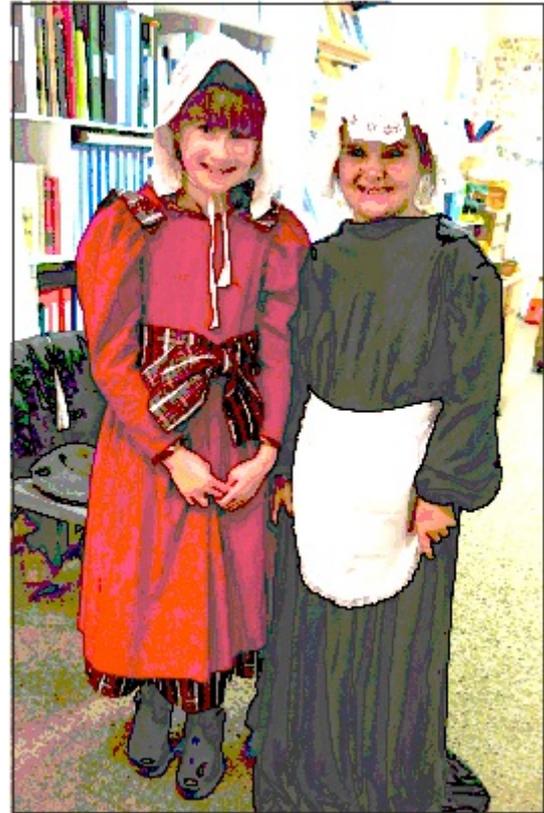
### November Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Brenda Cole (£35)  
2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Jane Alvarez (£25)  
3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Anne Long (£15)

## Half Term Activities Day

*from Joan Denwood:*

Steining Museum held a children's activity morning in half-term. They had fun dressing up, looking through Victorian stereoscopes, playing Victorian games and pastimes, brass rubbing and making Christmas cards. Children and parents had an interesting morning and said what a great time they had.



## Autumn Coffee Morning

*From Gillian Kille:*

Up until the time of writing this for the Newsletter, the weather had been unseasonably warm for this time of year and it was a mild, dry day for the Friends' coffee morning on 31<sup>st</sup> October. 59 Friends supported the event and all the stalls were well laden with items to buy - boosted by a large quantity of scarves of all types, generously donated by Friends and Stewards of the Museum, who had responded to our request and turned out their wardrobes and drawers for us! The scarves certainly generated a lot of interest, especially from our female Friends, and combined with the book sales, resulted in sales of £84.60, which was an excellent result.

There was quite a buzz and everyone seemed to be enjoying the opportunity to chat to friends over coffee and biscuits and look at all the

merchandise and the delicious home baked cakes on sale. With Christmas not too far away there was also the Museum's shop stall with seasonal gifts, Christmas cards and stocking filler items for children.

Our total net profit amounted to £293.06, after expenses. Thank you to all our cake makers, all the helpers, old and new, and to those who brought along items for the stalls and the draw - we really couldn't do without your generous support.

Our next coffee morning will be in the Spring on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April, 10:30 – 12:00 at the Penfold Hall when we look forward to seeing you all again. Please do bring a friend if you wish. Everyone is always very welcome. There will be a plant stall, so please bring along any cuttings and plants you have nurtured, they are always very welcome and popular. We will probably also have some more scarves to sell, and as the handbags proved popular too – any unwanted handbags will also be very welcome.

### **Subscriptions**

If you pay your annual subscription in cash, you will find attached to the newsletter a reminder that subs are due as from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016. As well as a reply slip to enclose with your subscription, you will find a form to enable you to set up a standing order for future payments. I do this every year in the hope that more of you will agree to do this. About three quarters of all the Museum Friends pay by standing order and this saves a great deal of labour in collecting subscriptions which are our main source of income to run the Museum. If you rely on paying in cash, it is so easy for you to forget which means that we have to send another reminder with the next newsletter.

Please help out our hard-working helpers by agreeing to start a standing order for payment.

### **Helpers**

As most of you know, Steyning Museum is run by volunteers drawn from the Friends organisation. The management committee (elected at the annual general meeting) is always interested in welcoming people willing to give some of their time to help with the day-to-day running of the Museum. Some ninety of you already carry out the invaluable task of welcoming visitors as stewards. There are, however, other tasks which need doing. What we are always looking for are people who can provide help with the other tasks which are

needed to finance and run the Museum on a daily basis.

Can you please consider if you can help with publicity, mounting exhibitions, distributing the newsletter, assisting with visiting school groups, and assisting the social events committee in their money raising events. That doesn't exhaust the possibilities. Long-time helpers do have to retire (mostly through advancing age!) so the future of the Museum depends on new helpers coming forward to take their place.

