From a map of Sussex by John Nordon, augmented by John Speede. a.1616 d.

BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Journal

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BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM TRUST

Official Address: Langton House, High Street, Battle, TN33 OAQ

Affiliated to the Historical Association, The Sussex Archaeological Society, The Sussex Archaeological Trust, Sussex Record Society, The Council for British Archaeology (South East Area) and the South East Museum Service

Officers and Committee 1996-1997

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(Registered as a Charity, No.292593, on 8 May 1984)

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

After the AGM of November 1995 with the losing of a considerable number of experienced members at one go, I was a little apprehensive that so new a committee might find itself gasping rather for experience and know-how. Happily, thanks to new members and not least to former committee members, we can look back on a not-entirely unmemorable year, l996. The Winter lectures retained both interest and scholarship, from the remains of Roman industry at Beauport Park and through the post-Conquest Benedictine houses in the North, to medieval agriculture and people and buildings in the Rye and Battle of the past. The talk on Uppark will be followed up in 1997 with a Society visit there. The Summer programme included a memorable visit to the area around Malvern; an outing to the Kentish manor of Pattyndene; and in London perhaps the first time the Society has sat down to lunch in the Hall of a City company.

May I also thank warmly those officers and members who year by year carry on both the administration and those activities which go on day-to-day - the library, the recording of Battle historical perspectives, and the Society's relations with other bodies with like concerns, English Heritage, the Battle conference, and foremost, the Museum Trust. In the course of the year it was decided that the Society's traditional year opening in October, the battle-month, be kept; while the annual traditional commemoration service at St Mary's and the party in the Abbot's Hall (attended this year by our President and Mrs Dobson) sustained the links with our founders.

The year saw a gratifying increase in new members. And also the starting of a Research Group to study through monthly meeting and individual original research, aspects of Battle from the Armada too the Restoration. Our annual printed record of the year was originally named "Transactions". In 1983 this was altered to the more friendly "Newsletter". After deliberation, it was thought the latter did not quite reflect its qualities of permanent historical (and original) records. So this year it becomes the Society's "Journal". None-the-less, the society's tradition of an absorbing historical address, audible, illustrated, and in a warm winter hall is never far from the committee's mind. And there is ahead a millennial year, incidentally the Historical Society's fiftieth birthday. Ideas?

John Springford

BDHS RESEARCH GROUP

The Society celebrates its fiftieth birthday in the year 2000. In times past older members recall accompanying Colonel Lemmon (was it?) in archaeological exploration round the manor and Roman road of Bodiam though today amateur archaeology without professional supervision is rather frowned upon as destroying possible vital evidence! It was thought, however, that the Society ought still to make some original contribution by research into local history. In 1996 therefore some eight members formed a Research Group to carry out individual research at the British Library, ESRO, SAS, and elsewhere, not to mention the society's own library, and meet some every six weeks to evaluate.

The subject chosen was "Battle 1600 to 1660", a time of religious and political stress - Armada and Gunpowder Plot, Parliament versus Crown, Puritanism versus Laud, Cromwell, finally the Restoration. The first paper, on the Deans of Battle Parish church, is planned to be made public early in 1997. The four deans of St Mary's Church were: John Wythines of Oxford University, his memorial brass still in the sanctuary, conversant with the Browne family at the Abbey and suspect of Burghley's spies; Thomas Bainbridge, Master of Christ's College, Cambridge (during John Milton's residence there) and University Vice-Chancellor, noted for his non-residence in Battle and Icklesham; Christopher Dowe, diocesan preacher and justice of the peace, follower of Archbishop Laud, who disappears in 1644 with Parliamentary supremacy. There followed two incumbants appointed by the "Committee for Plundered Ministers" - John Rowlandson who within two years had been restored to his former living of Bakewell, and Henry Fisher, once thought a possible third Christ's graduate from Cork but now clearly from a City of London family with father at the Middle Temple. It was Fisher who saved the church's Edward VI chalice from confiscation by describing it as a 'vase', and who survived the Restoration to spend his last eighteen years in the livings of Wartling and Hooe. One last matter. In "Monumental inscriptions in Sussex Churches and Churchyards" by Gell, a manuscript of 1820 now in the British Library, the 15th century brass to Dean Robert Clere was misread as Robert Acre who was subsequently (and mistakenly) entered as a seventeenth century successor to Christopher Dowe. Thus there was never a Dean Acre.

Following this paper the Research Group plans to enquire into the Battle families of the 17th century, their houses and farms, government, law and order, growing economic prosperity, and social life in town and countryside.

John Springford

MUSEUM NOTES

In terms of visitor numbers and school parties the 1996 season was a relatively quiet one - overall numbers were down by over one thousand on 1995. The reasons for this are not obvious, although a part explanation is that we had to remain closed for 4 days over a weekend due to a fault in the burglar alarm system; also EnglishHeritage have introduced a free educational tour, whereas we have to make a small charge.

A big disappointment during the year was the resignation, due to the pressure of her full-time work, of Julie Borrett, our Archivist. Julie joined us in 1993 and, since then, we have been indebted to her for annually reorganising and refurbishing the display of artifacts. Julie was also responsible for introducing models of Saxon headwear in which visitors can photograph themselves, using the instant camera also introduced by her. We wish Julie every success in the future and assure her that her helpful contribution to the museum will be missed. If any member would like to volunteer to carry on Julie's work, please telephone our Secretary (Mrs Joyce Cresswell) on Battle 772288.

During the year, a great deal of work was undertaken by Mr Gordon Kippax. Although not a member of the Committee, Gordon identified and recorded a number of interesting maps of the Battle area which hitherto had lain hidden away in almost inaccessible museum drawers. Similarly, our Curator (Mr Reg Marshall) has identified and catalogued a vast collection of interesting documents and records previously stored in unidentified boxes. Any member wishing to know something of the story of Battle's past would find these documents most interesting and informative.

Looking to the coming year, our School's Liaison Officer has already written to all the Primary and Secondary schools in the County, with details of the interesting school programme we have to offer, and so we hope to see an increased number of school parties during the months ahead. In the museum itself, a further range of old Battle photographs will be put on display. It goes without saying that I thank all committee members and custodians for their continued support.

John Hill

CUSTODIANS: Mrs A. Armitage, Mrs G.Bolton, Mr.H.Charman, Mr. & MrsJ. Downes, Mr.T.Drinkwater, Mrs.C.Gilbart, Mr.J.Hill, Mr.R.Marshall, Mrs.J.McMurray, Mr.J.Polush, Mrs.F.Reffell,Mr.J.Saunders

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SCHOOL GROUP ORGANISERS Mrs.A.Swann, Mr.J.Saunders

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

The past year has been a fairly active one with new accessions, enquiries, cataloguing and cleaning. I am pleased to say that there has been an increase in the number of members borrowing books during this Autumn and I hope that this will continue. Although the library is exclusively related to history, not all books are detailed, academic, dry and dusty. We have many topographical books on various aspects and areas of Sussex and Kent, on tracing your family history, how to go about researching the history of your house or locality and even historical novels.

The following titles are just some of the books added to the collection over the last year:
Sussex 1600-1660; A County Community in Peace and War
The South East to AD1000
History of the 1st Battle Scout Group 1909-1994
Anglo-Norman Studies Vols 17 & 18
Medieval Knighthood Vol 4 (includes report on Bodiam Castle)
Richard III; a Medieval Kingship
The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles
Smuggling in Kent & Susses 1700-1840
Victoria Village; The diaries of the Rev John Coker Egerton of Burwash 1857-1888
The Iron Industry of the Weald
A Sussex Life; The Memories of Gilbert Sargent, Countryman.

Gifts of books have been gratefully received from Mrs Westmouquette, John Springford, the family of the late Gladys Young, Ernest Wickerson, Keith Reader and Tamerisk Books, Hastings.

I would like to record my thanks to Eric Augele and Alan Kinnear for their help in indexing the articles in the Transactions/Newsletters and fully transcribing the oral history tapes respectively. Both of these have been mammoth tasks and the results will be of great help to local researchers. If anyone else would like to help in any way, please contact me on the telephone number below. There are a variety of projects I believe will improve the library and make life easier for potential readers ranging from single 'one-off' tasks to longer term undertakings.

The library is the most important service the Society provides for its membership but it is only worthwhile if it's usefulness can be proved, otherwise the costs of rent, insurance and maintenance are a drain on the society's finances.

Please consider using the lending books or reference works for pleasure, extending you knowledge or rereading something you may have read years ago. On behalf of members the Society subscribes to the Historical Association, Sussex Archaeological Society, Sussex Industrial Archaeological Society and the Sussex Record Society. The annual publications and regular newsletters of all these organisations are available in the library. The SIAS newsletters have recently featured Telham and Ninfield Windmills and the SAS Collections 1995 includes an article on Ashburnham Furnace.

