

The
BULLETIN
of the
EAST GRINSTEAD
SOCIETY

No 126

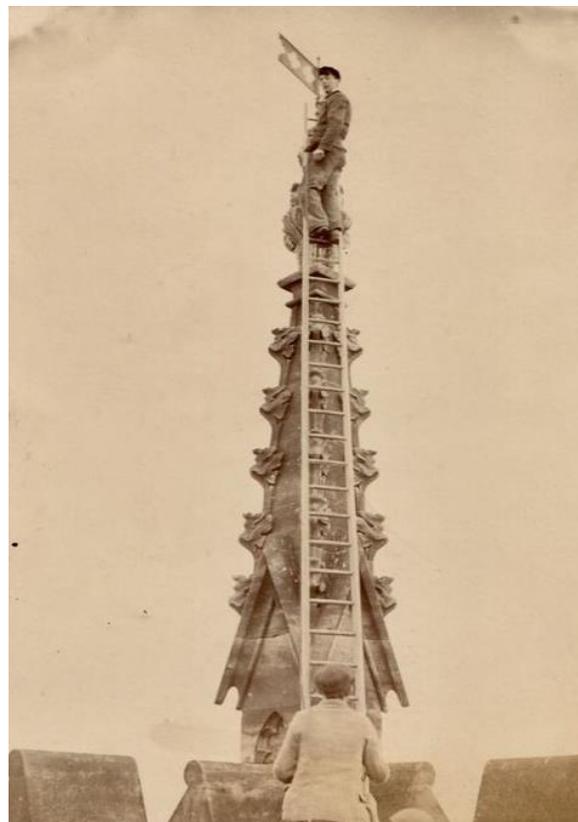
Autumn 2022

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THE EAST GRINSTEAD SOCIETY

www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org



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. Key to this is an active role in scrutinising planning applications and regular liaison with planning authorities and our publications: of which the *Bulletin* is one.

The *Bulletin* was established and edited by Michael Leppard. The continuance of the *Bulletin* forms both a tribute to Michael's legacy to the Town and a source of future research on the Town's history,

The *Bulletin* is an important tool for highlighting the rich and varied history of the Town and a key resource for the general reader, schools and researchers. As such we welcome suggestions for topics to be covered and, of course, draft articles for possible inclusion. We also welcome comments on the *Bulletin* and any aspect of the Society's role to: Chairman@eastgrinsteadsociety.org

Full information on the Society and updates on activities can be found on our website: www.eastgrinsteadsociety.org

The strength of the Society lies in the extent to which it can be seen to represent public opinion: the larger the membership the greater the influence. We are committed to expanding our membership by offering benefits such as a regular Newsletter and meetings and a social programme when conditions permit.

Welcome to a packed and varied edition of the Bulletin, which focuses on a range of fascinating topics as always. This Bulletin includes an account of Royal visits to East Grinstead and its surrounding area, a topical account in the light of the death of her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It covers the origins of the War Memorial, again timely in the season of Remembrance,

There is also a strong flavour of social history in this edition of the Bulletin. The article on John Pye and his renowned bookshop tells us not only about John and his real sense of vocation as a bookseller but also describes the wonderful building that hosts the shop. John will, of course, be entertaining us at our Christmas meeting on December 13.

We have two articles concerning St Swithun's: one on the work of local builder James Charlwood and one on the fall of the pinnacle, as shown in our front cover.

I hope that you enjoy this edition and agree with me that it really brings local history alive!

James Baldwin - Chairman

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Cover Picture

Craftsmen repairing the pinnacles at St Swithun’s Church in the early 20th Century.
Reproduced from the collection of Colin Wood, supplied by Peter Wood

Queen Elizabeth II

The late Queen Elizabeth II reigned for 70 years, from the death of her beloved Father, King George VI, on 6 February 1952, until her own death on 8 September 2022. As a young woman she promised to devote her whole life, be it long or short, to the service of her people, and she did so with grace, dignity, warmth and good humour. She presided over a period of immense change- from Empire to Commonwealth, and forward into the Space Age and the Digital Age. During her reign she made Christmas broadcasts that were televised, as was her Coronation. Many people, like my late parents, bought ‘a television set’ in 1953, in order to watch the Coronation. The Queen was served by 15 Prime Ministers: Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Harold Wilson, James Callaghan, Edward Heath, Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and, briefly, Liz Truss.

Queen Elizabeth II never actually visited East Grinstead. Her Majesty did visit Ardingly College, not very far away, on 9 June 1958, accompanied by His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. This visit featured in the Autumn 2021 *East Grinstead Society Bulletin* as part of the tribute to Prince Philip.