Please consider becoming a helper. All you need to do is leave a note for me at the Museum with your name and telephone number. That won't commit you to anything. It will merely be the start of a conversation to let you know if you might be able to help.

### **Exhibitions**

At present you can see the new exhibition which tells the story of our local church of St. Andrew and St. Cuthman. It looks at the building itself, the music which has graced it over the years, how it has been decorated and embellished and the story of some of the people who have been involved with it.

To accompany the exhibition you can buy the new church guide with full colour illustrations. This is the product of a collaboration between the Museum and the Church.

### **End Piece**

Liane Watt has been continuing her valuable task of recording the memories of people who have lived in Steyning for some time. As our end piece this month, you will be able to enjoy the memories of Brian Picking, who was born in Steyning in 1940 and spent his early life in the town.

If you know of any one who is a long-time resident and might have interesting memories to share, please leave a note for Liane in the Museum.

Tony Kettelman  
Editor

## Brian Picking

**My name is Brian Picking.** I was born in Steyning, Mouse Lane, in 1940. We lived in the little row of white cottages opposite Mill Field and Mouse Cottage. At that time Mouse Cottage was occupied by the Governor of Jersey who had been, I suppose, rushed out of Jersey before the war. Mr. De Sumeris, just as a matter of interest.

The first thing I remember is that my Grand-parents lived at Charlton Court at the top of Mouse Lane and their garden is the one that backs onto the Plaque (showing a copy of the John Stanley Purvis poem *From Steyning to the Ring* - editor) There is a pair of cottages three stories high and they lived in one of them, with a huge garden.

**My Grand father and Grandmother** both worked for Mr Hale at Court Farm. He was a cowman and he died not long after the war. I wasn't old enough to go to the funeral so it must have been in the mid-forties. Grandmother continued there for many years as house-keeper and cook. I remember walking down the road about 2-30 after washing up after lunch with a little pail of milk fresh from the cows every day and she used to take it into the scullery and beat hell out of it and make butter with a couple of wooden butter pats. **The very, very crude cottage I lived in.** We used to have to walk over Mouse Lane into the bushes to get water from the pump well which is basically still there with one of those great cast iron pumps, and cart it back up the garden path. As I said, they had no water, no electricity. It was all done with paraffin lamps and I remember when they used to go to bed at night they used to patter up the stairs with one of the metal candle holders each. Monday morning they would come down stairs at 6 o'clock and light the copper to get the water hot enough to do the washing. There was a big old scullery, no kitchen in those days, and I used to rush home from school on Monday to wind the mangle for them.

**Toilet**, well that was a laugh! There was only one door. You used to come out the front door, round three sides of the house, through the wood-shed, fall over the chopping block into a little place behind where there was a bucket with a board with a hole in it. Grandfather used to empty that once a week, dig a hole under the blackberry bushes and hope that he didn't find the same hole as last week. We had wonderful blackberries!

After he died her (Grandmother's) sister came to live with her. I remember meeting her off the train at Steyning. It must have been soon after the war. They lived up there for many, many years. They used to walk down the lane and do their shopping once a week, "Cooee" when they got to us and Mother said to go out and give them a wave. They used to come down with an accumulator each to take it up to Simms Garage in the High Street to have it charged up. They use to run the radio off an accumulator, one of those glass things you don't see these days. No transistors in those days. Although they had a huge garden, just after the war began, I suppose, they used to farm a patch in a wood half-way up the chalk track to the beeches on the left hand side. About half-way up there is a big hollow they used to farm, or cultivate for vegetables. I can remember sitting in my pushchair while they were digging away. I've seen it on the map. It's called Merritt's Wood now which is very good because that was their name. Grandpa and Grandma were Merritt's. So that's very good.

I only went in Charlton Court House, Mr. Hale's house once, but I remember it's one of those that you opened the front door and there's a stone flagged corridor going straight out to the back door. So I suppose that's a Hall house. We used to go up there once or twice and play in that big old barn which I think is about 14th century, wonderful place.

**War time.** I don't remember a lot about that. I can remember being at home down in Charlton Place and seeing a barrage balloon go over which seemed to have escaped from Ford or one of those coastal things, just on the loose. It just drifted over and I can remember a doodle-bug (V-1 flying bomb)

because Mother said we had to dive under the kitchen table. Although there were air-raid shelters down at the bottom of our steps we never ever used them. We used to be under the kitchen table. She said 'you've got to look out for this doodle-bug, when it stops keep your head down'. Calloways had a sweet shop on the corner of Mouse Lane. I forget what it is now, I think it is a private house now. Right on the corner opposite the George pub that was. We used to go down there with a six-pence on a Saturday and our ration coupon and collect our sweets.

