BATTLE AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Battle and District Historical Society and Museum Trust 1997 - 98
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Charity No.292593

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FORWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN

I cannot do better than give a brief summary of my report to the Society's Annual General Meeting of November 1997. Six winter lectures on local history (East Sussex archaeology, coastal wrecks, Logie Baird and British Television, seventeenth-century Sussex, Pitt and the Martello towers and the Murrays of Beauport) augmented by the director of the Albert Memorial's current rehabilitation and the Commemoration Lecture on the records of Parliament by the Clerk to the House of Lords. At the annual Commemoration Service in the parish church the preacher was the Reverend Hugh Mead, formerly master in history at St. Paul's School. Summer visits embraced Lewes Priory, Standen, Uppark (to supplement the lecture of 1996) and five days in Harrogate and environs during which a visit to Burghley House produced for the Library a little-known portrait of Battle's Lady Magdalen Montague (1539-1608). During the year the standing-down of Mr Don Phillips after the most fruitful work as librarian, and editor of Battle Walks, was received with much regret.

The Research Group embarked on a second year's work on Battle from mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries - some prominent residents (for example Sir John Foster who was made Chief Justice of the King's Bench in 1660), and the house lists of 1559 and 1652 with the light they throw on dwellings and dwellers in the Battle of the time. It remains to thank the members of the committee, both those of 1997 and those re-elected for the coming year for their meetings at The Almonry to direct the work and interests of the Society. At the time of writing, the re-development of the Memorial Hall is under study; but certainly for the year to come it will remain the Society's meeting place and house both library and the Trust Museum, and this, we hope, for well into the third millennium.

John Springford

MUSEUM TRUST REPORT

The past year has been one of progression and regression. Regression in that visitor numbers were less than last year and our hopes for improvements to the museum resulting from the Memorial Hall refurbishment have, so far, been disappointed. On the plus side, I am happy to say that we have found a first class Curator in Mrs Anne Ainsley and that the number of school visits increased by 24%.

Most museum activities carry on from year-to-year, so much so that one can easily take them for granted; therefore, as this is my last year as chairman I would like to end by thanking all the members of the committee and the custodians who, over the years, have worked so hard for the benefit of the museum and our visitors, and to urge all members of the Society to show some interest in the wonderful collection of photographs and paper records which have been so laboriously assembled and recorded for their benefit.

John Hill
November 1997

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT

As the new librarian, Mr Woodgate has only just taken up his post, there is little to report other than that members will certainly be interested to know that a copy of the Battle Conference 1997 is now available, as are copies of the brochure "Battle Walks".

The library is open on Fridays 10am - 12noon as well as half an hour before lectures. New listings have been compiled to assist research which should be of great benefit to library users.

Editor

TREASURER'S REPORT
Accounts for the year to 30 September 1997

The income and expenditure account shows a surplus of £443 against £348 last year. Again a satisfactory profit (£142) was achieved on our summer outings and holiday, despite a reduced turnover, and a profit of £33 came from the Commemoration Party.

It should be noted, however, that a substantial ingredient of our profit comes from interest received on our investment (£390) and this illustrates that the Society is particularly sensitive to external financial pressures. Our main source

of income is the annual subscription and this, plus donations and the sale of "Battle Walks", did not quite meet "Other Expenditure" (£1476).

Of particular concern is the maintenance of the library. This is a fine asset which is, regrettably, underused but which costs the Society rent and, most seriously of all, insurance charges. There is no way of reducing the expenditure and the Society, as a Charity, has a legal duty to preserve and maintain its assets. Members have free access to the library so that the only income derived from it is the occasional research fee.

The high cost of insurance was caused by the withdrawal of the previous Group Policy with the Sussex Archaeological Society, for reasons not wholly understood.
It was necessary to find an alternative insurer in the open market and this proved lengthy and difficult. Basically most insurers are not interested in small societies and quote ridiculous figures. It is improbable that we will get a better quote elsewhere.

Finally our Hon. Auditor, John Burnard, has retired from this office and I would like to record my thanks to him for his past services. I am pleased to offer as a fit and proper person for this voluntary duty, Mr Julian Dommet of Keymer, West Sussex who has kindly stepped in to audit the 1997 accounts.

David Sawyer

EDITOR'S NOTE

The aim of this year's Journal is to focus on the lecture and summer programmes, whilst keeping members abreast of developments within the Society itself.

I would like to thank all those who have assisted me in this, my first effort, at producing the Journal and to invite any members who would be interested in taking lecture notes for publication in future editions, to contact me.

Responsibility for the facts and opinions contained herein rest, as ever, entirely with the contributor.

Dawn Elliott, Editor

THE RICH ARCHAEOLOGY OF EAST SUSSEX

Martin Brown
Deputy County Archeologist,
East Sussex County Council

24th January 1997

Martin Brown, the Assistant County Archaeologist started by explaining that his job is to care for and conserve the county's heritage. Man has, he told us, lived on the south coast longer than almost anywhere else in these islands. There was everything needed to sustain human society - the coast for fish and contact across the sea - there were the downs, with easily tillable soil - there was the Weald with a plentiful supply of timber and later, as technology developed, there was iron. All these facts add together to give Sussex a great richness of sites.

The earliest human activity was in the paleolithic period, half a million years ago - the county abounds with flint tools and hand axes, made from a ready supply of flint. The mezolithic period is marked by a rock shelter at High Rocks in Tunbridge Wells and the neolithic period gives us the first built remains such as the causeway enclosures at Coombe Hill, Eastbourne, and of course, the long barrows on the top of the downs. The iron age saw the county gaining in importance. Land was beginning to be owned by tribal chiefs and defended by hill forts, such as Mount Caburn, Lewes and Seaford Head.

