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T H E E A S T G R I N S T E A D S O C I E T Y

The Society was founded in 1968 to protect and improve the amenities of East Grinstead and its environs. The town has a long history and a unique architectural heritage, entrusted for the time being to the hands of our generation. It should be our concern that such contributions as we in turn make are worthy of the past and a fitting bequest to the future.

The Society arranges regular talks, discussions and visits. It produces a bi-annual Bulletin of articles of local interest and a quarterly Newsletter. In 1969 it produced a report on the High Street Conservation Area which was well received as the basis for future policy. It is very active in making representations to the local authorities on planning matters. With the re-organisation of local government its importance as a watchdog increased. It has held six exhibitions, published a book of reminiscences, two town trails and three sets of postcards reproducing old photographs of the town, restored the churchyard railings, planted trees, presented a seat to Sackville College and, with the Town Council, established a (now independent) Town Museum.

The Society is registered as a charity. It is registered with the Civic Trust, a member of the Sussex Federation of Amenity Societies and affiliated to the Sussex Archaeological Society. A copy of its constitution is available on request.

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. The subscription is £3 a year (additional members in the same household £2, persons in full-time education 25 new pence) to be renewed every year on 1 January, except by those joining on or after 1 October. Subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer, 29 Hurst Farm Road.

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EDITORIAL

Contrary to the statement in our last issue, this Bulletin is not given over to the first instalment of our 1985 project, a detailed study of Cromwell House. As will be reported more fully in our Newsletter, plans have changed; the intention now is to produce a book with a wide appeal, and the Bulletin will complement it by printing, after its publication, information gathered on the buildings treated that deserves permanent record but is too detailed or specialised for the book. Meanwhile we offer readers our usual formula, and hope they approve.

COVER PICTURE: Sackville College by W.R.Pepper, from his East Grinstead and its Environs (1885), to accompany the article on pp.7f. where two more illustrations from the book will be found: Great-Upon-Little, West Hoathly, and Worth Church.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

LOCAL CLOCKMAKERS (Bulletins 10, pp.8f.; 11, p.14; 13,p.4; 19, p.14; 30, p.7; 31, p.4; 32, p.4; 33, pp.4-6; 35,p.6):

Sotheby's sale of 25 July 1985 included the following:

Lot 1663: 'An oak Longcase Clock, circa 1800, the 11 in. square dial signed Jno. Palmer, East Grinstead, the 30-hour movement with outside count-wheel striking on a bell, the hood with columns and shallow swan-neck pediment, 216 cm.; 83 in., with pendulum and weight'

Lot 1664: 'A similar oak Longcase, with dial, signed Thos. Fowle, East Grinstead, and 30-hour posted movement with bell strike, 211 cm.; 83 in., with pendulum and weights'.

Mr M.G.Taylor, the local auctioneer, to whom we are indebted for this information, comments: 'I have met quite a number of clocks by Thomas Fowle, and basically they are usually in an oak Longcase with a white enamel dial and rather plain and crude to look at, though the works are quite satisfactory'.

It may be added that this is the first example of a clock by John Palmer that we have been able to record though documentary references from 1799 to 1807 were already known (Bulletin 10).

ORCHARD COTTAGE (Bulletins 28, p.7; 29, p.4): Since these articles appeared (1980) this house has been re-named Little Shovelstrode Hall, with good historical reason.

AND WHAT IF SHE CAME BACK NOW?

16 August 1764: 'We had very disagreeable weather at my Cousins - one day it rained for Eight hours without ceasing, tho I did catch an opportunity of walking about the Town, and seeing all that was worth going after. I think it but a dull place.'

- Mrs Sayer writing to Mrs Collier about her stay with the Cranstons at East Grinstead (C.L.Sayer, ed., Correspondence of Mr John Collier and his Family, 1716-80 (1907), vol.2, p.421)

Heraldry, or rather the use of heraldic devices, was born of a necessity: to be able to recognise a man in full armour, including the closed helmet which completely concealed the face.

The ordered use of these devices, which we now know as the art and science of heraldry, developed from this, but as weapons and military accoutrements changed so the need for heraldry declined. It remained in use, however, because of its colourful and decorative aspects, its association with rank and its strong links with history, family and tradition.