**Mr Samualson**, who lived at Bayards, I believe its Bayards. He used to have one of those massive great green, like a Brooklands, racing car, with a leather strap over the bonnet. There was great excitement when he came and parked outside the shop, all the kids around it of course. A big old Bentley, a 4/5 litre Bentley. One of the old racing type ones.

**Juniors.** Oh, I started school when I was four half-way up the High Street. I think it was next door to the Produce Shop now or next door but one on the up side. There used to be a Mrs. Henton who came up on the train from Hove and ran a little private school. A one room thing for 20 of us. I started there when I was barely four years old, a private paying one. I used to watch the other kids go by to the real school in envy. Then when I started Junior School, well the High Street was nothing like it is now. We used to play marbles all the way up in the gutters because there was no traffic. We'd start half-an-hour before school and play marbles all the way up round. Then there was the Tuck Shop in Church Street, just the end of the railings. A little Tuck shop there where we used to get a penny's worth of sherbet, lemonade powder. So we used to go in with foul looking yellow mouths and lips. The Junior School was down School passage, School Lane. Play time there was marbles and the girls used to have balls which they used to chuck up against the walls there. I suppose it was all coordination learning. And skipping, it was all skipping ropes and balls and marbles. That was before hoola-hoops even.

**Mouse Lane.** We used to have a rag and bone man come round, "E-rag-bone" he used to say. We also had a knife grinder. He came with a big thing on wheels, a grinding wheel on wheels. Everyone used to rush down and get their knives and scissors sharpened.

**The Market.** That was great fun. Living in Mouse Lane we used to get cattle occasionally come down the lane and we used to help them drive through the town or stop them taking turns left and right. We used to hope to get a six-pence or a shilling when we got there. The same with the sheep. They used to drive the sheep down and up through the town.

**Talking about up through the town.** I can remember the swans from the pond at the Mill, from the Mill pond in the Mill Field. In summer they would bring their cygnets down and they would walk down the road, swan in front, swan at the back, cygnets in the middle and they would patter all the way down Mouse Lane, up the High Street, down through Bramber, down through Beeding to the river. Their feet must have been terribly sore by the time they got there. They used to stop the traffic. It was always mid-dayish and I'd bet they were glad to get their feet in the water after that. But you could never see them these days.

**The cattle market.** Yes, that was great excitement because the chance of earning a bob or two, or six-pence or two at the market. They used to have the auction there and all the pens. We used to be able to walk across the pens on a board, and there were machinery auctions in the field which is now built on, the Church side of the market place. That is where they filmed "Mr. Drake's Duck". Rumour had it that we got ourselves in that on the pens, but because one of us was picking their nose at the time they cut it out. I've seen it many years since. It's a good fun film. Of course most of it was up opposite Spithandle Lane.

**The Playing field.** I forget what it's called now, onto the back of Mill Road. "The Memorial Field" is it? There used to be a little paddling pool there, swings and a roundabout. And more air-raid shelters

which we just managed to leap across. The paddling pool. We never used the paddling pool much because rumour had it that it was filled from the Mill pond and we used to get all sorts of insects and creepy-crawlies come in with the water, so that was rarely used. Further up where Britton's Croft is now there was a funfair site and the bonfire site. The funfair was another opportunity to earn a bob or two helping them put things up and hopefully get a free ride out of it. The bonfire, we used to build huge bonfires. Shooting Field was starting to spring up then and they had a rival bonfire. All the best branches and bits of timber and that would go to and fro from Shooting Field to our bonfire on a daily basis. So they would creep in at night and pinch ours and we would get the better the next night and drag it back again and so on until bonfire night. Of course as far as Bramber and Beeding goes, we used to have those wonderful bonfire processions that are too dangerous to have now. Lewes and all the other societies used to come. We used to walk along with these flaming sticks, what do they call them? 'Torches' Yes, torches, that's it.

**The Rifle Range**, in Mill Field opposite us we used to see the soldiers coming in, the war time and just after. It was the Canadians, I believe. We used to rush down and operate the gate for them and get sweets and chewing gum off them Then, after they had gone, we used to creep up there and collect shell cases. I don't know what on earth for.

**Just another sign of the times** was the traffic. We used to sit on the wall where the fire station entrance is now and collect car numbers. I can't think why on earth we done that, but we used to sit there for ten minutes and "oh, here comes another one' You can hardly do that these days. I don't know why we did it.

