



HIGH STREET EAST GRINSTEAD

The BULLETIN of the EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY.

No. 3

JANUARY 1970



BANKER'S ORDER

Name & Address
(please print)

When complete this form should be sent to the Secretary, East Grinstead Society, 100 High Street, East Grinstead, Sussex, BN9 6RQ.

THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

The Society was founded in April 1968 to protect and improve the amenities of East Grinstead and its environs. The town has a long history and a unique architectural heritage, and represents a trust placed for the time being in the hands of our generation. It should be our concern to ensure that such contributions as we in our turn make are worthy of the past and a fitting bequest to the future. The strength of such a society lies in the extent to which it can be seen to represent public opinion: the larger its membership the greater its influence will be.

The Society arranges regular meetings for talks, discussions and films and produces a twice-yearly bulletin of its news and of articles of local interest. In May 1969 it produced a special report on the High Street conservation area which has been well received as the basis for the formulation of future policy. It has also been very active in making representations to the local council on planning matters, influencing, for example, the treatment of the site in front of Sackville College.

The subscription is 10 shillings a year; additional members in the same family 5 shillings. If you are not already a member please consider joining, by using one of the forms below or by writing for further information to the Secretaries, Mr & Mrs Rudel, Peredur Home School, East Grinstead.

MEMBERS ARE REMINDED THAT SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1970 ARE NOW DUE (unless you joined on or after 16 October 1969). Please use one of the forms below - banker's order if possible.

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TO Mr B.Castleton, Honorary Treasurer, East Grinstead Society, Barclay's Bank, High Street, East Grinstead.

I wish to become a member of the East Grinstead Society and enclose the sum of ten shillings as my subscription for 1970.

NAME (Please print name & address)

ADDRESS

SIGNED DATE 19...

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BANKER'S ORDER

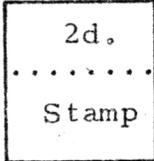
To (Please fill in here name & address of your Bank)

Please place to the credit of THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY at Barclay's Bank Ltd., High Street, East Grinstead on receipt of this order and on the first of January each year the sum of

(State in words the actual amount you wish to pay)

£ : :

Signature (across stamp)



Name & Address (please print)

..... Date 19...

When complete this form should be sent to the Hon.Treasurer, Mr B. Castleton, Barclays Bank, East Grinstead for paying in.

SOME LOCAL SPEECH USAGES

by M.J. Leppard

The aim of our Society could be stated as the conservation of what makes East Grinstead distinctively and recognisably East Grinstead and not any other part of the Kingdom, or even County. It is easy enough to interpret this in terms of landscape and buildings but there are less tangible features too - the way we live and the way we speak. This article is an attempt to record some of our speech usages and indicate a few of the solecisms by which the newcomer and the visitor so often give themselves away.

Writing in the East Grinstead Observer in 1899 Edward Steer related that when he first knew the town, in 1856, everyone was accustomed to call the High Street area 'the top of the town'. So we still do (and an enterprising shop has taken it up) but we can no longer use the converse 'down the Common' as they all did then. However, we all still talk of going 'up the town' and 'down the town' and most of us know the distinction between 'top' and 'bottom' Dixons or other businesses with two branches. (In 1844 a local diarist had a further distinction: 'the upper end of the town near the toll Gate' i.e. the eastern end of the High Street.)

Another group of usages concerns Ashdown Forest, or, simply, the Forest (but never the Ashdown Forest, nor just Ashdown). One always says 'on the Forest' (never 'in') and 'over' or 'across' the Forest (never 'through'). If there is a reason I suppose it is that Ashdown Forest is so open. And those who make this lack of woodland on it an excuse for criticising the name Forest should note that the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary gives as definitions: Extensive tract of land covered with trees and undergrowth, sometimes intermingled with pasture; Name of districts formerly covered with trees; (in law) woodland district, usually belonging to the king, set apart for hunting.

