

Times Past

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20 Years of Storrington Museum

How it all began...

A letter to the West Sussex County Times 19th June 1998 signed by Ron and Joan Ham described a conversation with a newly-elected Parish Councillor for Storrington, David Garrett, about the Council undertaking a project to determine the viability of a museum. Ron and Joan noted that as long ago as 1946 the Council had been bequeathed "certain items" on the understanding that they would form the nucleus of a local museum. They had to be returned to the executors because "the museum did not happen".

The Hams had emphasised that a number of items were already in store, and catalogued on computer, that would be donated should a museum become a reality. The idea would be further explored at a public meeting.

The outcome was favourable; leading eventually to the formation of a Museum Committee and the Friends of Storrington Museum in May 1999, with the first issue of Times Past being published in June of that year. Shortly afterwards, a shop premises at 13 Church Street came onto the market, and Cllr Garrett and the Museum Society proposed that the



West Sussex County Times, 9th April 1999

Council should purchase the building for £42,500 to house the museum, this being considered an ideal Millennium project. The Council went along with the idea – it saw the investment as an appreciating asset and had sufficient funds as a result of the sale of land elsewhere.

This was not to be – legal investigations proved that the sub-leases associated with the building involved far too many complications. Instead, the Parish Council offered "exclusive use of the Hooper Downer Hall at the Old School to house the museum." The Chairman of the Friends, Cllr Garrett, felt that although not quite so central the Old School offered better facilities and access.

The rest, as they say is history. On this page and the next, we include a number of items from the Museum's scrapbook about the genesis of our museum. We have been promised a fuller history at a later date.



West Sussex County Times, 5th March 1999

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Museum is now a reality

Storrington Museum is now a reality, following a decision that it can have permanent premises in a room at The Old School, opposite St Mary's Church.

Originally, Storrington Parish Council had voted to buy 13 Church Street as a home for the museum but, because of future liabilities on the site, had to abandon the idea last month.

Instead it looked at the feasibility of leasing the premises for a three or five-year period.

But, with members split in their views about leasing because of the expense involved, the idea of using a room in The Old School was put forward. The idea was endorsed by the parish council, when Mr David Garrett described the decision as "momentous" for Storrington.

Once current letting commitments have been completed for rooms in mid-January, the museum will be up and running in its new base. This will give a permanent home to the many photographs, artefacts and historical pieces relating to Storrington that it already owns.

The museum has the support of the Friends of Storrington and District Museum, a 300-strong group which is committed to making the new museum a success for the area.

The new site has many advantages, with its front and rear entrance, adjacent car park, and prime site opposite the church. Ten and coffee-making facilities are also seen as an advantage.

The move was welcomed by Storrington historians, Ron and Joan Ham, who have played a major part in establishing a museum for the area.

"We are delighted with the decision, which will enable us to open up the museum some time in January. The premises have heating and lighting and if we have something very special planned in the museum, there is always the option of hiring one of the other rooms. It gives us great flexibility," said Mr Ham.

The museum hopes to join forces with the church next year, when the church is planning a major Millennium event.

Fine support for museum

Storrington Museum is up and running, following a highly successful Easter opening, which attracted 80 visitors on the first day.

Mr Ron Ham has taken over as chairman of the museum from parish councillor Mr David Garrett and praise came for Mr Garrett's hard work at the parish council meeting last week.

Mr Ham said: "It will be a hard act to follow because he has put in a huge amount of hard work to get the show on the road. We received many congratulations on the first day the museum opened in its permanent premises in the Old School, Storrington. At the end of the day we also had £23.50 in the pot in the form of donations."

The exhibition, which ranges from artefacts and photographs to documents and memorabilia of Storrington, includes the Catholic book-op regalia used by the Rev Cormack Murphy O'Connor before he became archbishop.

Mr Ham said the idea of a museum for Storrington had long been the dream of the late Margaret Turner and her sister Florrie.