The Romans brought the art of making stone buildings, such as the remains at Bedingham. The castle at Pevensey is one of their finest monuments particularly the height of the walls, which still stand after some 2000 years. Then the Normans came and added their buildings to our archaeological inheritance. In many cases they built and added to earlier roman castles and saxon churches. At this period the county had a very great number of iron workings and there were bloomeries everywhere, traces of which can be seen today.

All these facts are important, but it was really in the Middle Ages that the county was shaped as we see it today. People were beginning to move around and traders travelled from town to town, so road lines that are much the same today, were being laid out. Towns were developing, sometimes around a saxon or norman nucleus as in Bexhill or Tunbridge Wells and sometimes they were planned towns such as Winchelsea.

Then there are the idiosynratic remains, such as the martello towers and later

the pill box at the end of Pett Level. The latter was part of a 6 inch gun battery during the last war, which while not seeming like archaeology, are the material remains of a particular period of English history and unless they are recorded now, they will disappear. The Royal Military Canal and the martello towers are now scheduled ancient monuments.

Sussex also abounds in 'green lanes'. These are old drover's roads, which are now usually used as footpaths but have been used for many hundreds of years by farmers to drive cattle from one area to another.

Mr Brown ended by mentioning the maritime archaeology. There are the wrecks of the Amsterdam, the Anne and the Black Cat, which sank off Brighton. There are also nearly 100 other identified wrecks, all of which had to be listed and watched over.

Joanne Lawrence

SIXTY YEARS OF BRITISH TELEVISION

R.J. Mears C. Eng., FIEE 7th February 1997

The talk commenced with pictures of the Nipkow disc invented by Nipkow, a German, in 1884 which was the basis of all Baird's work. Pictures of Baird's early experimental equipment at Hastings, Selfridges and Frith Street, London were shown.

In 1908, Campbell Swinton made his profound postulation that an electronic television system was possible. Pictures of the early electronic camera tube were shown. This was produced by EMI in the 1930's resulting in an embryo high definition system soon after.

Reference was made to the Selsdon Committee deliberations in 1934 which lead to the recommendation that the two systems be placed on a six months' trial, commencing November 1936, and conducted by the BBC.

The Baird system failed to come up to service requirements and after a short period of alternate weeks using the Baird and EMI systems the BBC Television

Service adopted the EMI system for the continuation of television broadcasting.

Pictures were shown of the coronation of King George VI in May 1937, coming from the first outside broadcast vehicle with television cameras. The redundant Baird studio was later converted to use EMI cameras in 1938 thereby extending the service from 1 hour transmissions in the afternoon and evening, Monday to Saturday, but now to include a longer Sunday evening show. The 1939 war brought an end to television broadcasting in the UK.

The Selsdon Committee sat in 1945 to determine the future of post-war television and recommended re-opening as soon as possible after the war on the 405 line system.

Pictures of technology in the 50's covered the first broadcast from Calais in 1950 - the first link between two countries, followed by the coronation in 1953, the first time a coronation was televised from inside the Abbey. This was broadcast to 8 European countries using the first optical standards converter developed by the BBC Research and Designs Department.

Video recording was introduced and revolutionised programme making in 1958 initially with BBC developed equipment called VERA, soon superceded by american equipment, Ampex.

Cable film produced by the BBC allowed the first high definition pictures to be received via cable from the United States in 1959. The 1960's progress was governed by the Pilkington Report involving the introduction of a new VHF Band for broadcasting, eventually requiring nearly a thousand transmitters large and small.

White City became the first international television centre in 1960 with 625 line cameras used on Channel 2 for the first time in 1964. This was followed by colour on the PAL system in 1967. Colour required very complex converter equipment to bring US 525 line/60 field pictures from the Mexico Olympics on to the 625 line/50 field British system in 1968.

Also in 1968 new equipment called 'sound in syncs' was developed to eliminate the need for sound telephone lines to distribute sound from studios to transmitters. This equipment used digital techniques for the first time and made significant financial savings. The last two items resulted in Queen's Awards for

technology for the BBC.

The first television signal received by satellite from the United States was received on BBC equipment installed at Goonhilly in 1962, and was later followed by the first major use of satellites in a programme "Our World" with a potential audience of 500 million involving ten thousand television staff on five continents. The UK transmissions were based on BBC Television Centre, White City.

The 1970s saw the home video recorder revolutionising home viewing in 1972 followed by the home camera. Ceefax experiments began in 1972 using digital techniques and the first digital television signals were sent over satellite paths in 1977 to bring programmes from remote points with no normal communications available.

This technology has had a tremendous impact on society in 60 years of changing and widening applications that could not have been envisaged in 1930 when the author helped to pioneer the first television service in the world.

Bob Mears

THE AMSTERDAM AND OTHER WRECKS
The Robertson Lecture

Dr Peter Marsden 21st February 1997

Dr Marsden gave the Society a most interesting lecture on the general subject of wrecks off the Thames and southern coast, with particular reference to the "Anne" lying off Pett and the "Amsterdam" similarly embedded in the sand at Bulverhythe.

The surprising statistic is that there are over 500 wrecks, mostly off the English coast, and dating only from the mid-nineteenth century - Rye Bay alone accounts for 60. In historical terms, there are many hundreds more, some of which date to the pre-Christian era. The oldest wreck, discovered at Dover dates to 1100-1300 BC and is a survivor of the Bronze Age; its construction was primitive as the art of boat building had barely evolved - no nails, pegs or sails.