Finally there is the pronunciation of place names. Most of the local ones (as in the rest of East Sussex) are stressed on the last syllable, e.g. Hackenden, or the second word, e.g. Ashurst Wood. Names of two equal parts are stressed more or less equally on both syllables, e.g. East Court, Fairlight. 'Grinstid' is the common form of the town's name.

It is hoped to record in a future issue some other features of our intangible heritage. Every reader can help by searching his memory and sending the Editor what he recalls: dialect words, local sayings, customs, traditions, superstitions, children's games, etc. No local authority is empowered to impose Speech Regulations or Tradition Preservation Orders. These things die all too soon. As with buildings, what we can't or shouldn't preserve we can at least record.

PLANNING NOTES

The new regulations for control of advertisements are now in force. The principal innovation is the control of advertisements inside business premises. Window stickers and other eye-catchers are brought under control of the planning authority if they are within one metre of a door or window: they may continue to be displayed but the council may order discontinuance if it considers it justified on grounds of public safety or amenity. Areas of special control may be defined by an authority in which specially stringent control must be exercised. There are many other provisions, of varying degrees of complexity and obscurity. This is clearly something we could all have a lot of fun with.

P.D. WOOD

by M. J. Leonard



This scene of 1840 is difficult to identify because apart from the church tower, nothing at all in it survives today. We are looking up the London Road from Boots, by the traffic lights.

The trees on the left made way for the Literary and Scientific Institute in 1888 which in turn was replaced by Murrells' shop in 1937. The adjoining cottages where the Whitehall now stands were known as Rocklands, and the results of elections were declared from the bank in front of them. The large building to the right of the church tower was the old Workhouse, built about 1747 on what was then known as Bedlam's Bank. It was demolished about 1862 and a handsome row of shops was built, all to be totally destroyed in their turn by bombing in 1943 and 1944.

To the right of the picture is the edge of the Swan Mead, a large field of 18 acres which went with Copyhold Farm, and had the reputation of being the best grazing in the neighbourhood; possibly because much of the neighbourhood's sewage found its way into the field.

The high pinnacles on the church tower were shortened in 1930 after a gale had blown one down through the roof of the nave; the most recent of recurrent disasters which have overtaken our parish church.

RESURRECTION

MUSINGS ON THE PARISH REGISTERS by R.H.Wood

A research took one back through four centuries of burials in East Grinstead. Of the small yearly total in early times children make up a notable proportion, as do the nameless ones: "a poore woman", "an olde man", "a waygoer", "a wanderer", "a bastard". From first to last the local names endure. In the 1870s the recorder began to have a taste for marginalia. These bring into sight again some who had, so to speak, only just dropped behind the hill but who, saving accident, would remain as remote as the Elizabethans.

March 1879: A man, name unknown, aged about 50 years, died at the Ship Inn. "'Norfolk Gyp' nickname by which known."

(We write him so and turf covers the rest. We know what the Ship looked like 90 years ago but no-one thought it worthwhile to photograph Norfolk Gyp.)

August 1879: George Wheatling, no occupation or age known, was found dead "on the new railway near Copyhold Farm, run over by trucks."

(The words have a ring of indifference: a waygoer. Grosvenor Road, Crescent Road and the coal-yard were part of Copyhold Farm.)

October 1881: George Plumb and George Daniels, navvies, each about 30. "Both men laid down the night of October 14th on ballast on the line and were found suffocated the next morning and partly burnt."

(Unimaginable awakening. Perhaps, in the darkness, a truckload of hot clinker or ash was shot upon them. The local gas-works was in operation. One wonders how many of the men slept out so. The "navigators" had other hazards. There was smallpox among them in the same year.)

June 1891: Frederick Goord Simmons, Farmer, 38, of Goodwins Farm, East Grinstead Lane. "Drowned in East Court pond Sunday 28th June. Verdict: In unsound mind."

(The house of onetime Goodwins Farm stands endwise north of Holtye Road between Orchards and Gotwick Farm, half-hipped and outwardly early 17th century. Holtye Road was 'Grinstead Lane' all the way to Holtye, narrow, white and empty in a tunnel of trees, gritty under this one's boots before he took the field path to the pond. From the windows of East Court a gleam of water marks the place.)