The library is open to members half an hour before all lectures and most Friday mornings 10-12 noon. If these times are not convenient, I am happy to arrange other times, evenings or weekends to suit. Please telephone me on Bexhill (no code from Battle) 730994.

Other projects which have been assigned to me are the High Street Index and Battle Walk booklet. The index is being updated as necessary and a new updated and slightly enlarged revision of the booklet should be published before the tourist season with help from the Rother Museum Service.

Don Phillips,
Librarian

EDITOR'S NOTE

As you will have noticed, the committee have decided to re-name this publication "The Journal of the Battle and District Historical Society". I hope you think, as I do, that this more accurately reflects its scope and quality.

Personally, I regret that pressure of work has made it impossible for me to continue in this post, and I wish my successor all best wishes for a time-consuming but rewarding task. My thanks go to all who contribute to the production of the Journal.

I have been, as ever, generally conservative in matters of style and punctuation, though I have followed Charles Dickens in approving "sentences" without plain verbs where these have been deliberately employed for effect.

Neither I nor the society take responsibility for the facts and opinions contained here. Responsibility lies solely with the contributor!

Richard Thomas
February 1997

LECTURES

ROMAN EXCAVATIONS AT BEAUPORT

Dr. G. Brodribb — 2nd February 1996

Dr Brodribb stated that the word "Roman" was difficult to place in time; to help us, he took five hundred year jumps. After the Armada, the Battle of Hastings and King Arthur, you would arrive at Roman times. As the Romans were in Britain for a very long time, it is hardly surprising that so much remains of their civilisation.

The Romans came to Britain (Caesar's expeditions were amongst his least successful adventures) for slaves, corn, hunting-dogs and the iron-works of the south-Eastern corner - that is, Beauport. Although there was a complex of sites clustering around the considerable inland port of Bodiam, Beauport is considered the largest of these. You can always recognise an ironworks site by the slag, which retains a considerable proportion of its original iron-ore content.

The slag heap - the largest heap of its kind in the country - was originally discovered by the Rector of Hollington Church in the Wood in the 1860s. The material from it was taken away and used for road-making in the 1870s and so many local roads will still contain a layer of Roman slag beneath their surfaces: roads, like slag heaps themselves, consisting of one layer upon another.

Dr Brodribb suggested the smallest pieces of slag would make suitable jewellery.

Dawson, of Piltdown fame, (or infamy!) also had fun with the Beauport site. He claimed to have bought a cast-iron figure off one of the workers on the slag heap. Asserting it to be the oldest cast-iron figure ever found, he gave many lectures on it, and must have enjoyed his joke enormously. In fact, the Romans had no way of making cast iron - they could not create a sufficiently high temperature to melt it and so they had to be content with hammering and manipulating it into shape.

Dawson's figure was subsequently proved to have been manufactured only a few

years before its alleged "discovery"!

In the 1920s Herbert Blackman played around on the site and, fifty years later, Dr. Brodribb became involved at the time when a golf course was planned for the area. A J.C.B. driver asked whether it would be helpful if he dug a trench. He did, and the result was the discovery of a lead-lined water tank, a very lucky find. It was shown that the planks used in its construction were of Roman width, the Roman foot being half an inch different from the modern one.

A track was discovered running up a hill which had been cleared for the owner of Beauport, Mark Singleton. Dr Brodribb went along this track with a divining rod. Using a J.C.B., a test was made for a road but, instead, masonry and tiles were found; what had been thought of a road turned out to be a building.

This building, whose size was roughly the same as that of the Hall in which he was speaking, had only a single door to keep in the heat. The first room would be cool, leading to a warmer room, and so on, until you reached the actual bath rooms, just two in number, which would have resembled a sauna. Visiting it would have been a leisurely business.

Beauport would have been an important site, under the control of the Romano-British fleet which was a merchant navy. Because Beauport was further away from any major Roman town that any other site, it would have functioned as a Leisure Centre. In the opinion of experts, it is the best preserved small Roman building in Northern Europe.

Dr Brodribb showed a model of the building. Water was heated by a fire under a bronze water tank, which had been removed by the Romans. The rooms were heated by under-floor heating; the floors could become very hot. At least 60% of the building remains; a box flue has been very well preserved. Over two of the rooms were circular barrel vaults of which large chunks remain. At its highest the building is now eight foot high. All the floors are intact except for the one from one of the hottest rooms where it had probably been affected by the heat. The entry room itself has beautiful tiling - just like Marley tiles - even the size is the same! The walls themselves were painted; 12 different colours of plaster can be distinguished. There is a ground floor window, the second highest ground floor window in Britain, five and a half feet from the ground. You could climb from the reception room into a cold plunge where there is stone to stop you slipping. There are also pieces of flat, hand-worn stone which acted like a soap substitute, almost certainly found nowhere else. The final room to be built contained lockers where

the Romans kept their clothes. Beauport is one of only seven places where these lockers can be seen. In fact, various buildings were added on over time. The building started at about 50 B.C. and the Romans left in 250 A.D. Then the workers moved into the building and made holes in the floor. At an unknown date, the hillside slipped down - rather like the Aberfan disaster - and covered the building. This accounts for the excellent state of the buildings' preservation.

In the front of the entrance door an inscription was found. There is reference to "Villicus", which we know from elsewhere means "Master of the Ironworks". There is also an allusion to "Bassanius", probably not a Roman, who seems to have been the builder of a rather poor-quality extension; the builder of the superior original building is unknown.

Further excavations have revealed that there had been another building, probably dating back to pre-Roman times, in front of the existing building.

Dr Brodribb revealed that he had kept every scrap of Roman tiling from the site, many tons of it, and had had it all minutely analysed. Some twenty tiles have foot impressions on them. When they were sent to Clarks' Shoe Museum, comment was made on the healthy nature of the feet shown.

The story of the relationship between officialdom and the site was not altogether a happy one. There had been a time, about twelve years ago, when the Department of the Environment (now "Heritage") had been keenly interested and detailed plans were made for the building to be opened to the public but, at the last minute, funds were diverted elsewhere and nothing came of the scheme. Things are more promising now. A Trust will be formed in the near future which will enable the site to be preserved and grants made. At the moment, work includes tracing the road from Beauport to Sedlescombe while planning is taking place for a major Roman Study centre.
Friends of East Sussex has been formed to research into Roman East Sussex. Dr Brodribb had proved that the site deserved the attention it was receiving.

Richard Thomas

UPPARK - THE STORY OF A GREAT HOUSE

Mr Brian Meldrum — 16th February 1996

The name Uppark is an old way of describing parkland high above the surrounding land. The house looks south over a broad valley to the Solent and the Isle of Wight. There has been a house on the site since at least 1594 when country maps showed a largish building within a pale or fence. At about that time a family called Ford lived in Harting Place, a mile below Uppark. Sir William Ford was a Royalist during the Civil War and he probably built the first house at Uppark. His son Sir Edward Ford was a scientist and was commissioned by the City of London, to devise a method of pumping water from the river Thames, some 93 feet, to the highest streets of the city. This he did and he then set about planning a system to bring water 310 feet from the valley up to the house at Uppark. So for the first time there was no need to rely on dew ponds and wells. Sir Edward's daughter Catherine succeeded him in 1650 and she married Ford Grey, Viscount Glendale and Earl of Tankerville. It was Ford Grey who rebuilt Uppark in the form that it is today.

Grey was both the house's most important and its most unscrupulous inhabitant. In an age of flexible principles, Grey was notorious for his duplicity. He supported the Duke of Monmouth, illegitimate son of Charles II, in a plot to assassinate the King, and was sent to the Tower, from where he later escaped. He lay low, probably at Uppark, until the invasion of William of Orange and he then supported William's claim to the throne. After the coronation of William and Mary he was active in politics. The present house was built some time after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and before 1695 when Celia Fiennes, the diarist, described it as 'new built'.

Uppark is one of the finest examples of a tradition of country house building, introduced into England from Holland. Symmetry and simplicity are its hallmarks, with a deeply corniced hipped roof, dormer windows and tall chimney stacks and a central three bay frontispiece set slightly forward with a pediment holding a coat of arms. The principal floors are separated by a plain string course, above a semi-basement; there is an elegant stairway leading up to a pedimented doorway on the south side.

The earliest inventories (dated 1705 and 1722) reveal that the ground plan has remained essentially unchanged since, although it is now clear that Lord Tankerville's Great Hall originally rose the full height of the house. In 1747, Uppark

was sold to the Fetherstonehaugh family for the, then, large sum of £19,000. They were a wealthy family and Sir Matthew Fetherstonehaugh set about extensive alterations to the furniture and fittings. The whole house was redecorated using the best craftsmen he could procure from London, where he also had a house. By 1753 he had spent £16,000 on Uppark 'besides furniture' - an enormous sum in those days. The magnificent plaster ceilings and the marble fireplaces originate from that time. On his travels abroad Sir Matthew bought tapestries in Belgium and Dutch and Flemish paintings. Many of these are still in the house. In 1753 he bought eight Canaletto's! In 1772 Sir Matthew died and was succeded by his son Harry.