Visit of the Queen and Prince Philip to Gatwick Airport, Crawley and Ardingly College, 9 June 1958

On 9 June 1958, the Queen and Prince Philip visited Ardingly College. The Headmaster was the Rev'd George Snow, later the Bishop of Whitby, and the visit, which was to mark the Centenary of the school, was probably brought about by the Headmaster and by Harold Macmillan, who lived at Birch Grove nearby.

The Mid-Sussex Times for 18 June 1958 reported:

'Her Majesty and the Duke came to Ardingly after an extremely busy day in the northern part of Sussex...The Queen officially opened the £7,600,000 Gatwick Airport before being accompanied by the Duke on an extensive tour of the Crawley New Town area...'

During my childhood, I often heard about this Royal Visit, but did not realise then that the Queen and Prince Philip had already visited Crawley New Town and opened 'the £7,600,000 Gatwick Airport' that day, before arriving at Ardingly College. I still have the handwritten White Passes that were issued for my father and mother and a very little me, the newspaper cuttings about the occasion, and a page of typed instructions for the day, including the order that at the end of the visit, the boys of Junior House were to run *silently* down to the College drive to wave off the Royal car. The wall of the terrace above the Headmaster's garden has an incised stone recording that the Queen stood there to admire the view over the Sussex countryside. My mother noticed that whilst standing there, the Queen eased her feet out of her shoes for a moment. (My mother admired the Queen greatly and found such a simple action by a Royal person very endearing, so I hope that I won't be sent to the Tower of London for that including that observation!).

The Queen and the Duke each planted a tree: the Queen a whitebeam and the Duke a red maple. The silver spade used by the Queen is housed in a frame on the wall in the Ardingly College Archive, along with the pen that Her Majesty used to sign the royal photograph. The Queen was described as *'looking magnificent in a fitted coat of royal blue silk with a feathered close-fitting hat to tone'*. In the College Chapel, the royal couple heard the Choir practising the anthem 'I Was Glad', which had been performed at her Coronation and they learnt that four of the boys had sung in the Coronation Choir. *'The Queen was particularly impressed by the Chapel and the singing'*, noted the *Mid-Sussex Times* reporter. At one stage 'Some of the senior boys bowling and batting at the cricket nets caused the Queen to comment upon the interest now being taken by **Prince Charles** in the game'. The Headmaster said that *'all were tremendously refreshed by the lively interest taken by Her Majesty and His Royal Highness in everything they saw'*. This lively interest and the good that it achieved surely lie at the heart of the work of the late Queen and Prince Philip.

The Queen and Prince Philip returned to the village of Ardingly to attend the South of England Show in 2002. An important football match was taking place between England and Argentina. Large TV screens had been put up to enable visitors to watch the match. When a huge cheer went round the grounds, the Queen apparently asked if England had scored- which they had.

In St Swithun's church here in East Grinstead people wrote messages in the Book of Condolence, and there were many other ways in which the people of this town could offer their condolences and give thanks for the life of the Queen.

May Queen Elizabeth II rest in Peace and Rise in Glory. Long Live King Charles III!

Other Royal Visits to East Grinstead

Whilst the late Queen Elizabeth II did not come to East Grinstead, her husband Prince Philip did in his capacity as President of the Guinea Pig Club, as Bob Marchant wrote for us in the *Bulletin* for Autumn 2021.

The late Queen's Father and Mother, **King George VI and Queen Elizabeth** called at East Grinstead in 1944, after the second wartime bombing. The Whitehall bombing of 9 July 1943 is believed to have killed 108 people and injured 235.¹ On 12 July 1944 an enemy flying bomb fell on the London Road, on the ruins of the previous raid. 3 people were killed and 38 injured. *'Later in the day the King and Queen stopped en route to an engagement to view the effects and talk to workers and helpers'.*



King George VI visiting after the V1 bomb on 12th July 1944

The Queen (later the Queen Mother) at Sackville College

1946

East Grinstead Observer 2 August 1946

¹ Michael J. Leppard, *A History of East Grinstead* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), pp. 152-155.



1946: Queen Elizabeth (1900-2002), the Queen of King George VI visiting Sackville College, East Grinstead whilst on a tour of Surrey, accompanied by Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn. (Photo by PNA Rota/Getty Images)

On 25 July 1946, the Queen (the Queen of King George VI and our late Queen's Mother) went to a luncheon with Lord and Lady Kindersley at Plaw Hatch Hall before the opening of the American Surgical Centre. Guests included Lady Louis Mountbatten, Lady Katherine Seymour, Mr & Mrs Edward Blount, Mr Alfred Wagg and Mr A. McIndoe.

After visiting the Queen Victoria Hospital and the College of St Barnabas, the Queen came to Sackville College.