October 1891: John Vass, vagrant, 76, died at the Union House. "The age is as given by the deceased but his appearance was that of a man under 60 years old."

(These wanderers were, within memory, still a part of the landscape, ragged, hairy, enigmatic. They chalked strange signs on gateposts, the occupier's character in brief for those to come.)

July 1892: Thomas Lambert, bricklayer, 55. "Found on the Sunnyside Estate. Death by strangulation."

(Short walk on a summer night among little new houses to the end of his world)

February 1896: John King, hawker, 61. "Found hanged near Hill Place Farm."

(This one too, swinging alone, cold as a February dawn.)

July 1893: George Read, furniture dealer, 47. "Crushed under the wheel of a tramcar near the Elephant and Castle."

(Some still living may remember his dark, resolute, unsmiling widow who carried on. The enterprise ended in 1968. The man, the woman and the name are dead.)

Why tell a tale of misery? Why not? They also were here.

A few more, briefly and less tragically:

William Moon of High Street, tailor and farmer.

(Till well into the last century most of the town's tradesmen also ran small farms. So did the innkeepers.)

James Bath who served in the Crimea.

Eliza Brace of Sackville College who died of "shock from the sting of a wasp." (The first to be buried from the College was Elizabeth Gee, 23 January 1622. Most of the books get this wrong.)

Altimos Leppard who died in the Infirmary.

(How came he by that name?)

Hortense Maffey, 92, French Governess.

(Buried in unconsecrated ground - but why?)

William Taylor, 65, furniture dealer of 218 London Road (where, in fine weather, his goods stood out upon the forecourt. A few may yet recall a vast man weighing down his little chaise behind a sober cob.)

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The earliest volume of East Grinstead's Parish Registers was published by the Sussex Record Society in 1917 (vol.24). The remainder are in the Diocesan Record Office, Pelham House, Lewes.)

THE TOWN IN 1823

by G.M.Smart

Pigot's Sussex Directory of 1823 affords brief glimpses of the town nearly 150 years ago when the population was 3153. The Borough still returned two members to Parliament as it had since the days of Edward I, but the only electors were the holders of the 36 burgages, mainly in the control of the Duke of Dorset and Lord Sackville.

Fairs were then held twice yearly on 21 April and 11 December; the Fair of 13 July had by then been abolished.

Of the Parish Church the Directory remarks that it "affords an interesting object to the stranger" and "the interior is particularly neat."

At the Post Office in the High Street, in the charge of William Palmer, the London, Lewes and Brighton mails arrived nightly at one, departing five minutes later. Letters were delivered from 8 in the morning till 9 at night.

Coach services included the Phenomenon which left the Dorset Arms posting house for London every morning at 7 and another from the Crown at 12.30 on alternate days of the week to London and to Eastbourne respectively. Carrier services included Jarrett's vans to London at 8 o'clock each evening and to Lewes at 3 each morning.

Family names noted in the Directory and still known locally include Brooker, Elphick, Head, Hounsoume, Payne, Stenning, Wood. Mr Paul the plumber bore the unusual biblical name Onesiphorus (school-boy pronunciation "one sigh for us").

The Postmaster, William Palmer, was also "bookseller, stationer and pencutter to the Royal Family." It would be of interest to know how he or his predecessors in the business came to acquire this Royal Warrant, perhaps by filling some emergency epistolary need of the Sovereign when changing horses at the adjacent hostelry. There is a local tradition that the upper windows of what is now no.12 Middle Row were originally shaped as quill pens to advertise the business Mr Palmer carried on there.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: As early as 1797 Thomas Palmer (apparently William's father) was using the Royal Arms in his advertising but there seems to be no definite record of the reason for the warrant. Tradition supports Mr Smart's guess at the reason.)