Harry remained a bachelor until the age of 70 when he married his 20 year old dairy maid Mary Ann Bullock. He died in 1846 and during Mary's long life and that of her sister Frances, to whom Mary left Uppark, very little was changed. Frances died in 1895 and she left the house to a friend, Col. the Hon. Keith Turnour. Early in this century Keith Turnour sold some of the French furniture to the Metropolitan Museum in New York and it is said to have been lost with the Titanic en route.

In 1930 the house passed to Admiral the Hon. Sir Herbert Meade who also added the name Fetherstonehaugh. Frances Bullock had stipulated in her will that in leaving the house first to Col. Turnour, who was a bachelor, and then to Sir Herbert Meade, they were to take the name Fetherstonehaugh as she had done. At last Uppark was a family home again and Lady Margaret Meade Fetherstonehaugh took a great deal of trouble in preserving the interiors of the house. Furniture was cleaned, repaired and conserved. Chandeliers were secured and deeds, manuscripts and papers were aired and sorted.

After the Second World War, Admiral Meade-Fetherstonehaugh approached the National Trust with an offer of Uppark and land to protect its setting. After long and difficult negotiations, endowments from various Trusts and one large anonymous donation, the house finally passed to the National Trust in 1954.

Then on a hot day, in August 1989, on the very last day of extensive repairs to the roof, a disastrous fire broke out. The beautiful house was gutted but not before nearly all of the contents of the house had been moved out onto the lawns. However that rebuilding and refurbishing is another story, albeit a very happy one.

FOLDSOKE AND BEANFEAST

Professor Paul Harvey, formerly of Medieval History, University of Durham
1st March 1996

The Luttrell Psalter, now in the British Museum, was written and illuminated for Sir Geoffrey Luttrell some time before 1340, the year in which Agnes, his wife, died. She is depicted with her knight husband in armour and their daughter-in-law Beatrice on the dedication page. The page appropriately quotes Psalm 110 - "The Lord said unto my lord". There the lecture's connection with the Psalm ended; for as Professor Harvey went on to describe, the 300-leaf manuscript is a treasurehouse of illuminated painting illustrating rural agricultural life in 14th century Norfolk. Artist unknown. Possibly a monastic, possibly by this time a professional clerk-illustrator in the open world.

The first scene shown was a foot-traveller driving a horse whom Professor Harvey identified as a travelling tinker with staff and crucible, and on the horse's back a leather sack with charcoal, brazier and bellows. Subsequent scenes depict everyday rural life in the manor fields. Four oxen in pairs are drawing a plough with coulter, share and mouldboard, driven by the ploughman, the harnessed oxen whipped on by an assistant in a hood. The same ploughman is also depicted sowing the corn, the seed taken from a sack and then from a wattle basket in hand. Crows are chased off by a dog. A boy tending geese is seen driving off a hawk: anticipation of harvest time when the traditional Michaelmas goose will be cooked. There follows the ploughman-driven square harrow, this time with a single horse (speedier) in collar and reins, its head held by a horse-boy. All wear the customary medieval belted skirt. But the lecturer was at pains to point out that the central figure, the ploughman, was by this time, like a herdsman, a responsible farm worker rather than a serf owing land service. However the whole community was pressed into service at times of intense agricultural activity.

It would appear from the next scenes of farm work - breaking up earth clods and weeding the new corn - that both
men and women were still liable to unpaid labour service in the lord's demesne. The weeder seems to be wearing large leather gloves against the thorns, and weeding, with crook and fork, appears to be a two-man job. Women are distinguishable by their long dresses. With their families they join the men as the village turns out to harvest the lord's corn. Reaping is done with sickles; the corn sheaves are bound with straw and piled. (The stalks appear longer in those days). And while the harvest is still in the field the customary tithes are abstracted, which

contemporary accounts allowed for. Food and drink are handed out to the labourers, a gift for 'a labour of love'; for this is 'boon-work'. And so - 'boonfeast'

Sheaves are carried from the field in a two-wheeled cart pulled by three horses, all with collars and reins. The rear horse is attached between the cart's shafts. A cart going back empty shows clearly its wattled sides and a ladder. But the driver of the full harvest cart is - no doubt to emphasise the jollity of the occasion - a monkey; somewhat sadly perhaps, contributing to the view of some English art historians that in the Luttrell Psalter art was entering a phase of decadence.

The post-reaping work continues, threshing with jointed long flails, and then the grinding. All goes to the lord's mill. A woman carries her sack to the miller who takes his entitlement in turn, up into the post-mill with its ladder and sails, well-guarded by a large alert dog. Windmills such as this appeared in mid-twelfth century England. The Psalter also gives a detailed illustration of the older watermill with its channels, sluices, waterwheel, pond, and millhouse.

The agricultural scene draws to a close with a flock of sheep crowded into a hurdle-sided fold and being milked. The women carry the milk away in posts on head. Milk apart, the wool, skins and particularly the dung on the land were valuable assets, all under the lord's jurisdiction. Sheep were folded every night on the lord's land for their manure. This was 'foldsoke'.

Finally a woman holding her distaff and hand spinning-wheel (a recent innovation and not yet the machine of later times) is feeding chickens and chicks. In the manuscript margins are fish. A cat plays with a mouse (Professor Harvey recalled an Irish poem with similar overtones). A boy is caught up a tree - conceivably scrumping cherries. At harvest time the beanfeast/boonfeast holds sway. But wages now change hand; and the ploughman puts his equipment away until the following spring. Two things perhaps stand out from this depiction of 14th century farming in East Anglia. The first, the farm tools - oxen, horses, cart, plough, harrow, mill, hand-labour; recognisable despite Coke and Townshend, well into the 19th century when steam and then petrol would take over. Finally, the facial expressions of the labourers. Is it simply effort depicted or is it scowling? Medieval purity being overtaken by a new concept - caricature?

John Springford

THE HISTORY OF AN ANCIENT TOWN - RYE

Peter Ewart — 15th March 1996

Peter Ewart looked at his subject as a Rye man born and bred, though admittedly not around for most of what he had to tell. He also illustrated his talk with a wealth of slides.

The coast line of Sussex has changed greatly in the last thousand years, causing a number of medieval ports to end up some appreciable distance from the sea. The change was gradual, although speeded every now and again by exceptional storms. Rye and Winchelsea became Cinque Ports in the 13th century - making 7 Cinque Ports. Rye became a borough in 1291 under the control of the Abbott of Fecamp, when the town was first fortified. It was at this time an island, with a narrow isthmus and with four land gates, in the enclosing wall of which only the Land Gate remains today together with the town fort, Badding Tower. Already the writing was on the wall with the enclosure of Romney Marsh. It was the storms of 1252 and 1287 which effectively finished off Old Winchelsea as a port with a significant future, though the River Rother, as a result of the storm, now joined the sea at Rye, enabling Rye to carry on despite the fact its harbour was silting up.

One of the purposes of the Cinque Ports was for defence and here Rye took its fair share of French attacks, culminating in the town being burnt to the ground in 1377 with only a few stone buildings and cellars remaining. 60 to 70 citizens were killed and the leading men kidnapped along with the church Bells - which came back a year later. Badding Tower survived to be sold in the 15th century to John de Ypres, thus acquiring its present name, colloquially, "Wipers." This building has served the town well variously as a prison, a mortuary and a museum, some of these uses overlapping.

The Parish church of St. Mary, though severely damaged, survived as reputedly the largest Parish Church in the country. It has a turret clock claimed to be the oldest in England still functioning with its original works. The pendulum swings inside the Church and the clock face is flanked by the figures of two boys who strike the bell on the quarter hours but not the hour - hence quarter Boys.

The present street plan differs little from the 14th and 15th century rebuild. The Mermaid Inn was built in 1420 but, after a chequered history involving smugglers and the like, it closed as an inn in the 18th century and was not re-opened until earlier this century.

Though Rye was in decline in the 16th century, it was still sufficiently important to host a visit from Elizabeth I in 1573. But the Royal visitor did not bring any funds to improve the rapidly silting harbour or defend it against the growing rivalry of Bristol and Chatham as ports and builders of boats. The next hundred years saw a considerable drop in the population of Rye despite the influx from a Huguenot settlement.

Another Royal visit occurred in 1725 but not with a fanfare of trumpets. The ship George I was sailing in was forced ashore at Camber Sands and the town found accommodation for the king and his retinue, mostly at the house of a Mr Lamb. The next day Rye was cut off by a snowstorm. Obviously the king was not too unhappy with his host as he gave him a goblet as a present on the birth of a young Lamb.