"Margaret died three days before you decided the museum could go ahead in the Old School. But I have visited Florrie, who will be 100 in December, in her nursing home and she is very excited that Storrington has a museum at last," said Mr Ham.

The official opening, in front of invited guests, will take place on May 19, with the ceremony performed by Richard Childs, county archivist and chairman of West Sussex Museum Association.

"The aim is to give a service to the public. The museum will not just be about looking at bits and pieces. People will be able to look up archives and we are going to build a database," said Mr Ham.

For a trial period the museum will be open each afternoon in the week, except Monday. Then the committee will listen to what stewards have to say before deciding on any extension to those hours.

Museum hopes build in village

LONG-awaited plans to find a home for a future Storrington Museum moved a step forward at a recent parish council meeting.

The council deferred a decision until its finance and general purposes committee meets on November 8 on whether to take out a three or five-year lease on 13 Church Street or to buy the freehold. This was to allow time to get more precise financial figures.

A bid to create a museum has been mooted for decades and the Storrington & District Museum Society already has around 400 potential exhibits.

A curator is in place and the Friends of Storrington Museum, formed earlier this year, now boasts 200 to 300 members.

Museum committee chairman David Garrett told the meeting, "It's my opinion we should agree to take a five-year lease at 13 Church Street, bearing in mind the amount of work that will have to be carried out by the volunteers and friends of the committee."

Horsham District Council has already granted a change of use.

But councillors Laurie Hodson and Mike Goldsmith felt it would be better to purchase premises, if a site could be found.

Above: West Sussex County Times 9 May 2000

Right: Worthing Herald 4 Nov 1999



Above: Friends bric-a-brac sale, December 1999

Right - Storrington Carnival 1998

Left: West Sussex Gazette 2 Dec 1999



We will be celebrating the 20th anniversary during the weekend of 23/24 May

The Birth of a Little Canal

The new series of **Hilary Langley's** extracts from the Mant papers examines a little-known waterway, right on our doorstep - the Baybridge Canal

Another box of the Mant documents, which the Museum inherited from the Akerman Solicitors, concerns the Baybridge Canal. Yet again, some of the documents have suffered to the point of illegibility both from damp and nibbling insects but they have an interesting story to tell.

Imagine two brothers - both landowners near West Grinstead - poring over a map showing the route of the River Adur from Shoreham. The river had been navigable by barge from Shoreham to Bines Bridge since 1807 but the cost and time involved in carrying their goods by horse and cart between Bines Bridge and West Grinstead was a worry. The goods sent to market from their farms

were very high quality wheat and also excellent timber (mainly oak) while they brought in coal, chalk (to make into lime for fertilising the fields) and, surprisingly, manure.

As they looked at the map, they spotted a small tributary of the Adur (Pike Brook) and decided that a canal from Bines Bridge to Baybridge could follow its line as well using its water. They wanted the canal to reach Baybridge because it was close both to West Grinstead and also to the Worthing to Horsham Turnpike Road (now the A24). As it would be only three and a half miles long, it didn't seem a massive undertaking. Indeed, it has been described as "one of the least known and least significant waterways in Britain" and many people refer to it as a cut rather than a canal because of its size.

To the brothers, however, such a canal was very important. Even if it didn't make a profit, and their initial outlay was lost, it would help enormously in transporting their goods because a horse pulling a barge could carry thirty tons (fifty times the amount it could pull on a cart).

When they discussed who else might contribute to the initial costs, the older brother, Sir Charles Burrell, thought his friend, Lord Selsey, might want to be involved because he had land in the area, although his main residence was at West Dean, near Chichester. Sir Charles was very enthusiastic because Baybridge was on the doorstep of Knepp Castle, where he lived. The younger brother, Walter, who was equally enthusiastic because he lived at West Grinstead Park, came up with the names of other landowners in the parishes of Ashurst and West Grinstead who would benefit from such a canal.