GENERAL NOTES & NEWS

WEST STREET DEMOLITION. One cannot regret the passing of poor and unfit cottages from any human point of view but it is good to know that members of East Grinstead Camera Club have been recording the demolition and the surviving cottages in their survey of vanishing East Grinstead.

THE WEALD AND DOWNLAND OPEN AIR MUSEUM (West Dean, near Chichester) has published a first-rate illustrated booklet on its work and the first few buildings and other exhibits, including the tilt hammer found at Dunnings Mill in April 1968. Free to all subscribers (minimum subscription £1). Money and help needed. If interested write to the Director, John Lowe, Estate Office, West Dean, Chichester.

OLD MAPS OF SUSSEX, 1597-1825. For a prospectus of a proposed reprinting on 28 sheets of 13 such maps write to H.H. Margary, Lympne Castle, Kent. Prices about £6 to £10 the set according to format.

APPEAL. Mr R.H. Wood (Cypress Lodge, Sandy Lane) is researching into the history of Sackville College, especially in the 20th century. He is most anxious to hear from anyone with personal recollections of Frank Hill and subsequent Wardens and inmates.

LOCAL HISTORY. The November 1969 number of Sussex Notes and Queries contained some notes on East Grinstead's history as an Assize town.

THE FUTURE. The Editor is apprehensive of dwelling too much in the Bulletin on the past and on the High Street. However, he hopes to be able to publish in the next issue (August or early September) something on the proposed London Road shopping precinct.

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COMPETITION!

The competition in our last issue evidently aroused a good deal of interest, though the Editor was sorry to see people at the A.G.M. marking answers they had been too shy to send in. Try this one (guess if you don't know) and send your answers to Mr M.J. Leppard, 150A, London Road, East Grinstead to arrive by 28 February. Answers and winner will be announced at our meeting in March (date not yet fixed). 10/6 book token for the first correct set of answers (or highest marked).

Indicate which is the correct answer to each question.

1. What is the approximate population of the Urban District of East Grinstead? a. 15,000; b. 17,000; c. 21,000.
2. What is the approximate acreage of the Urban District? a. 6,600; b. 15,000; c. 66,000.
3. How many members are there on the Urban District Council? a. 15; b. 18; c. 21.
4. When did East Grinstead become an Urban District? a. c. 1250; b. 1832; c. 1894.
5. What is the name of the Rape of Sussex in which East Grinstead is situated? a. Grinstead; b. Lewes; c. Pevensey.
6. To whom is the town clock a memorial? a. Queen Victoria; b. Thomas Cramp; c. W.H. Hills.
7. Who described East Grinstead as "a very shabby place"? a. William Cobbett; b. L. Ron Hubbard; c. John Betjeman.
8. Who gave East Grinstead its first coat of arms? a. King Edward I; b. Thomas Cure; c. The Urban District Council?
9. Approximately how high above sea level is the High Street? a. 350 feet; b. 450; c. 550.
10. What event led to the formation of the East Grinstead Society? a. The Civic Amenities Act; b. The Town Centre Development Plan; c. The demolition of 30-2 High Street.

CARING FOR THE PAST: III. WOODROT

by M.Fry of the Rentokil Group

The framework construction of 16th and 17th century housing frequently involved laying timbers direct on earth and building up from them, so it is hardly surprising that after the centuries massive oaks collecting moisture from the soil have steadily rotted away. Fortunately in many instances the sole plates (base timbers) will have been supported on a stone or brick plinth, but even then water may have crept up the walls to start the rot.

All fungi start from minute spores. Two main wood destroying fungi are found in buildings and account for 95% of all damage by fungal decay. Coniophora cerebella, the cellar fungus, is the commonest. It is a wet rot and only attacks timbers with a very high water content. It will not attack or spread to dry wood. Sometimes found with it, sometimes by itself, is Merulius lacrymans, the dry rot fungus. Oak is fairly resistant to it but not immune. This fungus can spread and infect previously dry wood.