'The Queen had a great reception from the crowd when she arrived at the historic Sackville College. Here she was met by the Warden, Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn. Presentations to Her Majesty included Lady MacMunn and the two Assistant Wardens, Lady De La Warr and Mr A.H. Hastie. The Queen inspected the common room, chapel and banqueting hall, and spoke to the oldest resident, 89-year-old Mrs Card of East Grinstead, and to Miss Page, who is blind and has lived for 33 years at the College, longer than any other resident. Her Majesty took sherry with Sir George and Lady MacMunn and signed the Visitors' Book before leaving. She received another big ovation when she left the College for the drive back to London'

Wartime shortages were still having an effect in 1946:

'The 'Observer' regrets it was not possible to supply extra copies of last week's souvenir issue. The maximum number of copies authorized by the Paper Control are already being printed each week'.

Copy of a letter from Buckingham Palace 26 July 1946 to Sir George MacMunn, from Sackville College archives

My dear General,

The Queen commands me to write and say how greatly Her Majesty enjoyed her visit to Sackville College yesterday afternoon.

The Queen is so happy to think that Sackville College provides such a happy home for so many old people and Her Majesty was, of course, deeply impressed by the beauty of the College and of its surroundings.

I am also to extend to you and to Lady MacMunn Her Majesty's warmest thanks for your delightful hospitality and to say how much Her Majesty enjoyed her brief rest in your charming old room.

The Queen will always carry away such a very happy memory of Sackville College.

Yours sincerely, Katherine Seymour

This may have been the occasion when the Queen was offered 'the royal chair', thought to have been used by King Charles II, and formerly at the Cophall property of the Sackville family. The response was '*in future the Guides will be able to say with certainty that a Queen of England has used this chair*'.

The Visit of the Queen Mother in 1963



As Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, the former Queen visited Sackville College on 5 June 1963. By now the Warden was Sir Harry Sinderson. The Queen Mother met the Residents, including Miss Page and Mr Thomas Warner whom she had met on her first visit. Miss Page was apparently the only Collegian allowed to keep a cat (with a bell on its collar, perhaps because of her blindness).² Mr Thomas F. Warner (born in 1872), was the Senior Brother at the

College and had won £1, 500 on the Pools in about 1950- an enormous amount then- but stayed on at Sackville College. He showed the Queen Mother photographs of her previous visit in 1946 'which she looked at closely'.

Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret 1990



Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret visited Sackville College when the present Warden's late father, Derek Chislett, was the Warden. In May 1990, he welcomed HRH Princess Margaret to Sackville College, where she attended Holy Communion in the Chapel, toured the College and met the residents. HRH Princess Margaret was staying with the Earl and Countess De La Warr at Buckhurst at the time.

² Michael J. Leppard, *A Brief History of Sackville College*, p. 21.

Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal



Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal visited Sackville College in 2014 to unveil the statue of Sir Archibald McIndoe, when the late Graham Gaisburgh-Watkyn was the Warden. Although this was not a Sackville College function, the Princess Royal stopped in the quadrangle so that the Residents who were there could be presented to her. She was gracious and charming in her conversation with the Residents. This was just one of several visits she carried out that day.

The War Memorial, East Grinstead High Street

East Grinstead War Memorial was designed by the sculptor Ernest G. Gillick and it is listed at Grade II *'as an eloquent witness to the tragic impacts of world events on this community and the sacrifices it made in the conflicts of the twentieth century'*. The memorial was made with local materials and was designed to blend in with other Grade II* and Grade II listed historic buildings along the High Street.

After the First World War tens of thousands of memorials were erected all across England for public commemoration. The East Grinstead memorial was unveiled by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Charles Madden, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, on 23 July 1922. During his speech, he said that some 1,000 of the town's population of 7,000 had served in the First World War. The names of men who lost their lives in the Great War are listed on five panels. A later plaque commemorates local residents who lost their lives in later conflicts.

In 2014 a commemorative paving stone was added in front of the memorial to honour Private Sidney Godley, born in East Grinstead, who was sent to the Western Front with the 4th Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment) aged twenty-five. On 23 August 1914, at the Battle of Mons in Belgium, he was badly wounded defending British positions at Nimy Ridge. He defended the bridge for two hours, then threw the gun into the canal to prevent the enemy from using it. He was captured and taken to a prisoner of war camp and survived to return home in 1918. He received the Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace on 15 February 1919. He was the first non-commissioned soldier to receive the Victoria Cross in the First World War. He died in 1957 in Essex.

The sculptor, Ernest Gillick of Chelsea also sculpted the Cenotaph in George Square in Glasgow, and some of the statuary on the façade of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Local masons Messrs Jenner and Grynner erected the memorial. The sandstone walls either side of the memorial have been extended to create the landscaped flower beds.