There is a gap in the knowledge of boats from thence to the Roman era and onwards to the Mary Rose. This latter vessel, of the first quarter of the sixteenth century was a watershed in the construction of warships and was built somewhat like a floating fortress. The inherent instability of its construction was its downfall as it sank almost immediately on launching with a huge loss of life. The armaments carried on it were an extraordinary mixture of guns and bows and arrows.

The next significant vessel was the "Anne" - (not HMS, incidentally, this appelation only applied from the end of the eighteenth century). The "Anne" is the last survivor, in any form of Pepys' Navy and provides the link between the Mary Rose and the Victory.

She was launched at Chatham in 1678 and named in honour of Princess, later Queen, Anne. She was built specifically to fight broadside rather than against the traditional method of a column of ships passing alongside each other and sending off the occasional shot. She was designed for war but, in the event, was immediately moth-balled until 1687 when she was chosen to become a royal yacht. In this capacity she was sent first to Rotterdam to take on board the bride of the King of Portugal whom she conducted to Lisbon, continuing on her travels to Gibraltar, North Africa and Italy.

In 1690, under the overall command of Lord Torrington, she participated in an Anglo-Dutch fleet against the French, at the Battle of Beachy Head. She was badly damaged in a melee that had an inconclusive result and was run ashore at Pett. The French fleet was anchored off Hastings and the Admiralty advised that, to prevent her being taken as a prize, she should be burned to the water line. This was duly done and here she has lain, for 300 years, deep in the sand; seven foot of stern and fourteen foot of hull. She is barely visible except at extreme low tide. Incredibly, until within the last twenty years there was no legal protection for wrecks although our forefathers seemed to have more respect for the fabric of the vessel than today. What is causing damage now is the action of the waves and the depradation of marine creatures.

The plan - subject to funding - is to raise the surviving fragments and preserve them in a specially constructed museum at St. Leonards. The idea is to safeguard the timbers by immersing them in chilled water, 2 to 3 degrees centigrade, which should preserve them indefinitely. The museum would be built within a stone's throw of the wreck of the Amsterdam.

This vessel, of which a greater extent remains, is the sole survivor of an East-Indiaman and is legally the property of the Dutch government. A photograph of 1911 showed two-thirds of the boat remaining but the dimensions have reduced since then, both by the effect of weather but more damagingly by a mechanical digger in 1969.

In January 1749 the Amsterdam was on its way from Holland to Java when sickness struck and many of the passengers and crew died. The remaining crew mutinied and beached the vessel at Bulverhythe where it eventually settled down into 27 feet of silt. The remains today show serious deterioration and it is likely that this will continue. The Dutch are in no hurry to excavate the site and appear unwilling to allow anyone else to do so. This means that the artefacts still on site are at risk. The 1969 dig, as an example, uncovered masses of small items, jugs, combs and the like but more significantly a set of bronze guns dated 1748 and bearing the insignia of the Dutch East India Company. Two of the guns have simply disappeared, rumour has it to the Battle area!

A quantity of wine was also uncovered, producing a typically bureaucratic situation whereby the Customs and Excise required import duty on two hundred year old goods. (The wine incidentally is fortified, 27% proof and undrinkable). The Chaiman was allowed to sniff a small vial of the wine but not taste. Dr Marsden commented that he had, in the past, drunk a small amount and was ill for three days.

The future for the "Anne" looks healthy as Hastings Council is keen to develop the museum as a tourist attraction; all that is lacking is the finance. The fate of the Amsterdam is less optimistic; this is sad because clearly there is much potential but as it does not belong to the British government there is very little that anyone can do about it.

David Sawyer.

THE RENOVATION OF THE ALBERT MEMORIAL

Mr Alisdair Glass
English Heritage

7th March 1997

Mr Glass began his illustrated talk by giving a resume of the purpose and original construction of the memorial.

Prince Albert died at the early age of 40, having been married to Queen Victoria for 20 years. Lead by the queen, the country began a period of deep mourning, perhaps tinged with remorse for not fully appreciating Albert's undoubted positive role in promoting industry and the arts.

A national competition was held for a fitting memorial in Kensington Gardens. In essence the scheme was for a canopy over a statue of Albert. Four architects submitted entries, only one of which was of the gothic style.

Giles Gilbert Scott's entry was selected. His scheme was based upon a medieval reliquary or shrine, in essence a giant piece of jewellry.

The selection of materials, their combination and the known science of engineering at the time, led to problems of weatherproofing the structure since it was first erected. It was these problems that have led to today's substantial renovation.

It was during the early 1980s that the deteriorating condition of the monument was giving severe problems and, as pieces of lead and mosaic were falling from the structure, a report was commissioned and the memorial clothed in scaffolding. Serious restoration began on 31 October 1994 with careful dismantling.

The main structure of the canopy and spire is of cast iron clad in sheet lead. The problem was the lead had expanded allowing the ingress of rainwater. This water then rusted the surface of the iron which in turn cracked the lead allowing greater amounts of water in. All lead was stripped from the iron, carefully measured, weighed and tagged. A video was made and photographs taken from this to record the location, fixing etc of each piece.

The iron framing was then cleaned, painted in red lead and wax coated before new lead was fixed back in position. New leadwork is in smaller sheets with

welted joints. This will mean less thermal movement and the wax will allow the lead to move over the iron frame. All the leadwork was originally coated, either with gilding or blacking to represent tarnished silver. Where the gilding is still adhering, once it is cleaned it is retained, new gilding only being applied where needed and to replace that stripped in 1914 and 1915.

The memorial has much ornamentation, especially to the gable barges. Here large coloured glass and semi-precious stones are used. A laser cleaner (the first in this country) was used to clean these which meant no physical damage or abrasion was caused to the materials.