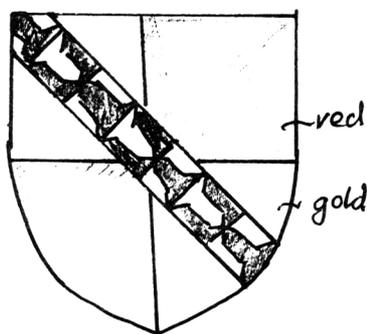
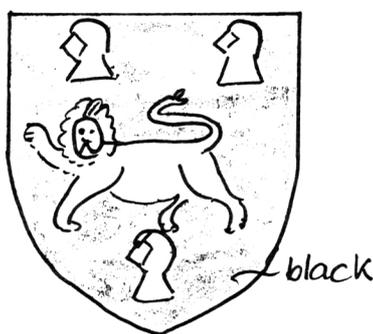
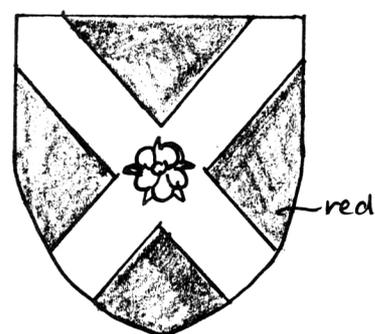
Properly used a coat of arms represents one person only (and this is still true today) thus serving as a means of identification. One of the ways in which this was put to practical use was the display of coats of arms on funeral hatchments as a sign of mourning. The manner in which the hatchment was prepared would indicate to an observer which member of a family had died.

The custom has now fallen out of favour but many examples of hatchments are still to be found in older churches, including four in St Swithun's, East Grinstead. It may not be generally realised that two of these are older than the present building, pre-dating and surviving the severe damage to the church caused by the collapse of the tower in 1785 which led to the rebuilding of 1789.

Hatchments were used at times of mourning by armigerous families, that is those entitled to bear arms. When a member of such a family died his arms were painted on a large lozenge-shaped wood or canvas panel with a black frame and placed outside the house for the duration of the mourning period, which could be up to twelve months. At the end of that period it was customary for the hatchment to be hung in the parish church, which explains the presence of those in St Swithun's and many other churches.

There was a recognised way of preparing a hatchment, depending on who in the family had died. Generally it would be husband or wife, in which case the impaled arms of their two families would appear on a shield. Impaling means dividing the shield vertically down the middle, or 'per pale' in heraldic terms, with the husband's arms shown on the observer's left and the wife's paternal arms on the right if she had surviving brothers. If not, and she was therefore an heiress, her arms would show on what is known as an 'escutcheon of pretence', a small shield superimposed on the larger shield of her husband. This indicated his claim to inherit his wife's family arms, and the children of the union would be able to incorporate the arms of both parents into a quartered shield.

The background of a hatchment is significant as it indicates which partner has died by being painted black behind his arms with white behind those of the spouse still living. When a surviving partner died then the whole background would be black, with the added difference that for a widow the arms would be on a lozenge and not a shield as a lozenge was customary for displaying the arms of a woman. Similarly it would be used for daughters or spinsters.

SACKVILLECOMPTONNEVILL

For an unmarried man, of course, a shield was used with the background wholly black. In the case of a son whose father was still alive the arms would be differenced from his father's by bearing a mark in accordance with the rules of heraldry, which provide for differencing up to nine sons.

The name 'hatchment' is derived from 'achievement' which is the term used in heraldry for a coat of arms with crest, mantling, motto and supporters where appropriate, as these were all usually incorporated into the hatchment. Sometimes cherubs were used to suspend the shield in place of supporters, and a skull in place of the crest indicates that the last of the line had died.

The four hatchments in St Swithun's relate to the following alliances.

A SACKVILLE/COMPTON (south wall, east) 1691

Charles Sackville, sixth Earl of Dorset, married Lady Mary Compton as his second wife in 1685. The Countess, contemporarily described as 'young, beautiful and good', became lady in waiting to the Queen but, sad to say, died of smallpox six years after her marriage. The hatchment is hers. She was buried at Withyham but Brambletye was the Compton home and the Sackvilles (later Sackville-West) have been patrons of St Swithun's since 1554.

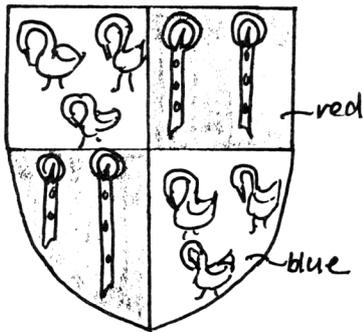
B NEVILL/PELHAM (south wall, west) 1768

The branch of the large Nevill family to which this hatchment relates built Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row, in 1735 and lived there until 1805 when they moved to Eridge Park. At that time Kidbrooke was in the parish of East Grinstead. George Nevill, first Earl and fifteenth Baron Abergavenny, married Henrietta, daughter of Thomas Pelham of Stanmer. She died in 1768 and is buried in the family vault at St Swithun's; the hatchment dates from the time of her death.