Tackling wood rot is not a job for the amateur. The source of moisture must be traced and the extent of the attack. All infected timber must be cut away, together with some apparently sound timber near it. Frequently sterilisation of walls is necessary to eradicate strands of fungus and plaster has to be replaced. Undoubtedly hundreds of buildings have collapsed and become ruins largely because no means were available to eradicate rot in the past. Now, however, these problems can all be solved and permanently cured.

For the occupier watchful and efficient maintenance is the surest prevention. Make sure the roof is sound and all gutters and soak-aways in good repair and not blocked. Keep downpipes and hopper-heads clear of nests. Regular painting of gutters to prevent rust and efficient pointing on brickwork will help keep the timbers dry, then rot will not be able to gain a hold.

VANDALS' NOTES

Who removed the crest from the drinking fountain in the High Street, the sculpted feathers of the town's ancient coat of arms? The loss was noticed in July 1969. When did it go?

South of the railway station is a fine brick viaduct of c.1881. The line over it is closed but apparently even when the station is rebuilt British Railways will continue to need it for shunting and parking stock. If so it surely needs some attention. The parapet seems to be disintegrating. There's a road and houses underneath now.

Can anyone now read the inscription at the bottom of Blackwell Hollow? Who's responsible for maintaining it? Is there even a record of what it once said?

M.J.LEPPARD

COMPETITION ANSWERS COMPETITION ANSWERS COMPETITION ANSWERS COMPETITION

ANSWERS TO OUR SEPTEMBER COMPETITION

1. a. Queen's Rd; b. Hermitage Lane; c. Holtye Rd (or road to town from Tyes Cross); d. Hermitage Lane; e. Church Lane; f. West Hill. 2. a. W. H. Davies, Cantelupe Rd; b. Mrs R. Powell, 'Poels' Moat Rd; c. J.M. Neale, Sackville Coll. 3. Dorset Arms, 'There is no office in this needful world but dignifies the doer if well done', A. Austin. 4. a. Sackville Coll.; b. Parish Church; c. Q.V. Hospital. 5. a. bend in road by Sackville School; b. Constitutional Buildings; c. opposite St Mary's ch.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman Mr P.D.WOOD, 29, High Street, East Grinstead.
 Vice-Chairman Mr B.C.THOMPSON, Nenthorne East, Ashurst Wood.
 Hon.Treasurer Mr B.CASTLETON, Barclays Bank, High Street, E.Grinstead.
 Secretaries Mr & Mrs S.W.RUDEL, Peredur Home School, E.Grinstead.

AND Councillor E.RUSHMAN; Mrs M.L.DEMPSTER; Mrs W.INGWERSEN; Mr M.J. LEPPARD, M.A.; Mr I.D.MARGARY, M.A., F.S.A.; Mr S.PAGE; Mr K.PETERS; Mr S.THAIR.

Subscriptions and applications for membership should be sent to the Treasurer, matter for the Bulletin to Mr Leppard (150A, London Road, East Grinstead) and all other correspondence to the Secretaries, including notice of change of address and suggestions for activities.

EDITORIAL

The many appreciative remarks made about our Society's Bulletins at the Annual General Meeting and at other times are most gratifying and encouraging. The Editor hopes, with the aid of contributions and suggestions from as many members as possible, to maintain the standards of interest and accuracy so far achieved, so that each number will contain something that makes it worth keeping. Not the least of the Bulletin's tasks is to record the things that are passing and (if anyone will pass them on) memories of things already passed, some of them, like old customs, once so commonplace that no-one bothered to record them. At the same time we must never forget the question: What are we passing on to those who will come after?

CONTRIBUTIONS

Unsigned contributions are the joint work of the Chairman, Secretaries and Editor. Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of anyone but their authors.

The appeal for contributions made in September has produced one article which we gladly print. By 17 July the Editor hopes to receive several more for our next number. If necessary he will help you put your contribution into words or polish it up.