The Lamb family served Rye, if not well, then for a long time, for, over a period of 130 years, 90 mayors came from the Lamb family and their relatives. The family also represented Rye in Parliament, in the days of the Rotten Boroughs. By the 19th century William Holloway was leading the opposition to the way Rye was governed, and in 1825 his party raided the Town Hall and obtained papers which stated that the Mayor should be elected in the Churchyard. A "proper election" was promptly held in the churchyard and for 6 weeks a Lamb was not Mayor until Parliament intervened. This was not the end of the Parliamentary story for in the 1850s there was a Parliamentary inquisition of the Rye Liberal agent, one Jeremiah Smith, who after being found guilty of perjury and imprisoned, personally "interviewed" all the members of the Jury which had found him guilty and convinced them to change their minds, as a result of which Queen Victoria eventually freed him.

The last mention of the Lamb family was the murder of Alan Greville, who was the brother-in-law of the Mayor of the time, a Lamb inevitably, and was probably murdered by mistake, instead of the Mayor. A local butcher, one Brede, was later found guilty and hung on a gibbet. His skull is said to be in the attic of the Town Hall.

Rye remained self-contained and busy as a fishing town where the fishing was done by cart rather than by boat until discovered by artists, poets and tourists. Now very much on the tourist trail, Rye has regained some of its prosperity - at a cost.

Colin Eldridge

COMMEMORATION LECTURE

KING ALFRED'S FORTIFICATIONS AND HIS MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Professor A P Smyth, Master of Keynes College

Professor of Medieval History, University of Kent, Canterbury.

11thOctober 1996

Professor Smyth's original lecture title had referred to the sun's eclipse of AD878 but he had amended this in order to speak precisely and totally on Alfred's distinction as a strategist against the Danes, both in military defence fortification and campaign attack. The society's annual commemoration, he said, was one of the battle of 1066 which resulted in Anglo-Norman political and cultural fusion. Tonight we were to review Alfred's success in resistance to the Danes which preserved Anglo-Saxon culture, language and way of life against the possibility of the country becoming yet one more 10th century Scandinavian kingdom in the north of Europe.

In his previous lecture of 1990 Professor Smyth had drawn attention to the need to look not uncritically at the sources of information on Alfred's achievements, Asser and The Chronicle. None-the-less, Alfred emerged as a scholar, a philosopher, a lawgiver and a royal leader of men, able to analyse a situation and handle men or organise its control. He lost more battles than he won; but the final result was success.

By the middle of the 10th century, English southern towns became prosperous; this was largely attributable to their security from Danish attacks which were both brutal and economy-destroying. Such security and wealth arose from a new concept - the building of defensive fortifications around key towns with men to man them paid for by taxation. Surrounding estates and farm owners with their families might shelter against marauding Danish attack and, at appropriate moments, retributive attacks could be launched against a weakening enemy. The 'Burghal Hidage' which sums it up, dates from the reign of Alfred's son and successor, Edward the Elder, whose success was followed up under Athelstan. But it is increasingly clear that the seeds of this were sown in the reign of Alfred.

Under the system the details of which Burghal Hidage sets out, southern England from Kent to Exeter - along the coast and along the Thames with advances north

to Lea, Buckingham, Warwick and Worcester - defensive fortifications were built and their circumferences were calculated. The number of men required to cover the lengths of wall or rampart were assessed and the responsibility for finding and supporting the men was laid on the district. Four men to one pole or perch (5½ yards) - one man supported by one hide. The Anglo-Saxon ramparts of Wareham exist today and have been measured at 2,200 yards. Wareham in the Burghal Hidage was assessed at 1.600 hides. Mathematically correct! Some 32 Burghs are listed and, roughly, in the kingdom defended against the Danelagh, every twenty miles of land was within reach of a protective burgh.

Alfred's struggles against Danish invading armies were already in course, at Reading, in 871 when he was elected King. The Danes had fortified the position and used it as a base for attacks. They were victorious and bought off. The drain in exaction from Alfred's kingdom in coin, plate, bullion and livestock was prodigious. But Alfred learnt his lesson and when hostilities broke out again in 875 against an army of some 3,000 Danes he kept them on the move with Danegeld payments and using protected positions at Wareham, Exeter and Gloucester. Finally emerging from the marshes in Athelney, Alfred built a fortress and defeated Guthrum at Ethandune in 878. The enemy was Christianised and forced to retreat north behind the Danelagh frontier.

There was a fresh invasion in 892, this time forced by a famine across the Channel. Some two to three and a half thousand warriors in a fleet of 180 ships overran Kent, built forts along a line to West Mercia and attempted the enlargement of the Danelagh. Professor Smyth held that they failed because Alfred had already fortified principal positions in their path. At Lea, the presence of forts on both sides of the river forced the Danish ships back to Mersey. The strategy behind the Burghal Hidage of Edward of some quarter of a century later would seem to have been conceived by his father Alfred. The 'burghware' then were not Professor Dorothy Whitelock's 'citizens' but fighters manning fortifications. So already in King Alfred's time the Danes were confronted by burghal garrisons supported by the hideage, by a resting army, and a field army. Thus Winchester was never attacked while Rochester, Canterbury and Lea could be recovered and once more defended.

In addition to other qualities that he had, Alfred was a strategic thinker. His concepts, learnt from his enemies, of constructed key strongholds defended by trained warriors, and in the Saxon case, supported by surrounding countryside, led him and his successors to develop prosperous, bustling towns and a safe

kingdom.

John Springford

COMBE HAVEN

Dr Shepperd

8th November 1996

Dr. Shepperd described himself, modestly, as an amateur historian but then proceeded to deliver to the Society an expert and professional talk on the subject of Combe Haven. Though he ventured from time to time into the realms of advanced geology, he was always entertaining and completely absorbing.

Combe Haven lies in a triangle from Bulverhythe to Glyne Gap and inland towards Telham; naturally it is familiar to members of the Society but few, probably, appreciate its historic and geographic significance. Most people simply look upon it as an area of flat land lying behind the ribbon development of the Hastings to Bexhill Road: not particularly attractive and known more for the council's waste disposal unit than anything else. This is the prospective site of the Hastings bypass and Dr. Shepperd regretted that the plans seemed to be going ahead with little or no attention to the archaeological potential of the area.

Combe Haven is the classical lost harbour, destroyed by a combination of coastal erosion and the silting of the estuary; the same forces which have dramatically altered the coast line of East Sussex from Rye to Hastings. An illustration of this phenomena was the disappearance of a small island shown in Speed's map as lying off the shore of St. Leonard's. Historians have dismissed this as being nothing more than an error - an ink- blot - even but Dr. Shepperd suggested that, taking into account the known geological movements, the shifting eastwards of shingle and sand, it was quite possible that the island had existed.

Domesday Book records that Filsham Manor, overlooking the Haven, was held by Edward the Confessor. It was not mentioned by King Alfred nor did it ever appear to have been fortified despite its obvious strategic importance. At one time the Manor extended to Wilting Manor, Breadsell Farm, and Hemingfold; the latter two being donated to Battle Abbey in the thirteenth century. Later documents show that Filsham was a wasted Manor after 1066 which, of course, is not surprising in view of the proximity to the battlefield.

Dr. Shepperd drew attention to the Hastings-Battle road where it crosses high land near the Black Horse Inn at Telham. This had been known (and not so long ago) as the Horse and Groom, and was formerly located at Hemingfold. He suggested that the use of the word "black" in this and other hill-side contexts may in fact be derived, not from colour, but the Saxon word "blec" - meaning fire or light; in other words, such places could have been the sites of beacons. He speculated that such a beacon may have been located on the small mound hidden by trees, next to the water tower. This mound, incidentally, is by tradition a burial place of Norman soldiers.

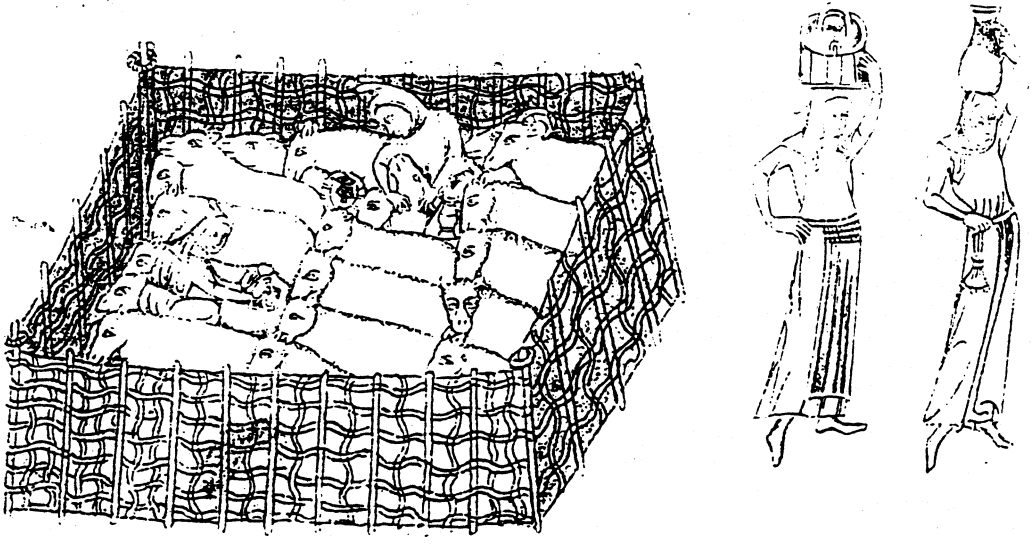
Dr Shepperd referred at length to the geological formation of Combe Haven and showed how it probably eroded and silted up. The underlying layer is Tunbridge Sand which is easily washed away along with the overlying chalk. Beachy Head, for example, is disappearing at the rate of one metre a year, its deposits moving with the prevailing eastward drift to Dungeness, which is similarly extending.