Unveiling of the memorial 1922 [<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/EastGrinstead.html>]



WAR MEMORIAL AND HIGH STREET, EAST GRINSTEAD

High Street 1926 [vintagepics.co.uk]

Inside St Swithun's church there is a board for the fallen of the First World War and another for the fallen of the Second World War, in the Memorial Chapel, which was created after the Great War. There is also a stone tablet commemorating members of the Oddfellows (a sort of guild not limited to one particular occupation) who lost their lives. The Chancel screen was given by the parents of Guy Francis Ormond Devitt, who was killed in 1915. The screen was installed in 1922. The Vicar, the Rev'd Youard, asked for it to be not only a memorial but also a thanksgiving for those whose menfolk had returned safely.

There are also two memorials on the south wall of the church, honouring some of those killed in the Whitehall Bombing on 9 July 1943, and the three killed by the flying bomb on 12 July 1944.

Outside the restored Whitehall Buildings, a plaque commemorates those killed in the 1943 bombing, whilst a complete list of those killed on that occasion stands in the memorial garden at East Court.



St Swithun's Memorial Chapel WW1



St Swithun's Memorial Chapel WW2



St Swithun's Chancel Screen in memory of 2nd Lieutenant Devitt, killed in 1915



St Swithun's Memorials to victims of enemy action in 1943 and 1944



St Swithun's Oddfellows Memorial



Memorial at East Court



Grave and Memorial at Mount Noddy



Whitehall Cinema Bombing 1943 memorial

Sources

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1426308>

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/16801>

<http://www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/EastGrinstead.html>

John Pye and the Bookshop at Tudor House, 22 High Street, East Grinstead

John Pye unlocked the doors to the Bookshop on 19th August 1991. The Bookshop, situated at the heart of the town's High Street, is a landmark, with its unusual bark decoration on the outside of the upper jetties. John's Bookshop has gone from strength to strength, due to John's enthusiasm for books of every kind, and a magical quality about the building itself. The browser can explore the nooks and crannies in the building and find inspiration. The Bookshop is the only independent bookshop in our town. In addition to selling books on the well-stocked shelves, John can order books for you and have them delivered amazingly quickly. There are second-hand books, which are always tempting for book lovers. The range of cards for sale is excellent. The Bookshop also serves tea, coffee and delicious cake in this lovely setting. Outside the shop on the pavement, there are Chess boards on tables, reflecting the successful Bookshop Chess Club. A boy who is part of this has gone forward into a national championship. There are two Book Clubs, an evening club which meets monthly inside the shop and a daytime Walking Book Club. John leads guided walks telling the stories of the town's history. John hosts talks and book signings by authors, which are always well attended. Sometimes these are held inside the shop and sometimes at Sackville College almshouse, across the High Street. A Publishers' Association film used The Bookshop to champion publishing and the bookselling industry. (The link to it appears below).

Tudor House is a Wealden Hall house and sits on two burgage³ plots, which are 34 feet wide in total. The house is thought to date from 1535. The house has seen change over time, including the use of timber which by tradition came from wrecked Spanish Armada ships, to embellish the interior. There are some round Tudor portrait heads, one of which is said to

³ A form of tenure where land was held of the king or a landowner for a certain yearly rent, or a freehold property in a borough. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

represent Anne Boleyn, another a Bishop. There are similar portrait heads at Sackville College, which, if they are Tudor, predate the College (founded in 1609) so the portrait heads were probably later additions brought in from elsewhere.



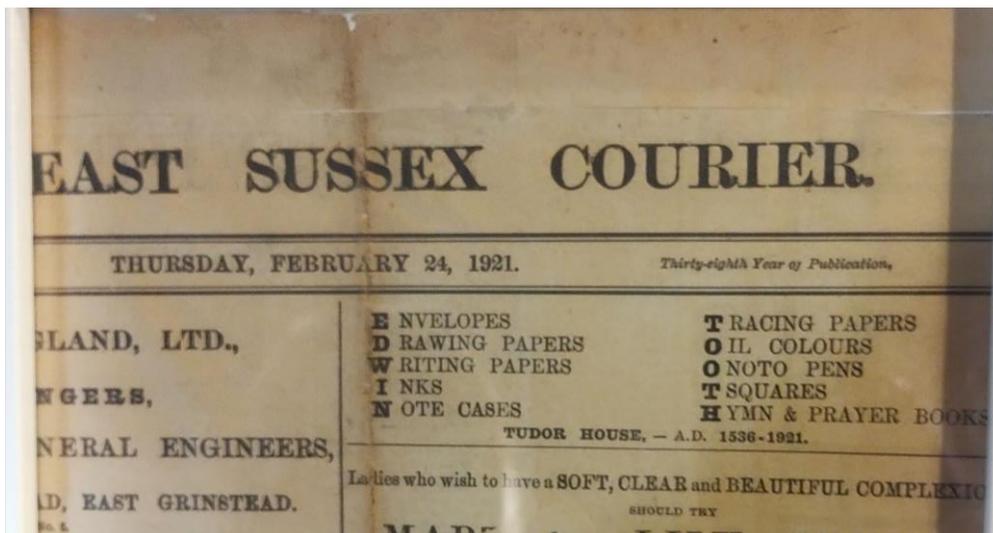
Oldest known photograph of Tudor House, 22-24 High Street