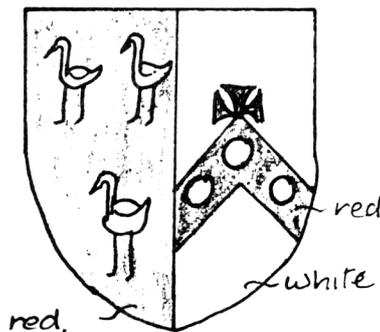
C CRANSTON/NEWLAND (over Vicar's and clergy vestry doors) 1841 and 1861

The Cranstons built East Court in 1769 and lived there until 1863. Edward Cranston, born in 1761, married Harriet Newland. One of the two Cranston hatchments relates to his death in 1841, the other, with the arms on a lozenge, to his widow's in 1861. (Their monument is on the north wall.)

It will be seen that both the Sackville and the Nevill hatchments are legacies from the old St Swithun's. As part of the extensive restoration work being carried out there the hatchments were taken down for safety during work on the south aisle roof and it was found that they too were badly in need of cleaning and restoration. This work has been carried out by a specialist, Mrs Catherine Hassell of Islington, and the hatchments are now (August 1985) about to be put back in place.



PELHAM



CRANSTON impaling NEWLAND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

We are grateful to Miss R.M. Willatts for drawing the coats of arms and for her comments.

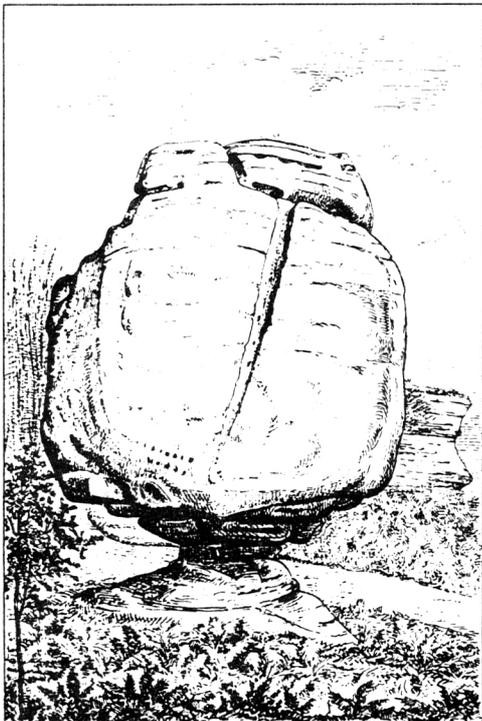
RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Forest Row, vol.2, part 2 (June 1985) contains articles on Rose Cottages and the Martin family (with plan and genealogical chart from 1685), Wall Hill Farm c.1890-1940 and the Wall Hill Mail Robbery of 1801, reminiscences of Victor Beedle (born 1906), additional notes on the Royal Oak beerhouse, four photographs, one drawing and a map extract. (Available at Town Museum, £1, or by post from Mr E.C. Byford, Michael Hall School, Forest Row, postage extra.)

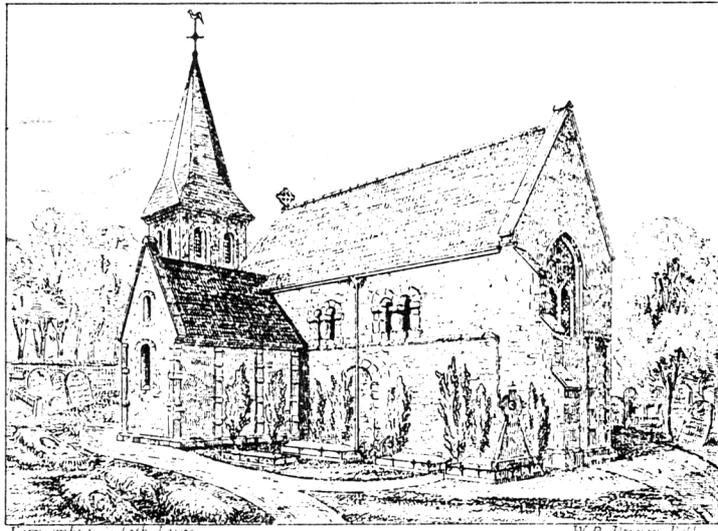
Sussex History, vol.2, no.9 (1985) contains an article by Sr Gabriel, S.S.M. 'An East Grinstead Sequence: part 1 Sackville College, J.M. Neale', a readable and reliable account of its subjects drawn from published material. The same issue reports the deposit in the East Sussex Record Office of Hammerwood School records (1904-59).