Both Sir Charles (who was involved with the Wey and Arun Junction Canal) and Lord Selsey (who was similarly involved with the Portsmouth and Arundel Canal) had the experience to see such a project through. Once Lord Selsey and other landowners had agreed to take part, they therefore employed an Engineer - May Upton, who had been the engineer for the Wey & Arun Junction Canal - to prepare a plan plus initial costings. May Upton's estimate for building a canal four



A 1950s map of the Knepp and West Grinstead area, showing the route of the canal from Bines Bridge (on the present B2135 road between Ashurst and Patrige Green) and Bay Bridge, near the old Knepp Castle ruins, (on the old A24 before it became dual carriageway)



*Left - a rather fanciful view entitled 'West Grinstead Wharf'
Above - Sir Charles Burrell*

feet deep, rebuilding Bines Bridge and building two locks plus three other bridges was £5,958. This was considered, together with his plan, at a meeting, when it was decided to go ahead.

Having secured an estimate and a plan, it would have been so easy to seek planning permission and begin work. That was not how canals were built in Georgian times however. Anyone wishing to build a canal needed a very detailed Act of Parliament, for which Mant (who would be the Clerk to the Company) had to instruct Counsel. In addition, he had to prepare a Petition to Parliament, asking them to pass the Bill and enclosing a list of Subscribers.

As May Upton's estimate was £5,958 and additional money was needed to pay the costs involved in getting the Act through Parliament and in buying all the land required, it is staggering that the Act allowed the Company to raise only £6,000 in £50 shares. If they needed any more, the Act allowed them to raise just £3,000 by mortgaging the future Tolls paid for using the canal.

The costs involved in getting a much shorter Act through Parliament were £329 15s and we have a list of some, but not all, of those from whom land was purchased. The total amount paid to them was £591 10s 3d. It is more likely, however, that the total cost of the land was at least £652 13s 6d (an amount paid to Mant who arranged the purchases). This meant that one sixth of the £6,000 shareholding was spent before a sod of earth was dug!

The original Shareholders were Lord Selsey (£1,500), Sir Charles Burrell (£1,500), Walter Burrell (£700), John Wood (£500), Rev Woodward (£500), Mr James Eversfield (£500) and Mr West (£200), plus Mant, the Company Clerk (£50) and James Lancaster, The Company Treasurer (£50): a total of £5,500.

This was however clearly not enough and additional shares equal to £940 were purchased by

Lord Selsey, Sir Charles, Walter Burrell, John Wood and Rev Woodward. This brought the total shareholding to £6,415 - above that permitted by the Act but needs must!

In today's terms, £6,000 in 1825 would be over half a million pounds: a very large commitment for individual shareholders for such a small Canal - particularly as much more was needed.

The Shareholders seem to have been determined not to raise loans by mortgaging the Tolls payable on the Canal, possibly because they would have lost control of that part of the business. Instead, they resorted to loans from themselves to the Company in order to meet the increasing costs.

The loan Agreements, which Mant drafted, were unusual because in both cases the lender was among those promising to pay back a share of both the loan and of the 5% pa interest payable. Thus, Walter Burrell, when loaning the Company £2,800, agreed to pay himself back a share of it, while John Wood agreed to pay back a share of the £1,000 that he loaned. Sir Charles did not bother with such an Agreement when he gave a loan of £360 to erect a crane and build a bridge.

When all the shareholdings and loans are taken into account, the Company's working capital was £10,600: £1,600 more than the £6,000 shareholding plus £3,000 loans permitted by the Act, but no-one seemed to worry!

Everyone appeared to be extremely well organised and, even before the Act was passed, Mant had liaised with the Engineer about which land must be purchased, had advertised for tenders for the digging and organised brickmaking to begin, commissioning iron bars for the kiln, and carters to carry the bricks.

The main work of digging the Canal could therefore begin as soon as possible after the Act emerged from Parliament.