The middle stage of the canopy is clad with Portland stone, chosen for its quality and white colour, again to imitate white silver. This had become blackened over the years and was cleaned using a trickle water system which lifted the rain deposited dirt.

There are nearly 200 statues on the memorial, most of which are difficult to see from the ground and the restoration is allowing them to be seen at close quarters. Not only are they filthy dirty but some have shrapnel wounds as well!

The statues illustrating the four virtues, from halfway up the spire, had been constructed using two different materials, copper for the heads and electro-plated copper/bronze for the bodies. The whole statue was originally gilded and will be again after restoration and strengthening. A restored statue is available for inspection in the visitor centre.

Each of the four gable structures is filled with glass mosaics. Every one is finely detailed even though it is far above the ground. They illustrate the four arts namely: architecture, sculpture, painting and, music and poetry. The italian artist had cleverly taken perspective from the ground into account in the design. Various repairs have taken place over a long period, most using unsuitable cement grouting which has made restoration difficult. However, it was the refixing of the mosaic to the background that was urgently needed and this had been done using materials similar to the originals.

Work remaining to be done includes the statue of Albert himself. This was cast in gun metal and was originally gilded. The gilding was removed in 1915 as a precaution against Zeppelin raids. The memorial canopy was built to frame the statue, whereas for many years, he has been a large black shape hidden by the

canopy. The four columns descending around the figure are of polished granite with four statues. These have always been ungilded to be in contrast with Albert.

Below this stage is the large base faced with marble with a frieze of 168 noted artists, amongst which is Scott himself. He was knighted for his work on the memorial.

Around the structure are four groups of sculpture illustrating the four continents. These are of a hard marble and have survived very well. The whole area is then surrounded by steps, paving and iron railings. These were originally painted a russet brown and partly gilded to imitate bronze. Since 1901 however they have been black but will be restored to their original appearance.

On the site today is a temporary exhibition illustrating the renovation in all the aspects and a model showing the finished look of the monument. In the future it is hoped a permanent exhibition interpreting the details of the memorial will be housed in the basement under the paving and steps. This will hopefully, ensure that future generations appreciate and value the memorial to safeguard its own future. The renovation, due to be completed by 30 June 1999, is planned to ensure that only routine maintenance is necessary for a further 60 years.

Mr Glass concluded by stating that the memorial is now being appreciated as 'one of the greatest works of art ever built.'

Don Phillips

PURITANISM IN SUSSEX IN THE 17th CENTURY

Professor A Fletcher 21 March 1997

Professor Fletcher spoke to the Society on a subject that is not widely known; what he had to say was illuminating and, at times, very moving.

The Puritans have an image of rigid principles and humourless, unemotional lives. They were described at the time as being "Men of strict life and precise opinions who could not be hated for anything but their singularity to zeal and piety". This picture, however, conceals the deep strength of their feelings and honourable, if, at times misguided, beliefs. Professor Fletcher quoted extensively from wills and letters, sources that have been somewhat neglected,

to give form and character to a profoundly sincere congregation.

The patronage of leading families supported and encouraged the Puritans, gradually replacing the influence of the Catholics. In Battle, the strong presence of the Montagues, patrons of the living (which was importantly a peculiar), meant that this town remained a bastion of discrete and muted catholicism whereas in the west such families as the Pelhams of Halland and Laughton held sway.

The gentry commonly exercised control of the situation by their appointment of ministers. The Pelhams, for example, appointed a staunch Puritan, Benjamin Pickering at Halland and this prelate was nominated by his patron, a Member of Parliament, to give a sermon at Westminster which he used to encourage his masters in stirring words: "The Lord has promised great things and glorious days that now hasten".

In Chichester, Bishop Richard Curtis urged every village to have an active minister which had not previously been the case. Battle, for example was a classic case of ministerial neglect and some villages, like Burwash were almost wholly abandoned to "unlearned curates".

By the beginning of the 17th century it was becoming common for preachers to be graduates, in many cases adopting the strict Calvinist traditions and beliefs. This was the core of puritanism that many people found harsh and demanding and ultimately, unacceptable. It created an exclusive minority who turned in upon themselves, becoming an elite.

The Puritans believed totally in pre-destination; that man was depraved and corrupt; that his body was in a constant battle between God and Satan and that, after death, there would be physical resurrection. There seemed to be no opportunity for discussion and non-believers were excluded metaphorically and physically.

But even in this exclusiveness, the strength and conviction of individuals commands respect and this is reflected in correspondence - quoted exclusively - which revealed a mixture of religion, emotion and love. Courtship was inextricably linked with a deep faith; times of sickness were used as the occasion of reflection and as a test of spiritual belief and death was accepted as a final mark of God's sovereignty. All Puritan religion mirrored God's providence; when things went ill, it was God testing and when right, it was because God was

smiling upon them.

The principal centre of faith in the east of the county was Rye where the influence of the Puritans was extreme and total. They considered that it was a town corrupted by all manner of sins and vices. One young woman was warned "Have a care of yourself - gotten into a town of much profaneness, swearing, cursing, whoredom, scolding and many such sins". And yet, the most prominent Puritan in the town, Samuel Jeake, far from being simply a bigot, is revealed in his letters, particularly to his wife, as being a man of considerable education and sensitivity. He had a library of 900 volumes, embracing 15 languages. He was an astrologer and dabbled in alchemy and was continually involved in controversy. But, to his wife he showed a rare delicacy allowing her, at her request, "Liberty of conscience and equal freedom in spiritual life".

By the time of the Civil War he had formed his own group who disapproved of any sexual and marital impropriety and was rabidly anti-Catholic. In particular he objected to baptism except for adults.