Wealden Iron, second series, no.5 (1985) contains articles on two important sites just over our parish boundaries, a Romano-British iron-working one at Felbridge and a Roman tile kiln at Great Cansiron.

WHOSE BULLETIN ARE YOU READING? Our Bulletins are read by far more people than the two hundred plus members of the East Grinstead Society, in libraries, by borrowing or by casual purchase. Why not be sure of seeing each number as it comes out and at the same time help us financially to keep it going by taking out a subscription to the Society, only £3 p.a.? Send to the Hon. Treasurer, whose name and address will be found on p2 together with information on our other activities. Thank you.



GREAT-UPON-LITTLE.



WORTH CHURCH.

WILLIAM REYNOLDS PEPPER -

THE MYSTERY LESSENS

M. J. Leppard

The temporary exhibition at the Town Museum devoted to W.R. Pepper and further research enable us to add enough to the information about him in our last issue to justify a second article and more pictures from his book (cover and above).

First, his full name, William Reynolds Pepper, has been established from directories listing him at the King's Head, Pound Hill, in 1867 (1) and 1874 (2). He is not there in 1878 (2).

Secondly, the painting of the High Street mentioned in the previous article as a version of a picture in the book (and kindly lent for the exhibition) proves to be an independent view of the same scene in 1880. (The differences and details repay careful study.) With it were lent the originals of three of his cartoons, painted in oils, and an offprint of 'The Fable of the Hare, the Turtle, the Fox; and the Wise Birds of the East' together with the original of the cartoon illustrating it, also in oils. Though none of them is signed, cartoons and text are unmistakably Pepper's work.

One cartoon, 'Great Walking Fe(e)t(e) E.G. 1881', is not now easy to elucidate. The others concern proposals to close foot-paths, a subject dear to Pepper as shown by the numerous walks on which he leads readers of his book. One, dated 19 April 1882, names Brambletye and Forest Row and identifies Mr Peerless, and one of 24 April 1882 names Moat Road and Forest Row. The fable, which is undated, is a punning skit on an action brought by the parish before the magistrates (the 'wise birds' with human faces) concerning rights of way, apparently in the Worsted Farm and Brockhurst area, and must date from a little later in 1882. Local newspapers of 17 and 22 April 1882 (3) give notice of and report a vestry meeting called to contemplate such an action. Mr

Larnach (Brambletye), Mr Murchison (Brockhurst) and Mr Pearless (Hermitage) were proposing to close South Park Road at Ashurst Wood and paths from Wall Hill through the wood to the road to Brambletye Mills, from Dunnings Mill to Boyle's Farm and through Westlye Field to Little Holly Bush.

Thirdly, a copy of East Grinstead and its Environs with the bookplate of Cecil George Savile Foljambe, one of those to whom acknowledgement is made on p.107, in the library of the Sussex Archaeological Society at Lewes, includes two MS letters from Pepper, at Moat Cottage, East Grinstead, to Foljambe. The first (1 June 1885) thanks him for information and asks for an account of the charity at Felbridge. The second (12 April 1886) is the covering letter sent with the book, 'of which I am the Author & Artist'. 'The work has met with great local success', he says, 'press and public alike' but owing to much greater expense in its production than he was first told it made a loss; 'it's the old story of "Publisher swallowing the Author".' In a postscript he explains that he has only just recovered from illness or he would have forwarded the book before.

This establishes beyond doubt that Pepper wrote the whole work and suggests that he did so on his own initiative and persuaded Farncombe's to publish it. The cartoons and the Christmas tale mentioned in the previous article now seem more likely to have been freelance contributions than commissions or the work of an employee.

The local directory for 1886 (4) gives Mrs Steer at Moat Cottage so presumably Pepper was her lodger or guest. (It may be the same Mrs Steer who took in William May in his last illness six years later (5).) This helps account for Pepper's hitherto inexplicable non-appearance in any East Grinstead records.