The Tooth family made their fortune in Australia, in New South Wales after taking out a ship's cargo of hats and hops. John Tooth emigrated to Australia in the early 1830s, traded as a general merchant, then opened a brewery, the Kent brewery, in Sydney in 1835.⁴ The Tooth family had interests in banking, agriculture, and real estate. Some members of the Tooth family returned to England and bought the two properties in East Grinstead, 22 and 24 High Street, in the 1870s.

They lived upstairs. In the 1870s John Tooth had the shop front created with large bay windows cut out of the front walls and propped up by iron girders. Upstairs, projecting beams extended the house forward into the street. Between the beams areas of stencilled patterns were created by a technique called 'pargetting'. Even more distinctive is the use of bark as a decorative feature outside

the upper floor. The Tooth family were benefactors to the town and gave the Lime trees that still survive. They had the Tudor panelling (presumably rescued from another property) installed, inside the shop. John Tooth, who was a Master Plumber, was mentioned in *St Swithun's Parish Magazine for December 1876*:

'The staining, decorating and plumbing work has been admirably executed by Mr J. Tooth, ... of this town.'



An advertisement from 1921 shows what Tooth's shop sold in Edwin Tooth's day

John Pye loved books as a child, especially the series of Ladybird books which told the stories of Great Men and Women. He loved reading, history and information. Second-hand books

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tooth_and_Co.

were a part of his childhood, so after completing a History degree, he set up a business selling second-hand books in markets, driving a Datsun Sunny van.

When John took over the Bookshop he moved the second-hand books upstairs and had shelving put in for the greetings cards. John rented the Bookshop for seven years, then when the lease was due for renewal, he was able to buy the property, through sheer persistence and by navigating the complex business of an auction.

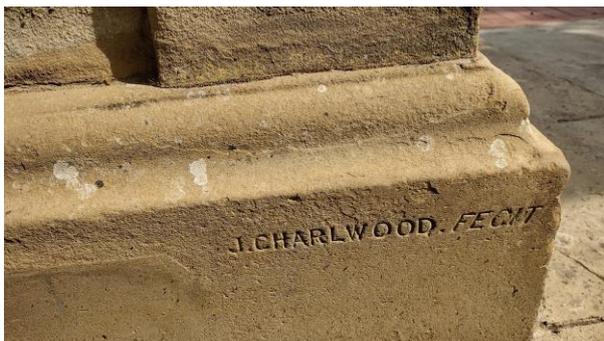
John says 'Every time I sell a book I sell a piece of magic' and that he loves to sell books to people and 'share in their joy'. He feels that books are for everyone, not just booklovers. He sees his work as a vocation and likes to enjoy every day and make a difference to others. The Bookshop is a hub, interconnecting with other town communities such as St Swithun's church, Sackville College almshouse, the Museum, the Library and the Town Council at East Court. In 2035, twelve years away, Tudor House will be 500 years old and John himself will have been a bookseller for fifty years. Through the old house we can look forwards as well as appreciating such a fascinating piece of the past.

Thank you to John Pye for so much information about the building and about his work as a book seller.

<https://vimeo.com/boldyellowmedia/review/673565039/ebdffa>

James Charlwood, Builder, 1840-90

I am very grateful to Mr Arthur Crawford for his generosity in sharing his own research about James Charlwood and for allowing me to include his findings in this article. The last *Bulletin* included information about the Jubilee Fountain on the High Street, given by Mr Crawford's ancestor, the Rev'd Charles Walter Payne Crawford, to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The builder employed to construct the fountain in 1887 was James Charlwood.



J Charlwood. made [this]

James Charlwood was born in East Grinstead in May 1840 and baptised on 23 May. His father was Charles Charlwood, a carpenter of East Grinstead. James Charlwood married Ellen Armstrong (1841-1924) in 1866 and they had five children: three sons and two daughters. The Census of 1881 recorded James Charlwood as living at 22, London Road, East Grinstead, married, aged 40, a builder, and employer of 92 men.