**Steyning Flyer**, the train, that was wonderful. That was a bit later for us. I used to go to school on it to Horsham. I used to catch the 8-28 out of Steyning after my paper round. I used to live in Mouse Lane as I said, and as long as I got to the Church yard and the train came in I knew I was OK. I used to run down and just about catch it. We used to use that to go to Brighton when we were teenagers. We used to go to Brighton on a Sunday afternoon. It came in about 2 o'clock with one the engine always at the back. It was always a pusher. So when we got to the Church yard we'd see the train coming along and then it would stop. It would move on out of the station to collect water which was at the far exit of the station and we used to go down there and it used to come back for us. Trains don't do that these days either.

**Characters I remember**. I just remember because I used to go and do the shopping at the Co-op which was where Steyning Butchers are now. I used to mainly volunteer for that because they had this wonderful system of pulling the chain and sending the money across to the central cash desk. That was great fun and your change used to come racing back again. I still remember our Co-op number,23812. I was up there one day when 'Gert and Daisy' came down the road, Elsie and Doris Waters. They were coming down the road doing one of their song and dance acts to entertain everyone. Right bang in the middle of the road.

**Another character of course was 'Carrots'**, Terence Holden the coalman. Oh, going back to Grandma and Grandad's, you went in the door through the scullery, through the passage and into their main living room. They had this big range where they did all their cooking, an armchair each side. Beyond that, right at the far side of the room was the door that opened under the stairs. That's where they kept their coal. You couldn't walk further through the house, the coalman couldn't, to put the coal in there. So Carrots used to come up and walk through the garden, right through the house and dump the coal in the far corner. Convenient to get near the fire, but wasn't very convenient for delivery especially if he had muddy boots.

**Other characters** . Tom Carr. I think his father used to run the boot shop next to, or under, the Town clock. He was obviously retired. He used to live down, I suppose, under the by-pass now. down near

Bramber station in a little hut, shack, and he still used to repair people's boots and shoes for them. I know a friend of mine had to go down there and deliver shoes for him. Because he was such a formidable figure, he used to walk around the town talking to himself, everyone was half afraid of him. So they used to put the shoes outside his door with a note and run.

The other character was Ma Blatch. I don't know anything about Ma Blatch except she walked round the town talking to herself loudly as well. I don't know where she came from.

**The Gas Works.** On a Saturday everyone assembled at the Gas Works with their little trucks and carts to collect coke. Half-a-crown it cost to fill the cart with coke to eke out your coal ration. Kids from all over Steyning came to collect their coke from the Gas Works.

**Sundays.** Well when we were kids we were never allowed to do anything in the afternoons. We never went visiting anyone until we'd been to Sunday School at the Penfold Institute. I think it's changed its name now - I'm not sure. Anyway, we had to go to Sunday School then we would go and visit Uncles and Aunts and things afterwards.

**The cricket field.** Obviously, there were air-raid shelters up there and they used to run the Athletic Club in them. They used to have a flower show every year. A shame that they've stopped that. There were marquees up there and that. I remember making a big fluffy ball. I had two pieces of card-board and I wrapped the wool round and round until there was a solid lump and you couldn't see the hole in the middle, cut round the outside and ended up with a big fluffy ball. I won three shillings in the handicraft section.

**The Downs.** We used to play on the Downs with our trucks because there was no ash trees up there then on our side. It was all bouncy mole-hills and ant-hills, wonderful. It's a shame that it is all covered in ash trees now.

**The Steyning Ghost.** The Church ghost. I was coming back from training at the Athletic Club one night. It was a very dark night. There were no street lights round there then between the Church and the road down to the station. There was a big row of elms and there used to be an old owl who lived there. We were half afraid to walk through the Church yard at night. But on this particular night I went down there with a couple of friends. I don't know where we were going. I wore a black track suit and I had a white towel. I got up against the Church wall facing the Steyning Centre. There was a flying buttress on each side. When the next bunch came along from the training I just pulled this white towel up. There were squeals and 'there's a ghost in the grounds' type of thing. They started throwing things at me so I put the towel down and moved a little bit to the side and pulled it up again and frightened the life out of them. They all fled. The next night, this was great fun, so I went down and done the same thing again and there were masses of people down there. On the third night, I don't know whether they landed from the train from Shoreham and what, there were literally hundreds of people in the Church yard and the 'Argos' was there and I got a wonderful picture in the 'Argos'. They had done a full-page spread. A wonderful picture of me along side the Vicar, Eckerton Williams, looking for this ghost. We never, ever, dared do it again. Two days later there was a chap from the Daily Mail on the door-step who said "I hear that you were the ghost" so I had to confess then.

**That's about it.** When I was twenty-one I moved away never to be seen again until two or three years ago. Glad to be back. That's about all I can offer I'm afraid.

January 2015