A plausible reconstruction is that Pepper gave up his pub soon after 1875 and retired to Moat Cottage with Mrs Steer, occupying his leisure with writing, drawing and painting when not hindered by ill health. No trace of him has been found after April 1886 which may mean that he did not live much longer. If so, however, he must have been taken elsewhere for burial, for there is no entry for him in the 1885-1901 Queens Road cemetery register. Mystery still surrounds what became of him in the end and there are many other unanswered questions inviting further research.

REFERENCES: (1) Harrod's Sussex directory; (2) Kelly's ditto; (3) cuttings in C.W.P.Crawfurd's 1874-98 scrapbook (Town Museum); (4) Steer's E. Grinstead almanack and directory; (5) Southern Free Press, 22 Jan. 1892 (Bulletin 33, p.5).

NOTE: The copy of the book mentioned above was presented by Mr C.G.Bridgland of Hove. It also includes some newspaper cuttings of East Grinstead interest, 1888-1903, which there is reason to believe were added by Mr Bridgland's father, George, who moved the family from East Grinstead to Brighton.

The exhibition at East Grinstead Town Museum continues until 28 September. It also includes guide books issued since Pepper's.

In an article in Bulletin 33 (Autumn 1982) I discussed the history of house numbering in the streets of our town, first noted so far in 1872 and revised later. It is surprising that naming the houses in the town is even less old. Thus in 1868 when J.C.Stenning published his 'Notes on East-Grinstead' he could draw attention to houses of note on the south side of the High Street only by such circumlocutions as 'Mr. Covey's at the west end', 'towards the middle of the town ... now used as a school-room', 'two or three houses further on ... occupied by Mr. Steer, plumber', 'now occupied in part by Mrs. Payne' and 'the adjoining house' (1). Today we identify them as, respectively, Old Stone House, 28 and 34-36 High Street, Cromwell House and Porch House. We can add Judges Terrace to locate the first more precisely and use shop names as alternatives for the next two and house numbers for the last two. Even in 1885, after the introduction of numbering and when naming had begun, A.H.Stenning in his revision of his brother's article (2) preferred to up-date the owner's or occupier's names.

There is nothing singular in this; an article on Midhurst in the same volume as Stenning's refers to premises in Wool Lane as 'a cottage', 'at the corner' and 'Challen, the butcher's' (3).

The modern house names in our High Street seem to date only from the 1880s. The first I have so far traced ~~are~~ in 1885: Clarendon House (4) and Old Stone House (5). Judges Terrace follows in 1886 (6). In 1899 in his reminiscences of forty years before Edward Steer confirms our impression by adding 'as it is now called' when he mentions Wilmington House (7). Amherst, Cromwell, Dorset, Porch, Sackville and Tudor Houses are no doubt from the same period though so far I have not traced them beyond the early years of this century. It seems significant that the naming starts when the town was growing and prospering, soon after the sale of the Sackville properties, completed in 1882 (8), and co-incides with the modernisation and rebuilding that the new owners then undertook. Some of the names preserve the historic connection by using one of the family names or titles (Amherst, Dorset, Sackville), as also does Cantelupe Road, laid out c.1890.

Perhaps none of this should be surprising in a town which up to the mid-19th century seems never to have exceeded 300 souls; the postboy would know who lived in each house and so would any resident, even a child, of whom a stranger asked directions. Yet, even so, in earlier centuries some of the High Street houses did have names, some of which persisted into the 19th century, though since all our references are from official and legal documents it does not follow that they were used throughout that time in common speech; indeed the evidence above suggests that they must have fallen out of ~~normal~~ use well before 1868.

Thus the western half of Amherst House appears as Gedges, Gedgers or Godges from 1637 (9) to 1785 (10), Cromwell House as the Great House from 1780 (11) to 1841 (12), 2-6 High Street as Gaynesfordes from 1580 (13) to 1827 (14) and the High Street part of Lloyds Bank as the Foure Portland in 1597/8 (15) and Wowers

from 1636 (16) to 1827 (14). As far back as 1329 we hear of 'a house called Borestigh in the vill of East Grinstead' (17), probably in our High Street but no longer identifiable, and there must have been many other names now lost to us.

Of these names the Great House and the Four Portlands explain themselves. Mr P.D.Wood has shown (18) that Gaynesfordes and Wowers preserve the names of former owners. So probably does Gedges, though the name does not seem to be recorded here. It would be imprudent to speculate about Borestigh.

Further information from readers on these names, and on house numbering, will be appreciated, as ever.