The Parish Magazine for St Swithun's church in December 1876 referred to repairs to the roof and other restoration work carried out by the Charlwood Brothers:

'It is but just to the architect and the contractors to place on record the account from the Sussex Advertiser of the work:

The interior of the church is greatly improved and the new Roof is in accordance with the style of the edifice and the new benches. The Sum of £2,500 was needed to complete the whole work of restoration; of this the work remaining to be done is to re-seat the north aisle with oak benches uniform with the rest of the church, and clear off the debt of £400 in all. The lofty

edifice now contains a very handsome roof and the work reflects great credit on the contractors, Messrs Charlwood, Bros, of East Grinstead'.

In 1877 James Charlwood was employed by the Rev'd C. W. Payne Crawfurd to lay the new tessellation flooring in the chancel of the church. As Lay Rector of the church, the Rev'd Crawfurd had hereditary ancient rights over the chancel and the Payne Crawfurd vaults beneath it. This flooring is the beautiful mosaic made with tiny pieces of stone, which may, or may not, have been the work of prisoners.

The death of James Charlwood, aged 50, was announced in the *Sussex Agricultural Express*, with a brief account of his funeral. A further article published in the same newspaper on 3 May 1890, described him as a well-known tradesman of the town of East Grinstead and part of the firm of Charlwood Brothers, builders and contractors of London Road. He had been apprenticed to the building trade under Mr Norman and became the foreman at the building of St Margaret's Convent (which began in 1865-66). James Charlwood and his brother went into a business partnership together. Charlwood had been a total abstainer for 35 years, loved Cricket, and was a member and manager of the Zion Chapel. He died on 28 April 1890, aged 50.

James Charlwood is buried in Queen's Road cemetery. The Rev'd Gibbs Payne Crawfurd, eldest son of the Rev'd Charles Walter Payne Crawfurd, wrote 'Recollections of St Swithun's Church' in 1926, at the request of the Vicar of St Swithun's at the time, who was the Rev'd Dr G. Golding-Bird. In those recollections, the Rev'd Gibbs Payne Crawfurd wrote: 'I remember that one of the very earliest burials in the cemetery which my father took a prominent part in securing for the parish was that of Mr James Charlwood, a man for whom my father had a high regard'.

Sources used: St Swithun's Parish Magazine for December 1876.

The Sussex Agricultural Express, 3 and 6 May 1890

Mr Arthur Crawfurd also used Ancestry.com.

Information about the employment of James Charlwood by the Rev'd Charles Walter Payne Crawfurd to install the tessellated flooring in the Chancel of St Swithun's church is taken from a letter written by the Rev'd C.W. Payne, the Lay Rector, to Miss Elizabeth Clarke, dated 22 July 1879, concerning the fitting of stained glass in the East Window as a memorial to her parents. The letter is amongst the private family papers of Mr Crawfurd.

St Swithun's Church and the fall of the Pinnacle, 1930



These three spectacular photographs of damage to St Swithun's Church caused in a gale have been kindly provided by Peter Wood and belong to Colin Wood. There are people in the town who are related or linked to the churchwardens, parishioners and the builders in the late 1920s and 1930s.

St Swithun's church has suffered serious damage three times. The building was struck by lightning and the steeple caught fire on 6 September 1683.

'The fire which fell from above into the battlements fired the steeple at the lower side, which after a small space burnt with intolerable violence and in a short time burned down all the steeple, melted all the bells, burnt the bell lofts, stick and stake all to the ground. But it was 6 of the clock the next morning before the lofts and all were burnt down, and yet notwithstanding this great fire and mighty heat in the belfry, by reason of the fire falling so

fast, together with the melting of the bells, the Church, by God's mercy and the people's industry, was preserved untouched by the fire'.⁵

Rebuilding took place but *'faulty repairs and bad workmanship'* were blamed for the fall of the Tower just over a hundred years later, on 12 November 1785. This disaster destroyed much of the medieval church. Rebuilding took at least until 1813, according to a notice in the belfry. Paying for the repairs involved a committee chaired by Mr Gibbs Crawford of Saint Hill. A petition to Parliament asking for a rate to be levied to pay for repairs was granted on 9 June 1790. The architects were James Wyatt (1746-1813), J.T. Groves (1761-1811) and William Inwood (1771-1843) and his son Henry William Inwood (1794-1843). The Speaker of the House of Commons, Charles Abbott, lived at Kidbrooke, which was then in the parish of St Swithun, and he declared: *'I will have a tower I can see and a bell I can hear at Kidbrooke'*. It was said that the last 20 feet of the tower were very expensive.