The arrangement with the Shareholders was that they would be asked to pay their shareholdings in instalments, as the work progressed. It seems however that by December 1825 the Treasurer had not called for sufficient money. The documents record the Superintendent of the Canal saying that as more money could not be advanced the men had stopped work!

Clearly, money was a problem throughout the Canal's existence but another issue also worried Sir Charles Burrell. In the beginning, he had offered his bricklayer and carpenter (supervised by his bailiff) to do much of the work. This could have worked out cheaper and ensured good quality workmanship. For some reason, however, the Company agreed with Rev Austen, who wasn't even a shareholder, that May Upton should be used as the Engineer for the entire undertaking.

Sir Charles commented in 1833 that, as a result, all hope of profit was lost because "for example, one of the Locks was destroyed because of unscientific construction and fields were damaged" and that "it is not much consolation to know I was right!"

It is clear that the Baybridge Canal never made a profit, proving instead to be a constant drain on the Shareholders. It is however important to remember that their motivation was not the profit they might make as shareholders, but rather a reduction in their



Brickwork, thought to be the remains of a sluice on the canal Sir Charles brought to his estate from Baybridge

transport costs. This they achieved, because in 1830 Edmund Cartwright wrote in the County History that the canal "has added to the advantages of Communications, the increasing traffic of which proves its utility."

The canal opened in late 1826 but work continued throughout its existence.

The next instalment looks at the remaining years of the Baybridge Canal's brief existence.

Our Lady of England in Storrington

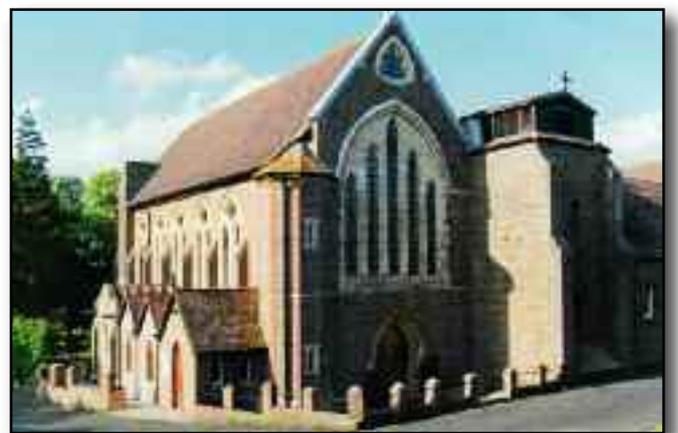
For the first in our glimpses at the history of Storrington and District's places of worship, concentrating on the history of the buildings as well as the people and their mission (though these are inevitably linked), we look at the Roman Catholic Church, dedicated to Our Lady of England.

The dedication is unusual – many churches, particularly in our area, are named for the mother of Jesus, St Mary the Virgin, but this particular dedication is held to be unique. The Virgin Mary is held in special reverence by the Roman faith in England, maybe as a result of a Saxon noblewoman, Richeldis de Faverches, who had a vision of the Virgin in 1061, at Walsingham in Norfolk. A shrine was built, which became – and still is – an important place of pilgrimage. England became known in the Catholic faith as the 'Dowry of Mary', it being thought that the Virgin was the country's protector.

But Walsingham was not the only place with a shrine to St Mary. Statues of the Virgin were venerated at many places, and our corner of West Sussex saw two important places of pilgrimage. The Church of Our Lady of Consolation, in West Grinstead, Sussex, contains a replica of an ancient

painting of Our Lady of Consolation in Turin, Italy. And here in Storrington a statue of the Holy Virgin was given the title 'Our Lady of England'. The statue is said to have been personally blessed by Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) and to have been responsible for several miracles and conversions – hence the church's unique title.