The influence of the Puritans extended naturally to Parliament against the Royalists - Rye was particularly partisan. It was for them a time of expectation and excitement. The Civil War was leading to the second coming of Christ.

Jeake wrote that "he desired victory against the Lord's enemies" and, in the short term, the victory was realised. But yet, despite replacing ministers with those sympathetic to them, they failed to achieve Godly reformation in the 1650s. At the Restoration, the Puritan tradition withered and the clergy lived quietly under the protection of the gentry.

Their legacy was one of non-conformism and dissent. In themselves they embodied a fierce intolerance; a desire to exclude themselves from the company of people who did not share their exacting standards. Seen across the centuries, their zeal bordered on the fanatic and, even with their choice of absurd Bible first names, somewhat ridiculous, but no-one can deny their sincerity and the consolation that their faith brought to them in their public and private lives.

David Sawyer

THE RECORDS OF PARLIAMENT IN THEIR 500th YEAR
The Commemoration Lecture

Mr David Johnson — 10th October 1997

Mr Johnson, who is the Clerk of the Records to the House of Lords, began by referring to the Magna Carter. This is not one of the records of Parliament, but is a notable example of the King being formally constrained to act within the limits of law. From earliest times kings had been advised by small groups of their courtiers, but had on important occasions summoned a "Great Council" of the realm. This included the leading landowners, other persons of influence, bishops, and, until the Reformation, the abbots of the main abbeys. From 1295 onwards these would include the Abbot of Battle. The great landowners generally passed on their property to their eldest sons and the hereditary principle of the House of Lords thereby arose. These councils gradually acquired the title of Parliaments. When in 1264 Simon de Montfort defeated and captured King Henry III at the Battle of Lewes, he arranged for a Parliament to be summoned for the following year and included in it representatives of the shires and the towns. Thus government began to be representative long before it was democratically elected. From the 13th to the 16th century Parliaments met in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey and were summoned with increasing frequency.

Such meetings required an organisation to handle their work and at first clerks were provided as required by the Court of Chancery. In 1376 the House of Commons made a further step and introduced the office of Speaker. It is from this time that we can trace the progress of petitions being considered first by the House of Commons, then by the House of Lords and finally being passed to the King for his approval. Until 1497 the clerks took the records away with them at the end of a Parliament, and all surviving records of Parliamentary business prior to this date are to be found in the Public Record Office and not in the Parliamentary archives. From 1497 Parliament has kept its own records, but those of the House of Commons were almost completely lost in the fire of the Houses of Parliament in 1834. Fortunately the House of Lords records had, since 1621, been kept in the Jewel Tower on the other side of Old Palace Yard and were unaffected.

In 1510 the House of Lords began a Journal of its proceedings and this example was followed in 1547 by the Commons. At first these Journals were merely a list

of Bills but gradually expanded to become more complete records of business. The records of the House of Lords also include the pedigrees of a number of peers which were examined when the new holder of a title sought admission. During the Civil War there were no "Acts" of Parliament, merely "Ordinances" for the King was not available to approve them, and from 1649 until 1660 there was no House of Lords. From its earliest days Parliament asked for information on various matters of public interest, and there is for example a report on the state of the Royal Navy signed by Samuel Pepys. Some events which might have been expected to arouse great concern seem to have attracted very little attention. For instance, the Gunpowder Plot is dealt with in a brief marginal note.

It is of interest that Acts of Parliament, unlike many documents having the approval of the sovereign, do not bear the Royal Seal. In early times the Royal Assent, in old French "Le Roy le veult" was simply written on the back of the Act. During the time that William III and Mary reigned jointly the wording was "Le Roy et la Reine le veult" and this form appears on the Bill of Rights. Mr Johnson was careful to point out that this Bill had nothing to do with human rights in the modern sense and was concerned only with the rights of Parliament. The last time that a sovereign refused assent to an Act of Parliament was in 1708 when Queen Anne said "La Reine s'avisera" to a Bill concerned with Scottish Militia. As from 1850 Acts of Parliament have been printed in the standard form used today.

While the work of Parliament in the 16th and 17th centuries was dominated by the religious and constitutional problems of the time, the 18th and 19th centuries saw a great increase in the number of private Bills arising from proposed commercial and industrial developments. The extensive evidence put forward in support of these Bills is a most valuable source of information on the history of the time. In the 18th century most of the Bills dealt with the construction of canals and gave most detailed maps and other data on the areas through which the intended canal would pass. In the 19th century this was repeated for railways, notably in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway, the first to carry passengers in steam trains. When Sir Charles Barry was designing the new Houses of Parliament after the fire he was asked to give particular attention to the safe storage of documents. The repository agreed upon was the Victoria Tower where, above the great arch of the sovereign's entrance there are 8 floors devoted entirely to records including 4,500 volumes of evidence for private Bills.

In reply to a question Mr Johnson caused some surprise by saying that all the

parliamentary records from 1497 were written in English. (Members may wish to note a lecture entitled "Anglo-Norman our Father Tongue" given to the Society by Lt. Col. Lemmon on November 30 1956. In this he pointed out that the House of Lords recorded its proceedings in French until 1483, although Parliament had been opened in English for the first time in 1363. Henry IV who was born in 1367 was the first king to have English as his mother tongue.)

In answer to a further question Mr Johnson said that Hansard had begun as a commercial venture in 1803 when it gave only a brief account of business. It did not acquire any official sanction until 1880. The present verbatim account of proceedings dates only form 1909. Parliament certainly did not encourage the production of Hansard. Until 1771 it was a breach of privilege to publish any account of the debates of either House and the early Hansard reporters had to work under very restrictive conditions.

