



# Museum News

Steyning Museum Newsletter

June 2011

## Museum Diary

- 13.08.11 Garden Coffee Morning  
Jarvis, Jarvis Lane  
10.30 - 12.00
- 17.09.11 Steyning Museum's  
"Antiques Roadshow"  
Steyning Centre  
2.00 - 5.00
- 29.10.11 Autumn Coffee Morning  
Penfold Hall  
10.30 - 12.00
- 08.10.11 Big Draw Day  
Museum & Penfold Hall  
12.00 - 4.30
- 14.01.12 Stewards & Helpers Social  
Penfold Hall  
11.30 am
- 24.03.12 Annual General Meeting  
Penfold Hall at 2.30pm.
- 28.04.12 Spring Coffee Morning  
Penfold Hall  
10.30 - 12.00
- 27.10.12 Autumn Coffee Morning  
Penfold Hall  
10.30 - 12.00

As you can see from the new events added to the Museum Diary above, Gillian Kille and her sub-committee have been busy organising social events well ahead of time. To plan well ahead is becoming important as nowadays the Penfold Hall is being booked up early as well. Gill and her helpers have been exploring new ideas for money raising events and you will see you can now look forward to our own Museum

"Antiques Roadshow" in September. You will find the details below in Gill's report on recent events and what is to come

Gill reports:

### *Spring Coffee Morning*

*We had a perfect, warm, sunny start to the day encouraging 64 people to attend our Spring coffee morning at the Penfold Hall. It was a chance for Friends of the Museum and their friends to relax over coffee and biscuits in a convivial atmosphere and to browse the stalls.*

*All the stalls did extremely well and it was so good to see so many nice plants and cuttings of all types on the annual spring plant stall in spite of another harsh winter. One enterprising helper actually sold some plants to passers-by on the steps outside!*

*Overall, we made a net profit after expenses of £269.20, so our thanks to all of you for your support and a 'thank you' to all the helpers and to those of you who donated items for the raffle and the other stalls. As always, we do appreciate your generosity.*

### *Summer Garden Coffee Morning*

*The next coffee morning is on Saturday, 13 August in the garden at Jarvis, Jarvis Lane, Steyning from 10.30 – 12 noon. Jenny Toomey has very kindly agreed to open her lovely garden to us – thank you Jenny!*

*We will have our usual cake stall and a raffle. Any new cake makers are more than welcome, so please leave a note for Gillian Kille at the Museum, with a phone number, if you would like to make some cakes for this event. We always need raffle prizes too.*

*(NB Map at end of newsletter.)*

## ***The Museum's Own "Antiques Roadshow"***

*Another new fund-raising event for the Museum is an "Antiques Roadshow" (no, not the BBC one!!) which will be held on Saturday, 17 September from 2pm to 5pm in The Steyning Centre.*

*Simon Langton from renowned local auctioneers, Denhams, will be valuing any items you wish to bring along. There will be an entry fee of £5, (donated to the Steyning Museum Trust) which will cover an informal valuation of up to 2 items with a fee of £1 each for any extra items. There is no need to book.*

*Refreshments will be available and there will be a raffle and other attractions.*

*We do hope you will support this event – so do please tell your friends and family and come along with your treasures. Who knows what you might find in your attic!*

### **200 Club**

April Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Laurie Keen (£35)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Roger Francis (£25)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Irene Rogerson (£15)

May Draw:

- 1<sup>st</sup> prize = Ann Coote (£35)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize = Alan Colebourne (£25)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize = Helen Lewis (£15)

### **The Annual General Meeting**

We had a very successful Annual General Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March with reports and elections followed by a very interesting talk by Mark Perry-Nash on Daily Life in a Medieval Sussex Village.