The church building owes its existence to an order of Roman Catholic priests, exiled from France in the late 19th century. The priests belonged to the Premonstratensian order, also known as the



The Church of Our Lady of England, as depicted in a 1970s postcard, differs little from today's scene (museum collection)



Church and priory in the early 20th century (Museum collection)

Norbertines, after their founder St Norbert, or the 'White Canons', from the colour of their robes. The order had first established itself in England in the 12th century, but Henry Fitzalan-Howard, 15th Duke of Norfolk, of Arundel, a member of one of the country's most prominent Catholic families, donated some land at Storrington on which they built a priory. The priory opened in 1888, the first Prior being Father Xavier de Fourvières from Provence, a well-known writer, poet and preacher. The foundation stone of the priory church was laid in 1902 by the Archbishop of Southwark, Cardinal Bourne.

The brick church building, with stone dressings, was designed by Edward Goldie, and completed in 1904. The cost was said to have been about £6,000. It was originally intended to have a tower, but this was never completed. The interior is simple, though noted for its acoustics, and houses the shrine statue, by sculptor Ferdinand Stueffleser of Austria.

The priory and church were strongly linked for 130 years, with physical links adding to the spiritual ones as the priory buildings were extended westwards in the early 20th century until the buildings were joined. The links persisted up to the time the Norbertines left Storrington about seven years ago.



A very poor quality image from the Museum archive, with the priory in the background. It dates from 1902 or before, as evidence of the start of building work on the church is just visible. It shows Mr Battcock's house, later removed when the priory was extended.



The shrine to Our Lady (top) within the Church - detail from a postcard by Drewett of Storrington; (middle) in the cloister garth - postcard from the Museum collection; (left) the former open-air shrine - from the Museum collection.

Since then, the priory has been occupied by the Chemin Neuf Community and the church now serves as a Parish Church for Catholics in the area as part of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. Even under the Norbertines, the church was well used by local Catholics. In fact the area around the church was strongly Catholic, with several buildings, including a school, owned and run by the faith.

For many years while the Norbertines were at the priory Storrington was a place of pilgrimage, with long processions through the village to the shrine – that inside the church itself as well as statues of Our Lady, within the cloisters and at an open-air shrine opposite. The site of the open-air shrine is now a



Pilgrimage to Our Lady of England shrine, in School Lane, Storrington, September 1954. The procession is passing St Mary's Anglican Church, with the Old School just visible on the right. (From the Marian Library Collection, Dayton University, USA).

private house, this statue having been moved to its current site just to the south, at the top of Matt's Wood, near to the Catholic cemetery.

Near to the cemetery, in 2006 the Norbertines

planted a small vineyard, growing pinot noir and chardonnay grapes, from which a well-regarded Champagne-style sparkling wine was made at the nearby Wiston winery. The first harvest was in 2009, and although the White Canons have now moved on, grapes are still grown there as part of Wiston's production.

The priory is perhaps best known for being the home – for a while – of poet Francis Thompson, who had been brought there by Wilfrid and Alice Meynell to recover from opium addiction. It was also frequently visited by Hilaire Belloc, who in 1908 wrote his poem *On Courtesy* about the priory. Belloc lived at Shipley Mill, and is buried nearby at West Sussex's other important place of pilgrimage, Our Lady of Consolation at West Grinstead.

The priory and church of Our Lady of England has not been without controversy. Rebel Jesuit priest Father George Tyrrell spent his last years in Storrington. His modernist views, although accepted now, were out of step with those of the Catholic establishment, and when Tyrrell died, he was refused a Catholic burial. Instead, the graves of Fr Tyrrell, his patron Maud Petre (of Mulberry House) and poet A.F. Bell can be found within sight of the priory, behind a hedge in the Anglican cemetery. This little corner of the churchyard has, in itself, become a place of pilgrimage.

But back to the present – March 29th 2020 is scheduled to be an important day in the English Catholic calendar, and one with particular significance for Storrington. On that day, the first Sunday after the Feast of Annunciation (when Mary was visited by the Archangel to announce the birth of Christ), England is to be re-dedicated as 'The Dowry of Mary'.