Donald Nicol

PITT THE YOUNGER AND THE MARTELLO TOWERS

Mr Geoff Hutchinson 14 November 1997

Mr Hutchinson appeared in the guise and costume of a robust Pitt the Younger. He set the scene by explaining that the date was August 1805 and Pitt was serving his second term as leader of the Government. On the very day that Pitt has accepted office, Napoleon had been declared Emperor of France. France had been at war with England since February 1793 and Pitt, essentially a man who desired only peace, now found himself prosecuting a war with the imminent threat of invasion. France had 130,000 troops poised to cross the Channel and were just awaiting the opportunity to find a chink in England's defences.

Pitt himself, was a sick man, who drank too much and worked too hard. He was gradually dying from exhaustion, but allowed nothing to interrupt his punishing duties.

In 1805 there was an air of triumphant defiance in England, expressed in patriotic cartoons yet nothing could conceal the extreme vulnerability of the South Coast. Napoleon believed that if he could be master of the straits for six

hours, he would be master of the world.

The solution offered was secure bomb proof forts, modelled on the Mortella towers in Corsica coupled with a military canal stretching from Hythe to Pett Level. There was to be a string of towers, 660 yards apart and each protected by a single gun. Any vessel would be within range of 15 towers and each tower would be in protective range of its neighbour.

The specifications were formidable. Each building was to be 30 feet tall and have tapered walls to deflect cannon shot; the outer walls oval with the thickest to the sea. Half a million bricks were bonded with hot lime mortar to give the strength of steel. There was a company of 24 men and one officer living above a basement containing ammunition and provisions and below a gun platform reached by a staircase built within the wall. The gun weighed two and a half tons and could fire a 24lb shot the distance of one mile.

By 1808 there were 73 of them between Folkestone and Eastbourne with an isolated tower at Seaford. A lesser number were built along the East Coast from Brightlingsea to Aldeburgh. So impressive were the towers that the French christened them bulldogs.

By 1812 the military canal was also ready although this never matched up to its originally planned dimensions.

The expense of both projects was enormous, and the construction was a bonanza for the unscrupulous. One Mr Hudson, for example, bought up the entire stock of available bricks and made himself a fortune. Each tower, originally budgeted at £2,000, cost £3,000 (that at Seaford, £18,000) whilst the canal was £250,000. In modern day terms that represents £80,000 and £10 million respectively. The Government did not escape the severest of censures from its critics. People like William Cobbett lambasted the expense and folly of it all which, in retrospect, it probably was. The danger was immediate and the solution provided, long-term and the irony, of course, is that by the time the defences were ready, the need for them had passed. No tower ever fired a shot in anger and no troops ever needed to defend the Canal. Nelson had so convincingly trounced the French navy at Trafalgar that they lacked the will and capacity to invade. Napoleon turned his eyes to the east and England was secure. But by this time Pitt was dead. His frail constitution had succumbed to exhaustion and drink at the age of 46.

Only 43 of the Martello towers live on, virtually indestructible by man, yet vulnerable to coastal erosion. They were not easy structures to fit within the framework of everyday life; at various times they have been used against smuggling; as retirement homes for soldiers; look-out posts and in World War II as home guard stations. The Military Canal, which in his lifetime was dubbed "Mr Pitt's ditch" was even more a white elephant. It has justified itself as a grandiose drain for Romney Marsh but for precious little else. We will never know if either would have succeeded in the function for which they were designed but they remain as a monument to one of the great politicians of vision and courage.

David Sawyer.

THE MURRAYS OF BEAUPORT

Mr Brion Purdey 12 December 1997

The Honourable James Murray was born at Bannonacrief, Haddingtonshire, on 21 January 1721. He was the fifth son of the 4th Lord Elibank. His ancestors were unflinching Scottish patriots, devoted to the House of Stuart. They were noble but poor, having been profligate, their estates were heavily mortgaged. His father Alexander, lost heavily in the South Sea Bubble, but he had an able, supportative wife, the redoubtable Elizabeth. She was an excellent, tenderhearted mother and was adored by her somewhat unruly family. One brother, Admiral George Elibank Murray, was a career sailor and another entered the church. He, the Reverend Gideon Murray and his brother George were committed Hanoverian supporters. The same could not be said about the fourth son, Alexander, who after a short military career, became a parliamentarian and a supporter of the Jacobite faction. His views later made it wise for him to flee to France. Patrick, the eldest son and later 5th Lord Elibank, served the King in the "War of Jenkin's Ear" but was at heart a Jacobite supporter.

James Murray of the 15th Foot, arrived in Hastings in 1744. His orders were to support the Preventative Services in their fight against the well organised and heavily armed local smugglers. At that time Hastings was a fishing port of about 1000 people but returning two Members of Parliament. John Collier was the foremost citizen of the town, being mayor and also agent to the wealthy Pelham family, one of whom was the Duke of Newcastle. James was much attracted to

Cordelia Collier, but as he had little money, he could not ask for her hand. There are many letters about this, written by Cordelia to her various relatives, that are kept in the County Record Office. In 1745 when Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Scotland, James' allegiances were severly tested but his sense of military honour prevailed and he supported his King. In 1747 James was again in Hastings having been wounded fighting in Flanders, and he was still persuing Cordelia.
John Collier, with the help of the Duke of Newcastle, got James a better position in the army and so he and Cordelia were married.