Precisely when Combe Haven ceased to be used for navigation is unknown but significantly the "Amsterdam" sought shelter in an area lying approximately in the centre of the Haven's mouth. The vessel was beached and gradually settled into the sand where it now lies, its bottom 27 feet below the surface.

It is virtually certain that the Haven was a Roman Depot as there are remains of sherds and slag. The precise spot is still to be discovered, hopefully not by builders' bulldozers. Equally certain is that the Vikings and Saxons were frequent visitors and Bulverhythe was still in maritime use in the Middle Ages.

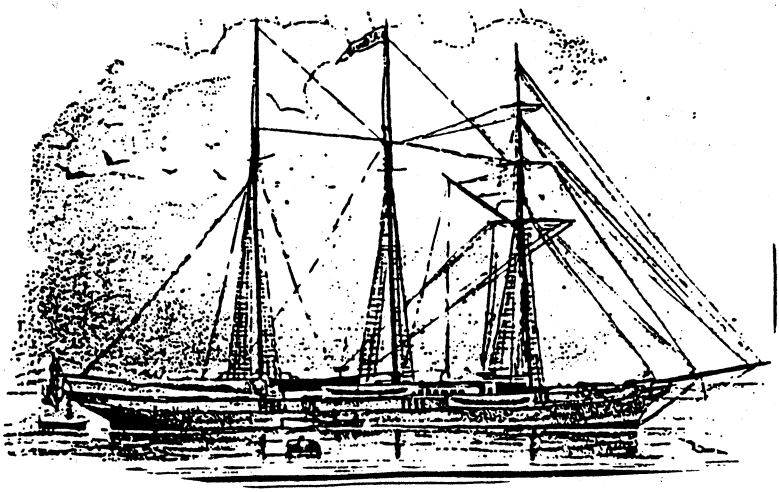
Further along the coast towards Bexhill and behind the Bull Inn, hidden by modern housing, lies the ruins of an old chapel. Nearby on the shore is the place of execution by drowning.

And finally.....and this is another lecture altogether, Dr. Shepperd suggested that Combe Haven may not only have been the original site of Hastings but also the landing place of Duke William.



15 Caring for the sheep, valuable for meat and milk as well as their wool (f. 163 verso).

Detail from Luttrell Psalter (Foldsoke and Beanfeast (P.13)



These drawings show: above left - Lady B
'*Sunbeam*'. Right - on board the yacht.

rassey with her pet pangolin above right - her yacht

Detail from Luttrell Psalter (Foldsoke and Beanfeast (P.13)

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Stephen Usherwood 6th December,1996

London, or Londinium, had become a town in Roman times because it was the first place along the Thames that the river could be safely forded. The Abbey stands on the site of an old Saxon place of worship, which had before that probably been a pagan meeting place. In the 7th century it became a Benedictine foundation and Edward the Confessor rebuilt it in 1050. Henry III, a very devout man, built the Shrine to Edward the Confessor, which became a centre of pilgrimage from all over this country and part of Europe. It was covered with gold and jewels, which were lost during the Reformation. Mr Usherwood pointed out that the whole Abbey would have been highly decorated at that time, with most of the stonework coloured. Richard II, Richard III and Henry VII all made important additions to the Abbey, the latter erecting the beautiful eastern chapel in the perpendicular style that bears his name. In 1559 Elizabeth I opened her first Parliament, in a covered cloister on the west side of the Abbey which had been used by Parliament since medieval times. There is a very good description of it written by the Ambassador of Mantua in a letter to Phillip II of Spain. He decribed the Queen's clothes, her jewellery and the ceremony in great detail, including the fact that the peers and foreign dignitories had to stand for nearly two hours.

We were shown a picture of Elizabeth's tomb, where she lies buried side by side with her sister Mary. The inscription reads 'Here we lie, Elizabeth and Mary, together in one tomb, both Queens of the realm, sisters, in the hope of the resurrection'. We were shown slides of Edward the Confessor's shrine, a bronze head of Henry III, the eastern end of the Abbey, the Coronation chair, Mary I, Henry VII's mother Mary Beaufort and the tomb of James I's infant daughter, Sophia, with the inscription 'A rosebud torn from her parents by a too hasty death'.

SUMMER PROGRAMME 1996

EXCURSION TO GREAT MALVERN AND DISTRICT
26 - 30 April 1996

Another year, another warm Spring morning and our party of enthusiastic members were on board and away not only on time but early!

An uneventful run with relatively light traffic meant that we arrived on time at our scheduled break at **WADDESTON MANOR** (a few miles west of Aylesbury), late home of the Rothschilds. Because of its popularity and its internal capacity all entries to the house are on a timed ticket basis so having 'booked in' we went down to the stables for a pre-booked lunch. In the courtyard to the stables is a magnificent bronze horse mounted on a large base but with no apparent inscription as to why it is there. In 1909 Mr James de Rothschild won the Ascot Gold Cup with a horse called 'Bomba' and maybe this is the connection.

Our party was split into two groups when we eventually started to tour the house and each group had a very informed guide to make the initial introductions in the East Gallery. It is dominated by two views of Venice by Francesco Guardi: magnificent but totally different from those of Canaletto which we are so used to seeing. The chimneypiece is reputed to be from a post office in Paris. There are fine carved oak panels on the walls - their provenance unknown but at the time the house was being built many old houses were being demolished in Paris to make way for new roads and boulevards, providing a great source of building materials, many of which are incorporated in Waddeson. There was a wonderful automaton in the form of an elephant. Made in about 1774 it plays four tunes, the trunk, ears and tail being set in motion at the same time. The sofas and chairs were Louis XV style whilst four tall chairs were Louis XIV.

The next room, the Breakfast Room, also had fine carved oak panels brought from 27 Rue de Richelieu, home of the great-nephew of the famous Cardinal. A fine Louis XV gilt-bronze clock adorned the chimney-piece in the form of a lady and gentleman driving in carriages. The route takes one through the Conservatory and Ante-room where there were two small marble fountains used as wine coolers - what a great idea! In the Dining Room the table was decorated as it was in 1897 and all the porcelain was 18th century Meissen. There were two fine Beauvais tapestries, part of a series hung either side of the fireplace on which stood a Louis XV gilt-bronze clock by le Noir.

Passing into the Red Drawing Room one's attention was drawn to the fine portraits. Nearest the fireplace was a Gainsborough, painted in 1782, of the Prince of Wales, later George IV. Lady Sheffield in a blue dress, also a Gainsborough, was painted in 1785. Perhaps the ceiling, an allegorical painting dated 1725, of the apotheosis of Hercules, was the real focus of one's attention. Amongst the furniture was a table probably made in Augsburg circa 1710-20, the top of which was inlaid with tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl and lapis lazuli and which depicts an imaginary Baroque city. Chests of drawers from Versailles and seven gilt

armchairs were outstanding. Sevres vases were dominant. The Savonnerie carpet was made for Louis XIV in 1683, the central motif being of Apollo symbolising Louis as the Sun King - for whom it was woven to be laid in the Louvre. Louis abandoned the Louvre so it was first laid at Versailles.

Next, the Grey Drawing room. I found this room the most delightful in the whole house. The walls were panelled with Rococo panelling taken from a house in the Rue de Varennes in Paris in 1730. There were superb Overdoors of vases of flowers by an unknown 18th century painter. There were three full-length portraits by Reynolds: a picture of the 26 year old Duchess of Cumberland; one of Mrs Abington, a leading actress of the day; and one of Lady Jane Halliday. A most unusual chandelier dominated the centre of the ceiling. There were Sevres vases, orange tubs and wine coolers. Candlesticks and secretaires and a Savonnerie screen with woven panels of 1719.

We then saw the West Gallery, the Small Library, the Baron's room and Morning Room - so the story continued and the First Floor was similar. We visited the Goodwood Room and the Sevres Rooms, dominated by over 300 pieces of a dinner and dessert service presented in 1766 by Louis XV to the Austrian Ambassador.