Marriage amongst the ruins and an assassination

During the rebuilding period the marriage between the Honourable Spencer Perceval and Miss Jane Wilson took place on 10 August 1790, by tradition in the ruins of St Swithun's church.⁶ In 1787 the older brother of Spencer Perceval married the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Wilson, Bart. of Searles, at Fletching, Sussex. Spencer Perceval himself, although he was a son of the Earl of Egmont, did not seem a good prospect at the time as he was 'a briefless barrister' and a younger son from a second marriage, so his suit for Jane Wilson was not encouraged. When she came of age, her father *'discreetly remained ignorant'* whilst she travelled to East Grinstead to stay with Mr Thomas Wakeham, attorney and an agent for the Wilson family. The wedding took place with the bride dressed in her riding habit. There are three possibilities as to where the ceremony took place: amongst the ruins of the church, or in a blacksmith's shed, as the family thought, or in Sackville College Chapel. In 1876 Sir Spencer Walpole wrote that as far as he knew, *'Mr Perceval did not afterwards visit East Grinstead'*. The marriage was happy, blessed by a family of six sons and six daughters.



The Right Honourable Spencer Perceval in fact became the Prime Minister and held the office for over two years. He was shot in the lobby of the House of Commons by a man called Bellingham. Bellingham was a merchant with a grudge against the government, for not helping him enough when he was imprisoned in Russia during the Napoleonic Wars. He shot Spencer Perceval at point blank range. Bellingham was hanged. Spencer Perceval has a fine monument in Westminster Abbey, but there is no monument in St Swithun's church to record the marriage of Spencer Perceval and Miss Jane Wilson. Spencer Perceval is the only British Prime Minister, so far, to have been assassinated.

⁵ W.H. Hills, *The History of East Grinstead* (East Grinstead: Farncombe, 1906), p. 64. From a manuscript provided by J.C. Stenning, originally from Mrs Chevall Tooke.

⁶ W.H. Hills, *History*, pp.178-179. ODNB <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21916>.

The following is a copy of the entry in the parish register :

1790. The Honorable Spencer Perceval, of Lincoln's Inn, in the County of Middlesex, Batchelor, and Jane Wilson, of this parish, spinster, married in this church by licence this tenth day of August in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety by me Chars.

Whitehead, Vicar.

Witnesses. Dorothy Wakeham
T. Wakeham

Spencer Perceval
Jane Wilson

The Parish Magazines of 1930-31 give us some impression of the damage caused in the Gale in 1930 and how the parish responded and brought about repairs.

On 31 October 1929 the flagstaff that used to be on the tower fell. It struck one of the pinnacles. The church stands on high ground and the tower is of a huge height and can be seen for miles around. The thought of a flagstaff up on the top of that- and of someone raising and lowering flags there- is terrifying, as is the photograph of the workman up a ladder, at the top of the pinnacle, without any safety equipment.

Then at the end of **January 1930**, during a great Gale, *'the upper part of the north east pinnacle of the tower, comprising the finial and the 2 upper crockets, was blown down and crashed through the roof into the west end of the nave, where masses of stone fell, chiefly into the seats on the north side of the nave: stone, slate, broken wood and dust being scattered about from the westward of the font to within a few seats of the cross gangway. The appearance of the broken pinnacle, as seen from below, gives no idea of the size and weight of the dislodged stone. The hole in the roof is divided into 3, its total length being about 16 feet and its greatest width about four feet. The north end of the gallery suffered severely, one of the largest pieces of stone going clean through its floor. The ends of 2 seats have been wrenched off. The font appears to have entirely escaped.'* (Churchwardens' report, February 1930). The Churchwardens were Dr Poynder and Mr Guy W. Mason and this report was printed over their signatures, presumably because it was a quasi-legal document being used in pursuit of funds.

(Note that the Font in St Swithun's church has now been moved from the West end of the church to the South door, closer to the entrance from the High Street).

The Vicar, the Rev'd D. G. Golding-Bird, wrote that this disaster 'made it difficult to write cheerfully' and appealed for funds. He said that this was an act of God and that the Church was insured against Fire but not against Storm.

Fund Raising involved a Gale Disaster Fund opened at Barclays Bank, to which all could contribute. Parishioners' donations were listed in the Parish Magazine, which seems very indiscreet now, but which perhaps made for competitive giving then! 'Mrs Taylor's Little Band of Scholars' gave 3s. 8d. The Bell Ringers of the parish church gave £2 2s., whilst the East Grinstead and District Bell Ringers Association gave £1.

Miss Leach organised a house-to-house collection, a Concert and a Garden Fete at 'Southover' to raise funds.