REFERENCES (S.A.C. = Sussex Archaeological Collections, S.R.S. = Sussex Record Society): (1) S.A.C., vol.20, pp.143f.; (2) published at Lewes as a pamphlet, pp.16f.; (3) p.20; (4) Parish Magazine, July; (5) E.Grinstead and Environs, p.21; (6) W.T. Pike's District Blue Book ... E. Grinstead parliamentary division; (7) E.G.Observer (serialised); (8) W.H.Hills, History of E.Grinstead (1906), p.5; (9) Sussex Archaeological Trust deeds FB 543; (10) Bargain and Sale, De La Warr MSS, E. Sussex Record Office; (11) Lease of the Hermitage, ex inf. late R.H.Wood; (12) Tithe Award; (13) Inquest post mortem, S.R.S. vol.3, p.129; (14) Dorset Settlement Act; (15) Buckhurst Terrier, S.R.S. vol. 39, p.57; (16) Kent Archive Office, Index of Sackville papers; (17) Treasure trove inquest, Sussex Notes & Queries, vol.7 (1938-39), p.65; (18) S.A.C., vol.106 (1968), p.61.

Canute played chess at East Grinstead

A NOTABLE HOAX M.J.Leppard

MY attention has been drawn to some interesting correspondence with regard to the ancient history of East Grinstead. It is, of course, common knowledge that the town is of old standing, and returned Members to the Model Parliament, but research which I have carried out recently in Scandinavia indicates that its origins go back much further.

In Rømberg's work on Runic Inscriptions, there are some very interesting biographical details of Cnut (better known popularly as Canute), monarch of a short-lived Northern Empire and King of England, defeating his opponents in 1016 following the death of his father Sweyn.

Further accounts are given by Ecgbert in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which is in the British Museum, and by Hulpó, the Danish archaeologist and historian, in various works in the Copenhagen Archives. Some of these relate to Canute's travels in England, and the following entry is relevant. I have translated it freely: a more scholarly translation is given by Hulpó. It is as follows:

"On the sixth day of his journey Canute held court at the town of Estgrensted, and there engaged in chess with his courtiers and with his governor Harald. It is said that Canute's prowess was such that when Harald met with defeat he was enraged, and there was a dispute which forced Canute to abandon his plan to stay within the town."

Canute was known to be a good chess-player, and on one occasion a game ended in a violent death. This episode, which appears to be authentic, may well have taken place in East Grinstead, which fits in excellently with Canute's suggested itinerary on this particular journey. The date is not certain, but some chronological suggestions by Hulpó indicate that it may have been 1022, well before events in the northern part of Europe were engaging Canute's attention, and while he was still consolidating his position in England itself.

ALFRED WIBBINS,
Ph.D., D.Litt.
Sometime Lecturer in
Ancient History
King's College,

Twenty five years ago, on 27 May 1960, during earnest correspondence in the East Grinstead Observer on the need for a new history of the town and how it should be written, the letter reproduced here (with permission) was published. It went unchallenged (even by your editor) and made some headway in popular belief, but study and reflection showed that it was quietly and cleverly pulling the legs of the other correspondents. It is far less specific as to its author and sources than at first appears and subsequent research has shown that the town of East Grinstead did not come into existence for some two hundred years after the date given here. Its author has never identified himself or been identified.

MAKING THEIR MARK

M.J.Leppard

Like a postscript to the message from 1808 discovered last year in the parish church roof (1) comes the detection of the words 'Plumber T.Crook 1808' scratched in the lead under one of the clerestory windows by an otherwise unknown workman employed in the rebuilding.

It was, and still is, quite common for plumbers, plasterers, carpenters and brick and tile makers to leave their name and the date, sometimes with other information, in some obscure place for posterity to come across. Examples recently quoted in the Sussex Archaeological Society's Newsletter come from Warbleton (glass, bricks, tile, 1763-1844) (2), Wadhurst (glass, 1825) and the East Grinstead area (tiles, 1763-1802) (3) and Benenden, Kent (timber, c.1920) (4).

The purpose of this note is to draw our readers' attention to the local examples mentioned (which were sent in by the present writer) and record others overlooked then. It is hoped that readers will supply further local examples, for they can be important evidence about workpeople and the dates of buildings.

Many will already know the tile built into an internal wall at East Court by the doors to rooms 7 and 8 inscribed

September 3th [sic] 1770
mead
by me Edmund Mitchell

It was discovered during reconstruction in 1907 as a coping tile on top of a wall connecting the main building with a wing (5). The house was built and occupied in 1769 (6). No other record of Edmund Mitchell as a brick or tile maker has so far been found. The surname was a common one here at the time; an Edmund Mitchell was married at East Grinstead 31 March 1771.