Members' Lunch

For the past few years the Members' Lunch has been held at the West Sussex Golf Club (courtesy of one of our members who was a Golf Club member and who sponsored us). But our numbers have been dropping and there was a suggestion this year that tickets were too expensive. We have stayed with the Golf Club because the setting was so comfortable and food and service reliable.

However, if the general feeling is that the tickets are too expensive, then obviously we will have to reconsider if it means attracting more of our members to the one social occasion in the year when they meet one another.

It is worth mentioning that we do not make any profit from the Annual Lunch. We add 10% gratuity to the price charged by the Golf Club and this is the

cost of the tickets. Any extras, such as cost of printing invitations to circulate with Times Past each year, are usually covered by takings from the Raffle which is profitable because prizes are donated by two or three members.

In the past we have tried the restaurant at Amberley, the Boat House at Houghton Bridge, the Chardonnay Restaurant, and the White Horse. There were drawbacks to all of them which is why we settled eventually at the Golf Club.

We would welcome suggestions from members as to possible cheaper acceptable venues. Also It has been suggested that people might prefer two courses instead of three but this creates an awkward service and is not an ideal solution.

Please let us have your thoughts as it would be a pity to abandon the Members' Lunch.

The museum has on sale a selection of second-hand books about Sussex. Please visit to view our reasonably-priced stock, or email us with any specific enquiries.

Coming Soon

Please note that all the events below are held at the Old School, School Lane, Storrington. Evening talks will start promptly at 7.30pm, afternoon talks at 2pm. Non-members welcome. Entrance to talks £5 (£4 for members) to include tea/coffee and biscuits.

SATURDAY 21st MARCH 7.30pm
Quiz Night - £10 to include home-made supper
Tel 01903 746569 or 743437 for tickets

MONDAY 6th APRIL 7.30pm
Henry VIII Talk by Dr Robert Hutchison

FRIDAY 17th APRIL 2pm
Ghostly Experiences at the Tower,
Afternoon Talk by Crawford Butler

SATURDAY 25th APRIL 2pm onwards
Afternoon Tea and presentation of Frank & Cindy Waters' A272 scrapbook

FRIDAY 1st MAY
Stewards' Coffee Morning, 10am-1pm - Meet other stewards, or find out about volunteering

MONDAY 11th MAY 7.30pm
The Watercress Line Talk by Dr Becky Peacock

SATURDAY 23rd/SUNDAY 24th MAY
20th Anniversary Celebration - see website and posters for more information

MONDAY 7th SEPTEMBER 7.30pm
Talk by Margaret Watson (Harpist)

MONDAY 5th OCTOBER 7.30pm
Why is Church Lane so Steep? Talk by Bill Avenall

SATURDAY 24th OCTOBER 7.30pm
Quiz Night - details as 21st March

MONDAY 6th NOVEMBER 2pm
Knowing two English Eccentrics
Afternoon talk by Susan Howe

SATURDAY 21st/SUNDAY 22nd NOVEMBER
Annual pro-Am Art Show 10am to 4pm,
free admission, refreshments available

MONDAY 18th DECEMBER 2pm
George Bernard Shaw
Afternoon talk by Brian Freeland

If anybody requires transport to any of these events, please contact the Museum and we will do our best to arrange a lift.

For updates to the programme and details of other future events, keep an eye on the museum website: www.storringtonmuseum.com

'The Abbey Cottage, Storrington'
A postcard, undated, one of a number of local views, published by J. Greenfield & Sons, Storrington, Sussex. The girls' dresses would suggest the image dates from the late 19th/early 20th century - J. Greenfield & Sons appears in the 1895 trade directory. The house would appear to be the building currently known as 'Smugglers Hut'



For future issues of Times Past we are always pleased to receive articles, photographs, memories etc. Please leave in museum, or email items to us at contact@storringtonmuseum.com