The Garden Fete was officially opened by Lieutenant General Sir George MacMunn, who was the Warden of Sackville College from 1929-52. There were 'Stalls for Plain and Fancy Needlework, Cakes and Provisions, Dips, Guessing Competitions and Various Attractive Side Shows, Teas and Ices', with Music during the afternoon, a Jumble Sale from 6pm and a Whist Drive on the Terrace from 7pm'. Admission was 3d.

The Concert was held on Tuesday, 7 October at the Parish Hall at 3pm. It included performances by Mr Sinclair Logan *'whose singing is already known and much appreciated in East Grinstead'* and *'delightful and amusing dramatic sketches'* by Miss Janet Barrow. Tickets could be purchased at Messrs Arthur Wood's Music Shop on the High Street and ranged in price from 7s. 6d. to 5s., 2s. 6d., or just 1s. 2d., on the door only.

At the close of Miss Barrow's *'Salta Pro Nobis'* which has a religious setting, the audience stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of those who died in the R101 disaster. (The R101 was a British airship which crashed on a hill in Beauvais, France, on a flight to India. The hydrogen which inflated the ship caused it to catch fire, resulting in 48 deaths).

The founding of a Club for Young Men was postponed during the repairs. One donor wrote that a Boys' Club was too important to be delayed and suggested that *'some of us could think of special acts of self-denial for Lent'* that would help to bring in funds.

By August 1930 it was reported that church goers and parishioners *'have risen to the occasion well, but we think there are some to whom our need may not have presented itself'*. The Treasurer of the Repair fund had *'an encouraging amount of money in hand'* but it still fell short of what was needed. The Vicar wrote *'The church tower is such a conspicuous feature of the landscape, contributing a distinct charm thereto'* that they felt justified in appealing for help beyond the parish boundaries.

In March 1930 Mr Walter Tapper, an ecclesiastical archaeologist, visited St Swithun's and presented a report, saying that *'all the pinnacles are in an unsatisfactory condition'*. The Vicar wrote that the Tower pinnacles had not been erected originally *'according to modern methods'*. Decisions were to be based upon safety, expense, and strength of sentiment over a change in appearance of the tower. The Church tower pinnacles had been heightened at the request of Charles Abbot, Lord Colchester, Speaker of the House of Commons so that he could see the tower from his home at Kidbrooke during the repairs after 1785. More recently, the weathervanes had been restored some 5 years before by Sir Charles Madden. (Possibly this is what the cover photograph shows?)

One suggestion was the removal of the pinnacles, as the tower would be *'architecturally complete'* without them. However the Vicar and the Council and *'local feeling'* favoured retaining them, so they were taken down, modified slightly, and reinstalled.

In October 1930 Churchwarden Dr Poynder wrote: *'Moving such heavy masses of stone as those of which the pinnacles are composed- the weight of one segment has been estimated at a ton and a half- at so great a height requires the utmost care and deliberation at every step'* and noted that *'the confined space makes it impossible to employ many men at once'*. He referred to the scaffolding as *'a fine mechanical achievement'*. New dowels of gun metal were used to secure the stones, and the shafts of the weathervanes were to be carried down the centre of the pinnacles.

By July 1931 the work was complete. The final costs were given:

- Messrs Norman & Burt for work on the tower £517 16s. 5d.
- Messrs Brooker for structural repairs to Church gallery, pews etc £284 15s.
- Messrs Dove £5 5s.

After other expenses this left a balance of £76 for the Domus Fund, to be used for running repairs. Thanks were given to all subscribers and to the architects who had generously remitted their fees.

A summary of the damage to the church on 3 occasions was printed in the Parish Magazine in June 1930 as a poem. It plays on the tradition that Sussex people 'won't be druv' (driven).

'In 1683 the spire was struck by lightning and set on fire; only a change of wind saved the town. In 1785 the new stone tower fell and ruined the Church. In 1930 a stone pinnacle was blown through the roof into the nave.

*The Devil came to Greensted in sixteen eighty-three
Up along the High Street to see what he could see.
He saw a cross above him on a tall shingled spire,
So he took a flash of lightning and set it all afire.
A hundred years later the Devil came again
To stir up further troubles with the East Grinstead men,
But he found they were Sussex men and 'wouldn't be druv'
So he flew against the Church tower and gave a mighty shove.
Down through the Church roof the falling tower went,
The noise was heard in Surrey and far away in Kent.
The dust rose to heaven, the Devil flew away,
And the Church lay in ruin for many a weary day.
And now it's nineteen thirty and the Devil's still abroad
Trying to damage anything that glorifies the Lord.
So when he came to Grinstead and saw the Church once more,
He took and shook the pinnacle and hurled it to the floor.
Then open wide your purses and give the Devil proof
He cannot touch your courage, though he damages your roof.
Set up the fallen pinnacle, the broken roof restore,
And show him you can beat him as you've beaten him before'.*

Anon.