The story of Waddeson unfolded and eventually, footsore and weary, we gratefully climbed aboard our coach to continue on our journey to the Abbey Hotel, Great Malvern. Although I had been unable to visit the hotel prior to our visit I need not have worried whether it was going to be of the standard which we had enjoyed on our several previous long weekends. We were greeted by the Manager and rooms were soon allocated. Dinner was excellent and the service could not be faulted. A good start to our four night stay.

Saturday morning we were off at the respectable hour of 10.30am to Hereford Cathedral. Why don't officials who decide to have direction signs erected try following their own signs? After an interesting circular tour of Hereford, we eventually had to leave the coach some 200 metres from the cathedral so, instead of being early, we kept our patient guides waiting. Unbeknown to me, and apparently to the guides also, the local Scouts were rehearsing for a St. George's Day parade. Our poor guide had to try and raise her voice above the fairly high background noise and hold our attention at the same time.

Hereford Cathedral is a cruciform cathedral dating from the 12th century but with many alterations made over the centuries. There was, besides the central tower,

one at the West End as well which fell down in 1786, knocking down part of the Norman nave. James Wyatt restored the West End which was again rebuilt at the beginning of this century. The central tower dates from the 14th century and is studded with ball-flower decoration.

The first Bishop of Hereford is thought to have been Putta (676-688) who probably built a wooden church on the site. King Ethelbert of East Anglia visited Hereford in 794 and was murdered on the orders of Offa, King of Mercia. Shortly afterwards a new church was built and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary and to the martyred Ethelbert. The first stone church was started in the early part of the 11th century. The various architectural styles can be summarised as follows: Norman - the Nave piers, South Transept and choir as far as the Clerestory; Transitional and Early English - Ambulatory, Lady Chapel, choir, Clerestory and the North Transept; Decorated - NE Transept, most of the Tower, Inner North Porch, Nave aisles and the remains of the Chapter House; Perpendicular - Stanbury Chapel, Audley Chantry, Booth Porch and part of the South Transept and Cloisters. Finally from 1786 the Nave Triforium and Clerestory and the West Front.

Hereford is, of course, the home of Mappa Mundi, the most elaborate medieval map in Europe. A new building is currently being completed to house it. The most recent internal addition is a Corona. In the Middle Ages coronas were commonplace in churches. Their dual purpose was to provide both decoration and light. The one at Hereford was designed by a young silversmith, Simon Beer, and it was constructed in his workshops in Lewes. Suspended over the sanctuary alter by almost invisible stainless steel wires it appears to hover in space.

After a snack lunch we headed off to **BERRINGTON HALL** where there was a bonus, for those interested in vintage cars, of witnessing a rally in progress.

The Berrington Estate was purchased by the Rt. Hon. Thomas Harley from the Cornewall family about 1775. Harley made a fortune as a banker and government contractor in the City of London. He became Lord Mayor at the early age of 37 and a year later was made a Privy Councillor. Soon after purchasing the estate he commenced laying out the grounds on the advice of (who else?) 'Capability Brown'. The present house dates from 1778 - the main structure being finished in 1781 and the interior three years later. In 1957 the house, park and pool were surrendered to the Treasury (in part payment of death duties) which, in turn, transferred the property to the National Trust.

The Marble Hall, through which one entered, was remarkable because of its floor

and fine ceiling, the latter giving the impression of a shallow saucer-dome created by the corner spandrels. The two wool tapestries were woven at the Aubusson factory in southern France in 1901. The Drawing Room decorations date from about 1910 and set off the elaborate ceiling, probably the best in the house. The furniture was mostly Louis XV/XVI period. The next room, called The Boudoir, is a room to which Holland, the original architect, had given especial attention. An apse with a fan shaped semi-dome and barrel shaped ceiling had created a feeling of extra space in this small room. The Business Room, restored as recently as 1975, is thought to be in the original colours. Once again the ceiling had been beautifully executed with four corner lozenges containing paintings of ladies representing the Four Seasons. On an oval mahogany table stood a Chinese export punch bowl made to commemorate the "breaking of the line" by Admiral Rodney at the Battle of the Saints in 1782. In the Back hall were many family portraits and a letter from Winston Churchill to Harold Cawley sympathising over the death of his brother. The last of the ground floor rooms was Lady Cawley's Room which contained many pictures of herself and family. The rooms upstairs were very similar with family heirlooms and uniforms. Space prohibits any more details of this interesting house - one worthy of the visit we made.

Our two visits on Sunday were to **WITLEY COURT AND CHURCH** and to **HANBURY HALL.** Great Witley dates back to Saxon times. After the Norman Conquest the land was granted to Urso d'Abetot, a relative of William the Conqueror. Over the centuries the house had many owners. It was extensively altered and added to, becoming one of the finest private houses in Europe. In 1920 there were two major sales and with the post-Great War depression only half the lots were sold. However, the Court and its contents were bought by Sir Herbert Smith, a wealthy carpet manufacturer. In his absence in 1937, a fire started in the kitchens and the small number of staff were unable to contain it. With the threat of war in the air, Sir Herbert decided to sell. After demolition contractors, vandals and weather had taken their toll in 1967, a local group decided that efforts should be made to save the Baroque church and in 1972 the Department of the Environment undertook the guardianship of the Court and gardens. Even now, a wander round the house and gardens soon impresses the mind as to how magnificent the completed building must have been. You do not need to stretch your imagination to recreate the church in your mind, however, as restoration in now complete.

The original medieval church lay some 185 metres to the west of the Court. This was demolished and the present church was completed in 1735. It was, however, plain with no decorations and box pews. In 1747 it was transformed. The 2nd Lord

Foley bought most of the internal decorations of the chapel at Canons, Lord Chandos' Edgware palace which included the ten windows of stained and painted glass. A quick word with the custodian and a gentle prod from me saw our chairman seated at the organ, which he pronounced as being good and powerful. Not only were our party entertained for about a quarter of an house but many other visitors sat down and listened to this impromptu recital.

The access to Witley Court is interesting to say the least. A long winding and hilly track led from the main road for nearly a mile and a few encounters with other traffic wishing to pass in the opposite direction caused a few 'oohs' and 'ahs' but our skilful driver made little of it - in fact I was told by one of the staff that no coach had ever entered the car park - we did!!

After lunch we drove to **HANBURY HALL** another National Trust property. Although I had been warned about the access to Witley Court no such warning had been received about the road to Hanbury. In part it was worse! Additionally, there was a long walk from the coach to the property. However the sun shone fitfully and the visit proved to be a rewarding one.

The house is the archetypal squire's house of the William and Mary period. It was built about 1701 for a wealthy lawyer, Thomas Vernon. When Sir George Vernon died in 1940 he left the house to the National Trust but it was not until 1953 that the Trust were able to take on the house thanks to an anonymous donor.

Entering the Great Hall the main features one noticed were the fine great arched doorcases, the wall panelling, the painted ceiling and the staircase on the left. The design of the ceiling with its 'trompe-l'oeil' saucer domes is in a rather dull monochrome but it certainly achieves a 3-D effect. The black marble chimney-piece bears the family motto *'Vernon semper viret'* (Vernon always flourishes'). The Drawing Room, once the Great Parlour, is now used as a conference room. One of the outstanding pieces of furniture was the satinwood pier-table of about 1780 painted with floral garlands and grisailles. A Broadwood piano of about 1817 was given to the National Trust in 1982 and is a duplicate of the one supplied to Beethoven.

The Dining Room was originally two rooms but the present room probably dates from about 1935. There were fine plasterwork panels featuring garlands of oak and laurel. There were also fine family portraits - one by Sir Joshua Reynolds, of Emma Vernon.

The stairs rise from the west end of the hall in three flights. The painter ceiling, 'an Assembly of the Gods' , shows Jupiter with his eagle, Venus attended by a winged Cupid, Bacchus raising a cup and Minerva in armour. Huge paintings adorn the walls. The subjects consist of 'Achilles choosing a Spear', 'Agamemnon removes Briseis', Thetis and Vulcan', 'Achilles and Chiron'.

The first room is known as the Blue Bedroom in which there was an early 18th century angel bed from Zeals House in Wiltshire. The quilt on the bed is original and was worked in the late 18th century. There was a set of Queen Anne walnut chairs and some Chinese Export armorial porcelain circa 1730. There were some six other rooms to explore before we went into the garden where the Trust are restoring the original design of a parterre. The dwarf box hedges are planted and beginning to get established. In a few years time it will be fully restored.

On Monday morning we left at 11.30 am for a private visit to **EASTNOR CASTLE**, home of the Hervey-Bathursts, descendants of John Somers, Lord Chancellor to King William III. The castle was built by the 2nd Baron Somers between 1810 and 1824. The style is Norman Revival. Most of the building materials are traditional with the exception of the roof trusses which are cast iron, used to save timber in the midst of the Napoleonic Wars when required for ships.