In 1749 the new major and his wife were posted to Waterford, Ireland, where they stayed until 1755, when he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. In 1756 William Pitt, the Elder, organised some minor expeditions across the Channel. We were again at war with France and it was during one of these sorties that he, together with Lieutenant Colonel James Wolfe, came to the attention of Pitt. When Pitt proposed an expedition to expel the French from Canada he thought of Wolfe, then a Major General. Wolfe was allowed to select his own officers and he readily took Murray. The siege of Quebec was a long and very difficult one. The French commander, Montcalm, was a wary adversary, and Wolfe was in bad health. But, in a last huge effort to seize the town, Wolfe's men scaled the hitherto unclimbeable Heights of Abraham, which were undefended, and Montcalm was defeated. Montcalm died in the battle and Wolfe died very shortly afterwards. There was great rejoicing at the victory in this country and shortly afterwards James bought the land on the Ridge in Hastings and built a large house. He called it Beauport after Montcalm's camp.

In 1761 James was made Governor of Minorca. Cordelia, who was childless, accompanied him but returned to Hastings in 1762 and died soon afterwards. James meanwhile was besieged in Minorca by both the French and the Spanish. He put up a very good fight but was forced to surrender. Later he came back to face an Enquiry but he left the court without a stain on his character. The next year he married Ann Witham, daughter of the Consul General of Majorca. They lived happily running the estate and farming at Beauport. They had several children.

Joanne Lawrence

SUMMER PROGRAMME 1997

EXCURSION TO NORTH YORKSHIRE
12 - 22 APRIL 1997

Our first visit was to Belton House. Situated 3 miles N.E. of Grantham, and now owned by The National Trust, it was built between 1685 and 1688 for Sir John Brownlow (1659-1697). A fine example of Restoration architecture it was extensively altered by James Wyatt in the 1770s. The family were owners of a considerable acreage of land in Lincolnshire.

On Saturday morning we set off to Beningborough Hall near Shipton, a Georgian house of 1716 with a flavour of Italy. John Bourchier returned from a Grand Tour of Europe with the intention of building himself a fashionable new house. It is thought that a carpenter-architect from York, William Thornton, designed the house and most certainly did a great deal of the elaborate carvings which dominate the interior. The Bourchier family came to Beningborough Hall in the mid-sixteenth century. For some 150 years they lived in an Elizabethan house they built beside the Ouse. The grandson, the Puritan Sir John Bourchier signed the death warrant of Charles 1. The house changed hands several times over the centuries until the Earl and Countess of Chesterfield moved in 1916. During the last war the house was occupied by the R.A.F. and used to house airmen from the nearby bomber squadrons. The National Trust acquired the house in 1958.

We left for a gentle drive through the countryside to Boroughbridge and the adjoining village of Aldborough, both roman towns, where a few stalwarts alighted to see the mosaics and remaining walls of what must have been a very substantial town, being the principal one of the Brigantes, the largest tribe in Roman Britain.

On Sunday morning we drove to Harewood House stately home of the Lascelles family. Harewood is recorded in Domesday as belonging to three saxon chieftains, Tor, Sprot and Grim. Over a period of nearly 600 years the estate passed by descent, varied only by marriage, until in 1738 it was bought by Henry Lascelles of Northallerton from a John Boulter. A Lascelles travelled with William the Conqueror and is also mentioned in Domesday.

Temple Newsam, just outside Leeds and owned by the City, was the next

destination. This estate can be traced back to Dunstan and Glunier, two anglo saxon thanes who lived around 1066. It passed, about 1070, into the de Lacy family as a gift from William the Conqueror. About 1155 the Knights Templar were in possession until 1308 when it was seized by Edward II. In 1488 Thomas Lord Darcy built a house on the site which formed the basis of the existing structure. After various occupations it was sold in 1622 to Sir Arthur Ingram whose heir the 3rd Viscount Halifax sold it to Leeds Corporation in 1922.

Temple Newsam is a strange house. It lacks any real atmosphere probably because the City Council use it more as a museum with constantly changing exhibits. Nevertheless, there were many fine pieces of furniture, ceramics and paintings.

At Ripon Cathedral we were welcomed by one of the cathedral canons for our pre-arranged guided tour. Bede describes how, in 655 a small monastery was founded in the heathen village of Rhypum and how, by 672 Abbot Wilfrid had dedicated his stone church, one of the first in England. Three hundred years later it was completely destroyed leaving only the crypt down which we were taken through extremely narrow passages and steep winding stairs. It is the oldest complete crypt in England.

A new minster was built only to be destroyed again but this time by William the Conqueror. In 1080 a new church was erected and this time dedicated to St Wilfrid and St Peter and instigated by Thomas of Bayeux, first norman Bishop of York. The remains of this building can be seen by entering the vaulted undercroft from outside below the Chapter House.

We travelled on to Fountains Abbey. Now in the care of the National Trust, it is a most spectacular ruin of a 12th century Cistercian abbey. Officially dedicated to St. Mary of Fountains it is reckoned to be one of the outstanding historic monuments of western Europe. The site was given to the monks by Thurstan, Archbishop of York but such was the severity of the conditions in the secluded valley that they had to appeal to Bernard, abbot of the Cistercian house of Clairvaux in France, for assistance. The response was immediate and building commenced using locally quarried stone. The abbey became very rich with its involvement in sheep rearing and agriculture until Henry VIII's break with the Roman Catholic Church and the subsequent dissolution of the monasteries. In 1540 the whole site was sold to one Sir Richard Gresham. His son sold it 58 years later to Stephen Proctor who used stone from the abbey to build Fountains

Hall, which was finished in 1611.

Our last planned visit before arriving back in Battle was to Burghley House. The name Cecil is one well known in English history and it was William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who built the house we visited.