As a result of the meeting, the committee personnel for the coming year will be:

- Chairman - Jacquie Buttriss
- Vice Chairman - Jackie Campbell
- Treasurer - Paul Norris
- Curator - Chris Tod
- Minute Secretary - Helen Coutrouzas
- Communications  
& Friends Secretary - Tony Ketterman
- Stewards - Sarah Leigh
- Education - Joan Denwood
- Publicity - Jill Kemp
- Shop - Liane Watt
- Social Events - Gillian Kille (Chair)

& the Sub-committee: Iris Taylor,  
Pam Perry, Mariella Alexander

### **Gert & Daisy**

The article featuring a diary of Gert & Daisy's trip to India in the last newsletter produced a good response and the interest has continued now the exhibition on their lives has opened., Some visitors have been coming to the Museum from some distance away just to view the display. We held a ceremony for the opening on 15<sup>th</sup> April with invited guests, some of whom had known the two sisters when they lived in Steyning. George Cockman, Lynette Rose and Peter Field each recounted their memories and, together with memories from other guests, a picture emerged of two ladies remembered with great affection.

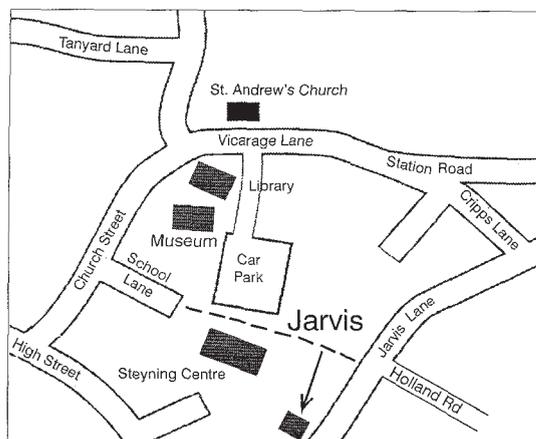
### **Next Newsletter**

As has been our custom in previous years, there will be no newsletter in August, just a delivery of steward rotas. The next edition will be delivered in early October.

### **Family History Research**

Jacquie Buttriss has kindly written an article on family history research as the end piece this month. She responds to the enquiries the Museum receives from the public seeking information on members of their families who may have had a connection with Steyning. With our internet connection, quite a few of these enquiries come from abroad. As a result of Jacquie's efforts, many interesting facts are emerging to be added to our growing archives.

Tony Ketterman (Editor)



# **FAMILY HISTORY**

## **Start from what you know**

The first step in putting together your family tree is to start from what you know. I first became interested in my family's history in my teens. I began by asking my parents what they knew of their forebears. My mother recollected some tantalising snippets, but my father knew very little.

I still had three grandparents alive so, at the age of 17, I sat down with each of them in turn and asked them lots of questions. What do you remember? Who? When? Where? Any anecdotes? The answers they gave enabled me to draw out my first family tree, back to about 1835. This was a very good start. But that's where it stopped! Many of my ancestors came from other countries and very few from Britain, so that was an immediate problem. Of course, another was the difficulty of accessing research facilities, before the opening up of archives and the invention of the internet. (Though of course we didn't know what we were missing at that time!)

Whatever age you start on your family history, there will almost always be somebody, perhaps a sister or a cousin, who may remember something you don't.

I put my putative family tree and a few notes and photos in a small drawer. That's where they stayed, rarely looked at, for the next thirty years! If I hadn't been otherwise engaged with work, raising a family and everyday life, and if more of my forebears had been British, I could have visited graveyards and museums, tracked down county record offices and contacted local family history societies. These are all good ways to start on your research.

## **Grasp new opportunities**

Ancestry.com was one of the first websites to come online in about 1990. This was the moment that rekindled my interest. Gradually, more sites appeared. The coming of the internet meant that I could 'visit' the archives of other countries without having to pay the travelling costs. Indeed, the main obstacle with most of my forebears had been not knowing where they came from – in some cases, I didn't even know what country.

Gradually, over the past twenty years, I have pieced together more information, a place for one individual, a date for another. There were mysteries to solve along the way, and several frustrating but intriguing challenges. From that first small drawer of papers, I now have a whole wall, floor to ceiling, of files containing research findings and a family tree that stretches back more than 60 generations – 1,500 years, with links to biblical times.