In 1911 the sale particulars of the Felbridge estate record the inscription 'William Barnes, July 1763' on a floor tile in Felbridge Place (7). Possibly Barnes, who is not otherwise recorded, was an East Grinstead man.

In 1968 when Mr George Bridgland of East Grinstead was replacing a tile on a roof at Dormans Land he found it inscribed 'J.Bridgland, 1802', his great-great-great-grandfather (8).

The examples which follow are all recorded as having been presented to the museum housed in our parish church tower from 1925 until its dispersal in 1955. Where they are now is not known, or even whether they have survived.

A ridge tile with 'March 1734' scratched on it was removed from 1-2 Ship Street when demolished in 1934 (9).

A tile inscribed 'Edward Payne, June 19, 1842' came from 88 High Street (10). No other record of a brick or tile making Edward Payne has so far been found. The surname has always been so common here that any identification would be very difficult. 1842 might be when 86 and 88 became separate houses within the one building or perhaps a time of reroofing or refacing.

A diamond-shaped pane of glass with 'John Smith, 1750' scratched on it was taken from Old Shovelstrode Farm in 1886 (11). This name too does not seem readily identifiable but is, of course, different in kind from those reported overleaf; not the maker's but a resident's or guest's.

REFERENCES (E.G.O. = East Grinstead Observer; Par. Mag. = East Grinstead parish magazine): (1) Bulletin 37 (Autumn 1984), pp. 7f.; (2) no.42 (April 1984), p.366; (3) no.44 (Dec.1984), p. 407; (4) no.45 (April 1985), p.424; (5) Par.Mag., Sept. 1907; (6) C.L.Sayer (ed.), Correspondence of Mr John Collier and his Family (1907), p.504; (7) E.G.O., 9 April 1965; (8) E.G.O., 31 Oct. 1968; (9) Par.Mag., Sept. 1934; (10) Par. Mag., Sept. 1948; (11) Par. Mag., Feb. 1930.

BOOK REVIEW

P.D.Wood

R.Michell & D.Gould, East Grinstead Then and Now (Middleton Press, 1985, £5.95)

An amateur historian once complained that his study of East Grinstead revealed only that nothing had ever happened there. He was advised to entitle it 'A Study in Continuity'. We should be thankful for such truth as there is in this assertion, because it means at least that much of our surroundings survives from past centuries.

Just how much is surprising. Leafing through this excellent collection of old and new views of East Grinstead one is constantly struck by how much of one's childhood is still there, if not unscathed, at least with only minor scatches.

This impression is just a little false. Many of the pictures have been chosen precisely because survival can be demonstrated. More change has taken place than this collection can show, but most of it is round the outskirts. The old parklands of Halsford and Hackenden are not illustrated; understandably, since space is limited and their entertainment value is not high: but that is where the big changes have happened.

But what a splendid collection it is! Ron Michell, David Gould and the Middleton Press have produced another winner. Some of the old familiar photographs are there, but their research, aided in many instances by Nick Stephanakis's great collection, has turned up dozens of new and unfamiliar views. I was delighted to see one of my great-uncle posing self consciously behind a fine old Morris Cowley, which I had never seen before, a good view of Railway Approach c.1910 in the heyday of the small shopkeeper, and the interior of the Wesleyan Chapel when it was Sainsbury's. This photograph does not show the placard they displayed: 'Sainsbury's - Fifty years of Service'. I remember hearing a sardonic old man mutter 'Hm - seems longer'.

As in the case of Branch Lines, the authors have supplemented the photographs with old advertisements, reproductions of large scale maps and an exceptionally well-researched text. To anyone interested in East Grinstead this book is a bargain; to anyone who remembers it before the war it is beyond price.

When I first came to the town the Co-op was down Railway Approach but soon to take up a large departmental store building in London Road facing Dixon's chemist's shop on the corner of London Road and Railway Approach. I reported the opening ceremony performed by the eldest daughter of Mr Ramsay Macdonald, then Prime Minister. A huge crowd of people assembled and it was followed by a lavish luncheon.