The Great Hall was our first encounter with the interior of the castle and an early painting confirms that this was meant to be the heart of the castle. As was to be expected, no less than twelve sets of armour, part of a collection of thirty three suits bought by the 3rd Earl Somers in Milan in 1856, decorate part of the Hall. Currently used by the family as a vast drawing-room, it is furnished with an ottoman, sofas and armchairs, modern but covered with old fabric. Pictures depict various members of the family plus a small one of William of orange, given to Lord Chancellor Somers by the King. Above the entrance door was a Minstrels' Gallery.

The next room, the Red Hall, contained more armour, 14th Century Austrian Pavises and a fine 18th Century Dutch Clock with an alarm driven by a secondary weight. The ceiling, redecorated in 1991, has panels painted with crests of families related to the Somers and the Cocks in the twentieth century. The Dining Room was next. It is still used for corporate and private functions and many family portraits adorn the walls. The Gothic Drawing Room has hardly changed since 1852 when it was decorated to the designs of A.W. Pugin for the 2nd Earl. The massive chimney-piece with the painted family tree above is the focus of the room. Most of the furniture was specifically designed for the room and the chandelier was exhibited at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Brussels tapestries, a

wedding present to Lady Caroline Yorke, wife of the 2nd Earl Somers, adorn the walls.

The last room, which space allows me to describe, was the Long Library. Designed to the 3rd Earl's specification, the shelving and inlaid woodwork was made in Italy and assembled on site by the Estate workman. The walls are hung with 17th century Flemish tapestries and the Kooloonong is painted with emblems of various qualities representing virtues and their corresponding vices. The chimney-pieces are Istrian. A carved bench seat bore the Medici crest and some 5000 books filled the shelves. There were no less than ten other rooms to be explored - I can only finish by recommending a visit if you were not one of our party.

Our last visit of the day was to **HELLEN'S MUCH MARCLE** one of the oldest historic houses in England. Begun in 1292 it is still occupied by descendants of the family who built it! Whether it was because we were getting tired or because our guide had a streaming cold I wouldn't know, but although interesting it was not a house to which I could relate afterwards. Nevertheless, there were some interesting facts about the house.

It has been the boyhood home of the Black Prince's friend Sir James Audley - hero of Poitiers and an original Knight of the Garter in 1344. The stone table was there on which they ate before leaving for the wars. There was a pair of silver spurs sent from Gascony as a year's rent to the Earl of Gloucester. The bedroom, prepared for Bloody Mary, Queen of England in 1554 is still hung in her favourite colours. Perhaps the day was destined to end in rain, a rather fitting complement to the dark and damp interior of the house.

Tuesday morning we had to start our journey home but time was found for a pre-arranged conducted tour of **GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL**. There was a monastery on this site as early as 681 founded by Osric, prince of Mercia. Some 400 years later in 1022 the secular priests were expelled and the monastery was handed over to Benedictine monks. In 1072, Serlo, the first Norman abbot, was appointed to the almost defunct monastery. In 1089 the foundation stone of the new abbey church was laid. It was completed in 1128. The East End was

remodelled by London masons after Edward II was buried there in 1327. Much of the Romanesque works remain, although they were covered over with a skin of masonry in the new Perpendicular style. The Norman apse was removed and one of the largest Perpendicular windows in England was installed. It still retains its original 14th century glass. The cloisters were also rebuilt in the 14th century and contain the earliest surviving fan-vaulting and in the south walk are the carvels, (miniature studies used by the monks for reading and studying).

Our party then split into two groups, each with its own guide, who explained various features as we circumnavigated the cathedral. After this, we were left to ourselves to retrace our footsteps if we wished and to have lunch. We returned to Battle, dare I say it, one minute behind schedule. So ended a very successful expedition.

B. Gillman-Davis

HELLENS MUCH MARCLE

29th April 1996

Hellens Much Marcle, an ancient manor house lying between Hereford and Gloucester, was the subject of a visit during the Society's Summer Programme stay at Great Malvern. Earlier this century the house became the property of Axel Munthe, who cared for it but without excessive restoration, so that, emerging from the narrow access lanes, the impression was of old brick wall and gate beyond which lay a compound of medieval and Jacobean building. Originally built for a religious house (it would seem that the old stone banqueting table seen today was once an altar) it became in medieval times a family residence with a Great Hall, in which the Black Prince dined with the friends of his youth, the Audleys. The arms of the latter, in stone, still decorate the wall above the gateway. The inner courtyard dates from about 1290, as does the Hall, the Courtroom, of the Courts Baron. James Audley died in battle as Governor of Aquitaine in 1369. The 'castle' passed by female descent in 1399 to the Walwyns, and Thomas Walwyn carried out considerable brick extension. The family remained staunchly Catholic. Mary Tudor visited Hellens as a young girl.

In the early seventeenth century the crumbling medieval building was transformed

from a fortified house to a Jacobean mansion, complete with a staircase of carved wood and with Cordova leather hung in the master's bedroom; the stark old walls were now covered with plaster and ornamental stucco and the garden tower was reduced to a dovecote.

After Marsden Moor there was much Civil War activity in the neighbourhood. The family's 'old monk' was moved to a secret hiding place in the roof but, after the battle, Roundheads found and killed him. The place where he hid was removed after a fire in 1787 which caused the building to be reduced to two storeys.

In the following century, the estate was once again passed on through marriage, this time to Edward Noble, a Scottish presbyterian and the High Sheriff of the county. He adopted and kept the name Walwyn, however.

Fortunes declined and the building deteriorated into an ill-kept farmhouse with "dairy in the western rooms, hooks for meat joints bored into the medieval beams, and the forecourt abandoned to weeds".

In the late Edwardian and Georgian times there was a turn for the better. With Lady Helen Gleichner's marriage to Axel Munthe the house took on new life as Lady Helen had a passion for history and restored the building we see today (despite a bomb in 1940). It is still somewhat dark and mysterious with the portraits of the seventeenth century families of Kemyss, Tynte, and Wharton on the walls and upstairs the window of Hetty Walwyn's bedroom is still scratched with initials and verse as she was confined there for years around 1702.

"A rambling dilapidated pile of mouldering bricks, on foundations, older still, of crumbling stone" as Malcolm Munthe's book describes - yet a keystone in English history.

PATTYNDENNE

6th June 1996

Members of the Society and guests joined the afternoon excursion of Pattyndenne Manor, just a short distance south of Goudhurst. The area in early times was heavily wooded (the Kentish Weald) and accordingly late in settlement, from Kent. The derivation of the name is as follows:-

"Denne" - Anglo Saxon for a clearing in a forest

"Patta" - a stream which rises or falls in a few hours
Such a stream runs at the bottom of the manor garden, as did a railway which has long since been taken up.

A growing population increased pressure for land and even before the Norman Conquest clearings where once pigs had rooted for acorns had given way to permanent cultivation and settlement.

In medieval times Pattyndenne had become a Manor with a watermill, court-hall and a gaol in the cellar. Prosperity grew through wool and in 1470 the present timber-framed house was built in the traditional style though of considerable size. On the ground floor there was a hall, parlour, pantry and buttery while upstairs over the three latter rooms were bedchambers. In Tudor times a kitchen was added on behind the pantry and a massive chimney in the hall given a ceiling to accommodate further bedrooms. The Victorians added an extension to the rear, with a wide staircase giving access to the floor above. Here on the landing may be seen original timbers of the house and in the loft room above, a soot encrusted timber roof redolent of the days before chimneys.

The roof was tiled and the exterior walls close-studded. The first floor was "double-jettied", a distinctive feature of Pattyndenne, hence "dragon beams" and unusually massive corner posts. A Wealden hall-house of the size and construction of Pattyndenne with its ornate timber beams and linenfold panelling, clearly played an important role in the history and development of Goudhurst. For some unexplained reason (not improbably simply the ebb and flow of family fortune) the family who built the house disposed of it to Lord Berkeley, a friend of Henry VIII, who visited Pattyndenne to hunt. Stained glass in the hall commemorates this and also, incidentally, Katharine of Aragon. Berkeley's son, Sir Maurice, was standard-bearer to four Tudor sovereigns.

When grand tastes in later centuries turned to brick and stone, Pattyndenne, like so many timber Wealden houses, reverted to the life of a farmhouse. In the past quarter century the present owner, Mr David Spearing, has been engaged in a programme of meticulous conservation., The Society's party was treated by him to a full description of the house and its history, after which the group was invited to explore at will. To round off the pleasure tea was served in the wide-lawn garden. Warm and genuine thanks were offered for so distinctive a glimpse at five centuries of life of a Kent Weald Manor House

CITY LIVERY COMPANIES AND ST BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT

8th July 1996

A suggestion in committee that a summer programme visit might interest itself "behind the front doors" of a London historic institution came into being when the Clerk of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers invited a group of members to visit his livery company which shares the building of the Apothecaries Company in Blackfriars Lane.