## **Meet your ancestors**

Gradually, as I have built up information and uncovered new evidence I have also come across a few of my more illustrious ancestors in old books and papers. Indeed, many of these have now been digitised. I read a lot of social history too. This provides a context for each of my forebears, whatever their status. We now know almost as much about how

paupers lived through the ages as we do about the aristocracy. In this way, I have been able to imagine my ancestors' daily lives and get to know them as people with their own stories.

I have found many intriguing and disparate individuals along the way, including the occasional black sheep! For example, one forebear was a transported convict, sentenced to death at first, for stealing a trinket from a rival pedlar. The story at the time, apparently, was that he was set up, in order to clear the patch for his rival to be the sole trader. I have never found evidence to prove this either way. However, when his sentence was commuted to life, he was transported to the new colony of Australia, where he was given an absolute pardon. He started a small business and acquired others until eventually he became a prosperous landowner, a shipping magnate, philanthropist and pillar of the community. He even co-founded Sydney University, where a stained-glass window commemorates him to this day. Of course, this was several generations back, so his fortune, shared among his 76 grandchildren was very soon dissipated!

My family turns out to be quite a motley crew. Among many other surprising ancestors I have discovered a citizen of Warsaw who became King of Poland for a day, an American Indian princess, a pauper who died in the Islington Workhouse, an orphaned child who survived her precarious upbringing in London's most 'notorious' tenement building, a bigamous Irish lawyer, a Colonel who commanded the last Camel Corps in Africa, the daughter of an aristocrat who was last seen eloping on the back of a black horse one moonlit night 300 years ago, an eccentric French mayor, a Dutch immigrant who saved the life of King George III and 'Marching Rollo', the Viking conqueror of Normandy.

Over the years, I have often been asked to help friends or distant relations get started with their family trees, or to help them break through the inevitable brick walls one finds along the way. I've always enjoyed doing that. That's why I was happy to take on the voluntary role of Family Historian at Steyning Museum.

## **Find your family history at Steyning Museum**

In Steyning we are blessed with a rich array of documentary resources to help any aspiring family historian research forebears in this area.

We have parish records for Steyning, Bramber, Beeding and Wiston, censuses from 1841 to 1901, memorial inscriptions from St Andrews graveyard, poor law records, some wills and probate records, electoral rolls, old parish magazine name indexes, tax and property records, indentures, charity donors and recipients, workhouse overseers' records, old maps, newspaper extracts, house histories, old family trees and many other useful archives.

As the Family Historian at the Museum, I receive a variety of queries, mostly by email from the genealogy page of our Steyning Museum website or our Family History blog. Some people want to know if we have any records of their ancestor(s) and if we have they are often keen to come to the museum and do some research of their own. We are always happy to arrange a mutually convenient date when we can point them towards the records they need to start them off.

Other enquirers live further away; often in other parts of the world. So we offer everyone a free half hour of my time to do some initial research on their behalf, which allows me to establish whether we do indeed have records of their ancestor(s) and the extent of information about them that is available. At this point, if I am looking into just one or two names, I can usually send them quite a bit of detail about each of these, which often satisfies their curiosity and answers their main question. Sometimes people make very welcome donations to the museum in thanks for our help. However, for broader or more complex searches, half an hour is only a starting point. For this reason, we do offer a research service, priced very reasonably, at £25 per hour, up to a maximum of £100, which makes a small contribution to the Museum's day-to-day running costs.

### **Some of our recent Queries**

Over the past eight months, since I became the Family Historian, I have responded to more than fifty requests. During the course of these researches, I have found out a lot about local workhouses, smugglers, poachers, blacksmiths, the railway and many other aspects of life in the Steyning area. Of these fifty or so families, a few unusual stories stand out.

One puzzle that had us scratching our heads was the writer who remembered his grandfather living in a "creepy, turreted gothic-style mansion" in Steyning – that had us looking at certain local houses in a new way. Another query involved the story of a man who did a bit of poaching on the side, reputedly sentenced to transportation for life in the drawing room of the JP on whose land he had been caught!