From that vantage point I recall the then largest shop in the town, Messrs C.M.Wilson, that had many departments, spreading along a stretch of London Road round into Queens Road. The chief was Mr John Viall, to become one of the founder members of East Grinstead Rotary Club. In Queens Road, part of the complex, was a door that led up a steep staircase and at the top were offices: two on the right were the headquarters of the Conservative party whilst on the other side was another quite spacious office used in a variety of ways.

Down Queens Road, opposite the then General Post Office sorting department, was a popular fried fish and chip shop, not far from the Queen's Hall with its East Grinstead Working Men's Club premises below, who organised the annual rabbit pie supper, at which the top table was kept for town dignitaries. Attending one of these in those far off days there was an alarming experience when Mr Joseph Rice caught a rabbit bone in his throat. All ended well. Mr Jack Wood was the club's hon. secretary. It was a case of soft drinks only then but masses of cigarettes (five per person) were provided on the table. And there was always a first class concert to follow the (happily) brief speech-making. The cost per person? Just one shilling.

Overlooking the Queens Hall was the old Queen Victoria Cottage Hospital, and my digs on the other side overlooked, cheerfully enough, the women's ward. One could sit on the steps leading to the back door and chat to patients on a summer's day when they had their windows open. That sounds brazen, but I was far from that when I recall that on Boxing Day I journalistically toured all the institutions (the hospital, Sackville College and the Poor Law Institute down Railway Approach). At the hospital the then friendly matron invited me to visit the two wards. I went into the men's but, to her astonishment, was far too shy to enter the women's.

I did have one upset when attending the fortnightly Board of Guardians meeting. Very often Countess De La Warr would pick me up en route and kindly drive me in her car to the meetings. She was very charming. Then in one issue I misreported her. She was advocating bedsteads for tramps and I wrote 'bedspreads'. I laughed. That did it. She stamped her foot and told me crisply that it was no laughing matter. I was to meet her years later when I was elected hon. publicity chap on a fund-raising effort for Sackville College. We chatted, recalling the event, and I told her I had no idea the unfortunate ones calling there for a night's doss had to sleep on the floor.

Early highlights of my journalistic career included attending the inaugural meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, the annual banquet and the annual ball held on the sprung dance floor above the Grosvenor rooms, part of the Whitehall theatre complex and all owned by Messrs Letheby & Christopher Ltd. A bonus was a free pass to see the silent films there after I had been introduced by Mr Hills to the manager, Mr Fred Maplesden.

Another highlight was the annual fat stock show and heavy luncheon at 4 p.m. in the Crown hotel.

The oldest licensee in those days was Mr Gasson of the Rose and Crown where, if you liked, you could have your drink in a little courtyard at the back. Another licensee was 'Father' Presley of the White Lion who was later to open Norton House as a club. We were great friends and he was to become Chairman of the Urban District Council. He was known as 'Father' because of the big part he played in the Roman Catholic Church. He was very devout and got me so interested that, as a somewhat High Anglican, I very nearly switched over. He had got it into his head that I was a lapsed Roman Catholic. Yet another famed and popular licensee and great friend of Mr Hills was Mr G.F.Thompson of the Ship. There were in those days, apart from those mentioned, the Sussex Arms, West Street, the Swan, London Road, opposite the Warwick Arms next to Rice's Hill, the Railway Hotel, later the Glanfield*, and across the border into Surrey the Star, Felbridge, which for some time was not allowed to open on Sundays. Then of course, as today, there was the fully licensed North End Working Men's Club. At the railway station there were two licensed bars, one on the low level and one on the high.

The station master was Mr Buck and in the booking office were Mr Wright and Mr Walter Eagle. I got to know the latter very well and sometimes we nipped into the lower bar for a chat. It was rather amusing, for porters would slip in for a hasty pint and when they hastily disappeared, for fear I presume of being spotted by the station master, Mr Buck would appear for a more leisurely drink.

Other annual events I attended were the productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operas at St Michael's School, where I got to know Sister Laura, in charge there. I did not know then that my wife-to-be was a pupil and appeared in one of the operas I reported. And then there was the High Mass, procession and luncheon in the grounds after the service at the convent marking St Margaret's Day. Once again I did not know that I was to get to know the Mother Superior very well and years later sit on the same ad hoc committee that put on the spectacular memorable centenary exhibition in the convent.

But life was not all honey and jam for me as Mr Hills had difficulty in getting me to call on bereaved residents for details, standing in church porchways taking the names of people attending funerals and then copying down in full inscriptions attached to floral tributes.

Let's end this instalment on a happier note. We never turned down an invitation to weddings and receptions.

*renamed the Broadway, July 1985 - ED.