The visit began with a tour of the Hall and premises of the Apothecaries Company described by a member of the Apothecaries Hall. The hall was built partly on the site of the medieval Dominican Priory and taken over by the Company in 17th Century. Four years after the Great Fire of 1666 it was rebuilt largely as it stands today. Everywhere reflected the history of the Company including the courtyard, staircase of 1671, parlour, courtroom and the Great Hall where the group sat down to lunch in the style of a City Company. The hall was filled with portraits, stained glass, bookcases and medical-ceramic collections illustrating the Company's diverse activities.

The Livery Companies began in the 11th century as "guilds" (a term well known to a medieval town such as Battle) - groups of tradesmen and craftsmen bonding together for the mutual protection and well-being of their craft. The Apothecaries, one of the earliest with a mention in 1180, dealt not only with medical preparations but also spices, perfumes and cosmetics. In 1617 under a charter of James I the apothecaries broke away from the Grocers Company to practise medicine and develop pharmaceuticals. They also pursued medical studies, granted licences and had responsibility for the Physics Garden in Chelsea. Today the Company continues its role in the complexity of medical practice and study, examining in specific medical subjects including medical jurisprudence; added to this is a share in the governance of the City and the charitable duties they carry out.

The activities and responsibilities of the Spectacle Makers Company were similarly descrbed. Founded by Royal Charter in 1629 by Charles I the Company is today widely involved in contemporary optics by representation, the making of awards, the training of technicians and through close connection with the profession and industry. In common with other livery companies charitable activity

has a high profile along with the City's government and the intense social intercourse these engender.

The visit was not over, for the group proceeded with a guide to the Great Hall of the hospital of St Bartholomew founded by Rahere, Henry II's courtier in 1123. St Bartholomews has a great list of benefactors and one, Henry VIII is depicted on a stained glass window in his old age. The window illustrates the granting to the hospital of new life after its monastic dissolution. The church of St Bartholomew the Great is where Rahere lies buried in the Norman quire. Although not faring so well at the dissolution or in the succeeding centuries (a blacksmith's forge was in the former north transept) it has revived as a great London parish church. The Society's visit to the City ended with the perusal of this impressive building.

John Springford

ARTICLE
LADY BRASSEY AND THE 'SUNBEAM' VOYAGES

Annie Lady Brassey (1839-1887) was a notable traveller, writer and collector of natural history and ethnographic artefacts for her museum. Famed for her travels around the world in her steam yacht *Sunbeam*, Lady Brassey's best known book *A Voyage in the Sunbeam* describes her circumnavigation of the globe with family and crew in 1876-1877. The book became a Victorian best-seller and was translated into many different languages.

The Brassey family's country house was Normanhurst Court in Catsfield and the family had considerable influence upon the locality. Annie's husband and her son were both mayors of Bexhill and her daughter Muriel married the 8th Earl De La Warr.

Most of what now remains of Lady Brassey's collections are at Hastings and Bexhill Museums. Bexhill Museum's material is mainly geological although there are natural history specimens and some ethnographic artefacts. Until now the importance of Lady Brassey's contribution to the collections at Bexhill has been underestimated and have only been displayed together once since it was first donated in 1920.

Brassey is not a well-known character, which is surprising considering her

popularity during her life and the large collection of artefacts that she left behind. Today the best memorial to Brassey is the Durbar Hall at Hastings Museum which contains a substantial part of her collection.

In 1839 Anna Allnutt (or Annie as she preferred to be known) was born, the only child of a wealthy wine merchant and jockey, John Allnutt. Her mother Elizabeth (née Burnett) died when Annie was four. Annie went to live with her grandfather, John Allnutt senior, at Clapham. He was an art collector and patron of artists such as Turner and Cox; Anna Allnutt grew up in a collecting household. Later she moved to Grosvenor Place with her father. In 1860 she married Thomas Brassey junior, the son of the famous railway contractor who was reputed to have built one twentieth of the world's railway lines. The Brassey family were very wealthy: Thomas senior left about five million pounds when he died in 1870. They lived with Thomas Brassey senior at Beauport near Hastings, until their new home of Normanhurst Court at Catsfield was built in 1870. The family also had a town house in London at 24 Park Lane, the present site of the London Hilton. Lady Brassey used the houses to display her collections to the public and temporary exhibitions were held at the Brassey Institute (now Hastings Central Library) and elsewhere to raise money for charity.

Although not of an aristocratic background the Brassey's assumed the role of landed gentry when they moved into Normanhurst Court. The nearby village of Catsfield was said to have been greatly influenced by the benevolence of the Brassey, who took a keen interest in the welfare of the community. The Brassey's philanthropy stemmed from their religious convictions. Although members of the Church of England they were ecumenical and not extreme or exclusive in their beliefs. In 1892 Baron Brassey as president of the Sunday Society petitioned for the Sunday opening of museums, art galleries and libraries.

The Brasseys came from Cheshire yeoman stock, although they claimed descent from a Norman family. They were 'new money' and contrasted sharply with their aristocratic neighbours at Catsfield, the Ashburnham family. The Ashburnhams had an unimpeachable pedigree but had run into financial difficulties by the end of the nineteenth century. One of Lady Brassey's motivations for collecting may have been to furnish her new stately home with high status objects, instant heirlooms for the *nouveau riche* 'lord and lady of the manor'.

The Brassey family was actively involved in politics, supporting the Liberal Party. Thomas Brassey contested the Birkenhead election in 1861 and was elected as MP for Devonport in 1865 and Hastings in 1868. Lady Brassey supported her

husband's political career by canvassing for him and managing their affairs while he was away.

In 1880 Thomas Brassey joined Gladstone's Parliament. The Brasseys were personal friends of Gladstone, who, with his cabinet, often visited them at Normanhurst and sailed with them on their yacht. Thomas Brassey received a knighthood in 1881 and so Annie Brassey became Lady Brassey. In the same year she was made Dame Chevalier of the Order of St. John and a Knight Companion of the order of Kapiolani by the King of Hawaii. Thomas Brassey became Baron Brassey of Bulkeley in 1886 and Earl Brassey in 1911.

By 1911 all the Brassey family were in favour of votes for women although shortly before her death Annie Brassey did comment that:

"I thought women already did given the world more or less, whereas if we had votes we should probably not have nearly as much power as we now possess without any undue fuss being made about it".

After Annie's death her husband wrote:

"She had too much intelligence not to form a judgement of her own on political issues. Her sympathies were instinctively on the side of the people".

Annie Brassey was most famous for the books that she wrote about her travels around the world on the steam yacht *Sunbeam*. Sailing was Thomas's pastime; he had owned a yacht since he was as school. Annie Brassey, however, had never been on a boat before she married. Despite frequent and severe sea-sickness she kept a lively and detailed account of their journeys. These she sent to her father as a series of letters which were at first printed for circulation amongst family and friends; they were later published as books. It was Brassey's third book *A Voyage in the Sunbeam* (published 1878) that established her as a popular author. It was a best-seller, nine editions were published and it was translated into seventeen foreign languages. The 1880 edition was adapted for reading in schools and the 1881 sixpenny 'popular' edition was published as an inexpensive paperback.

The *Sunbeam* voyage took place in 1876-77 and was the first circumnavigation by steam yacht. The Brasseys travelled with their young family and their pets on the sumptuous yacht which needed a crew of thirty. The family made many other cruises on the yacht, four of which Brassey wrote books about. The final book

describes their last journey together on the *Sunbeam* in 1886-87. The journey was ill-fated; one of the crew committed suicide and Brassey's health was failing. On September 17th 1887 Lady Brassey died of malarial fever while the *Sunbeam* was *en route* between Australia and Mauritius; she was buried at sea. The book that she had been writing was published by Thomas in 1889 as *The Last Voyage.*

Brassey was aged only forty eight when she died. She had led an adventurous life which lived up to the Brassey's family motto *Arduis Sæpe, metu, numquam,* 'Oft in danger, never afraid'.

Shortly there will be a temporary exhibition on Normanhurst Court and Lady Brassey at Battle Museum and a lecture is available by request from Julian Porter at Bexhill Museum (telephone 787950). Plans are in hand for a permanent display case on Lady Brassey at Bexhill Museum.

Julian Porter
Bexhill Museum 11/2/97

OBITUARY

The Society has suffered a sad loss by the death, on 27th January, of Mr George Bishop, a keen supporter of
both the lectures and the summer visits, whose enthusiasm brought us a number of new members. He served on the Committee from 1985 to 1990 when he felt that deteriorating health meant that he could no longer do the job as he would have wished.

Our sympathy is extended to his wife, Sheila, who has herself made a notable contribution to the Society by her work on the oral history project.

Donald Nicol