An Australian had tracked down some eighteenth century Vandyke forebears to Steyning and wanted to know whether I could help him establish his and their descent from Sir Anthony Vandyke. I found no evidence of this and felt it unlikely, since the famous artist apparently had only two daughters, one by his wife and the other by his mistress.

A Canadian member of the Johnson family sent us a copy of a letter signed by Queen Anne herself, granting leniency to John Johnson, Master Tanner of Steyning, "a man of very low circumstances ... with a wife and five small children". The letter commanded that he be excused from paying the exceptionally large fine of £415 (in 1702), imposed as a result of a malicious accusation of wool-smuggling by a man "of mean credit and repute".

One extensive family tree that was given to the museum many years ago and has rarely been looked at since, has suddenly been much in demand! Indeed, since August 2010, we have been able to share this document with five different individuals, none of whom knew of the others' existence, but all of whom were researching the same family, by the name of Stenning, or its variations (Stening, Steyning, Stanning). You will be pleased to know that we have been able, at their requests, to put them all in touch with each other, now that they know they are all distantly related.

It is due to our archivists over the years that we have been able to build up such an extensive collection. Principal amongst these archivists in our early days was Mr Cox, who indexed many of our early records. Local historian, Janet Pennington, donated much of her extensive archive to Steyning Museum. Over the past fifteen years, our current archivist, David Thompson has given us a great deal of his time and expertise in searching out,

indexing and making available ever more evidence of former residents and their lives. Of course, our key expert when it comes to the anecdotes and explanations of daily life in Steyning is our excellent curator, Chris Tod. I thank them all for making my role possible.

## Useful websites to start you off

Whilst a few of the websites below are completely free to use, others are either 'pay-per-view' or subscription-based. However, nearly all of them offer free trials to begin with, so do give them a try. In particular, [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) is UK based and gives a week's free trial. You can find out a lot in a week!

NB the term 'bmd' refers to births, marriages and deaths

Here is a list of the most useful websites to start you off:

[www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) – an excellent UK based selection of records in all aspects, including censuses, parish records, bmd registrations, military records, convict records, etc.

[www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) – this free website includes many useful archives, principle of which is the IGI (international genealogical index) – click on 'go to previous site', lower right, then click again on 'search' at top of new screen.

[www.genuki.org.uk](http://www.genuki.org.uk) – a free directory site of all UK listings on every relevant subject/place

[www.cindislist.org.uk](http://www.cindislist.org.uk) - the free UK branch of the most comprehensive worldwide genealogical listings – covering almost every conceivable subject/place/region in the world

[www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com) – partners in the 1911 census release. Particularly strong on immigration, bmd indexes and a fast-growing range of other sources

[www.originsnetwork.com](http://www.originsnetwork.com) – a range of searchable databases for all UK and Ireland

[www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk) – an award-winning site with a wide variety of resources

[www.freebmd.org.uk](http://www.freebmd.org.uk) – what it says on the tin – free bmd database, but not yet fully complete

[www.freecen.org.uk](http://www.freecen.org.uk) – free database of censuses – not yet complete

[www.freereg.org.uk](http://www.freereg.org.uk) – free database of parish registers – not yet complete

[www.gro.gov.uk](http://www.gro.gov.uk) - where you can order birth, marriage and death certificates (since 1837)

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) –free to search lots of searchable databases, such as wills and probate (pay-per-view to download a will)

[www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org) – free - find out if you have any London area black sheep! Trial transcripts, with names of defendants, witnesses and their actual words

[www.deceasedonline.com](http://www.deceasedonline.com) – a growing database of burial records and memorial inscriptions

And, last but not least:

<http://steyningmuseum.org.uk/genealogypage.htm> - the family history page of the Steyning Museum website, with links to other relevant pages and a link to email the family historian regarding any queries about Steyning, Bramber, Beeding or Wiston families

<http://steyningfamilyhistory.blogspot.com/> - this is our blog, relating interesting aspects of recent researches undertaken by the Steyning Museum Family Historian

[www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure/record\\_office.aspx](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/leisure/record_office.aspx) – the website of the county record office at Chichester (note the underscore in the website address)

Jacque Buttriss