N E W S A N D N O T E S

1: ACTIVITIES

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on Thursday 16 October was well attended. Favourable reports of the Society's activities and finances were received, the Officers and Committee were chosen (without a contest) and several suggestions for the future were put forward, as well as some observations on matters within the Society's concerns, for the Committee to consider at leisure. A book token was presented to Mrs R.Cheal, the winner of the competition in our September number (for answers see back cover), and the Civic Trust's film Spare that Tree was shown.

On 4 DECEMBER a good number of members enjoyed Sir Kenneth Roberts-Wray's film of life in Forest Row. A much appreciated innovation was coffee and biscuits beforehand, kindly prepared by Mrs Cheal and Mrs Leppard. They have promised to make this a regular feature.

OLD VIEWS OF EAST GRINSTEAD: Mrs Copsey, the wife of the Vicar, very kindly offered the Society a complete set of old postcard-size views of the town, mostly dating from the 1860s, framed and glazed, discovered in the Church tower. We, having no premises and feeling that these fascinating photographs should be on public view, passed them on to the local County branch library, where they were received with pleasure and will be hung in some convenient place after cleaning and re-glazing.

2: PLANNING

ROCKLANDS site is to be re-allocated as a public open space in the next edition of the Town Map, as suggested in our last issue.

ZION CHAPEL has been reprieved for the time being and is to remain in use as a place of worship. Its long term survival probably depends on someone's finding a secular use for it, buying it and repairing it. If this cannot be done we may eventually lose a handsome building. The adjacent MANSE is likely to be demolished.

HIGH STREET SCHEME: The Council has announced preliminary steps towards a scheme of redecorating and refurnishing in which architects' advice is to be sought. A sensitively executed scheme could be of great benefit: a tasteless one could do great damage. Let us beware of turning a live street into an embalmed show-piece. Good luck to the scheme - but let's keep an eye on it.

MEETING WITH COUNTY PLANNING AUTHORITIES: Several members attended a private meeting on 3 November about the Inner Relief Road. Little emerged that was new, but the county road engineers are clearly thinking in terms of a road in the old railway cutting, with two intersections only: at the Clock Tower and with Lewes Road between Old Road and Lower Dene, sunk for most of its course 12-15 feet below ground level. Date: some time in the 1970s. One or two discordant voices were raised, but all the detailed engineering studies are still to be carried out and until they have been (maybe not for two years yet) we shall not have any hard facts.

3: MEMBERSHIP

Total membership is now about 204, of whom no less than 24 have been enrolled since the A.G.M. Well done those who made the Society more widely known and got them interested. We can now claim the paid-up support of just over 1% of the population of the Urban District. To be really effective we need a larger membership still. Though the Society is concerned only with the Urban District (which, of course, includes Ashurst Wood) membership is open to anyone anywhere. Among new members we are specially pleased to welcome Brighton Public Library which feels that our publications will be a valuable addition to its unrivalled Sussex collection. Once again our front cover has been designed for passing on to friends who might care to join (or for paying your subscription for 1970 which is now due).

4: OFFICERS

Grateful thanks to Miss Spink, our gallant and conscientious pioneer Secretary, and to those Committee members who were not re-elected. Welcome to the new ones, especially Mr and Mrs Rudel who will share the secretarial duties. They are anxious that members should not hesitate to get in touch with them with suggestions and observations.

5: CORRIGENDA & ADDENDA

Mr I.D.Margary points out that, contrary to the statement in our last issue, Mr Brian Desmond is still working on his revision of W.H.Hills' History of East Grinstead. The drawing of Cromwell House was taken from R.H.Nibbs, Antiquities of Sussex, First Series (1874), a collection of rather romanticising drawings. Readers will have noticed that the artist put his name on the shop sign-board. The cover picture came from a booklet of 12 souvenir views published in the early 1880s, as does that on this number.

6: THE FUTURE

Suggestions for future meetings have included visits to the Roman Road at Holtye and to St. Margaret's Convent ("an example of Gothic Revival architecture which no other country in Europe can equal" P.Anson), and the Brighton College film of Chichester Cathedral. Any other ideas?