The building of the house commenced in 1555 and was not completed until 1587 when the North Front was finished. It is believed that Sir William, as he was until ennobled in 1571, designed and supervised the construction himself. On the South Front masons' marks are still visible in the oolitic limestone, a hard and durable rock quarried in Northamptonshire.

Of the dozens of paintings in the house, two in the Great Hall have local connections with Battle. They are of Sir Anthony Brown and his wife, recorded as 16th century but also accorded the titles of 1st Viscount Montague and Lady Montague. The tomb in our parish church is, of course, of a knight and his wife of the same name and period. It appears that the one at Burghley was his son who completed the West Wing of Battle Abbey, known as 'Princess Elizabeth's Lodging' of which only the watch towers remain.

Bernard Gillman-Davis

UPPARK

On September 2nd we went on a full day visit to Uppark. Uppark has one of the most beautiful situations in England. It stands four-square, high on the crest of the Downs, with a breathtaking view over rolling hills and valleys to the distant waters of Spithead and the Solent. There is no garden on the south side, just the Downs running right up to the walls of the house.

It is recorded that there was a house on the site in the late 15th century but it was not until 1690 that Lord Grey of Werke, later the Earl of Tankerville, began the present house. He was the first of three great creators of Uppark. William of Orange had just arrived on the English throne and Uppark's Dutch inspiration was probably a piece of flattery. The basic structure is simple, two brick storeys raised on a low basement, and with a steeply pitched roof containing attics. The great virtue of the house is great grace and simplicity.

In 1746 Sir Matthew Fetherstonhaugh came into a vast inheritance and bought Uppark. He and his wife toured the Continent collecting paintings including Canalettos, silver, porcelain, carpets and fine furniture. He had intricate plaster ceilings, doorways and coving created and then gilded. In 1774 he was succeeded by his son Sir Harry, who too, added many priceless objects, such as Sèvres porcelain. He married late in life, his dairy maid Mary Ann Bullock, and after his death, she and her sister Frances lived on in the house for another fifty years, changing nothing. This principle has remained true in this century. Frances willed the house to her adopted heir and his descendants gave it to the National Trust. All these owners had done a great deal of conservation but all had seen it as a place too precious to alter.

However, on 30 August 1989, everything changed. A small fire started in the roof, where workmen were in the last stages of re-leading. Within minutes the old roof timbers were alight. Despite the efforts of 156 firemen and 27 engines from all over West Sussex and Hampshire, the house was burnt to a shell. With the aid of visitors, the staff managed to save a great deal of the moveable furniture, the silver, the porcelain and the pictures.

The house had been insured but there was a great debate as to whether it was the job of the Trust to rebuild. It was only after all the factors had been taken into consideration that the decision was finally made - Uppark would be restored.

From the sludge at the bottom of the roofless building as much as possible was retrieved. There were pieces of timber, gilded plaster, metal, ceramics, stone, glass and textiles lying among the charred and fallen timbers. The ideal was to put as much back as possible of the original fittings and to use precisely the equivalent material and craftsmanship to fill the gaps. By the spring of 1995 this had been achieved. Its restoration was the most complicated that the National Trust has ever undertaken.

The house is now as beautiful as ever, the great white saloon and the red drawing room being the highlights, with their wonderful plaster ceilings rebuilt and regilded. The fact that it looks so like it did before the fire is a timely celebration of British conservation skills.

Joanne Lawrence

This summer the Society undertook visits to Standen, East Grinstead, Lewes Priory and Southover. Reports on the places that were visited were made in 1984, 1971 and 1969 respectively. Ed.

THE MEDIEVAL WALLPAINTINGS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH, BATTLE

Ann Ballantyne 15 February 1997

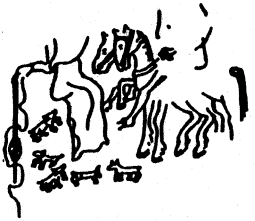
The lecture was given by Ann Ballantyne in the church on Saturday, 15th February 1997 at the joint invitation of St Mary's Church and the Battle and District Historical Society.

In 1845 a Hastings artist, W H Brooke, made coloured drawings of paintings appearing, during the disturbance by workmen, through the whitewash of the nave north wall, the eastern end of the south wall, the chancel arch, and faintly in the chancel itself. At that time an organ gallery protruding from the west tower enabled a close-up view of the western pictures, but less of those further east. His notebooks of drawing and text with his observations which were published in 1847 by the British Archaeological Society survive today. His interpretation of what was depicted, particularly of the series on the north wall as scenes from the Passion of Christ, though, was not always correct. The walls were subsequently re-whitewashed; while in Butterfield's's church restoration of 1868 the chancel arch was so reconstructed as to destroy most of the paintings formerly on it.

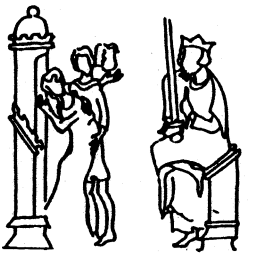
In 1959 the walls were expertly examined by Dr Clive E Rouse MBE, and after a further report by him in 1973 the paintings on the north wall and in the clerestory arch splays subsequently restored to a remarkable degree by him and his conservation assistants, headed in 1976-8 by Ann Ballantyne who again worked on the paintings in 1996. She has said more might still be done to reveal and conserve.

All notwithstanding, the mural paintings of St. Mary's in Battle are now considered to be an outstanding example of this art in medieval England. First the north series, of 24 scenes, 12 running east to west in groups of three, and 12 back again below them; these are now identified as portraying the life and martyrdom of St Margaret of Antioch (in Pisidia, today's southern Turkey, near Yalvac) - a legendary saint in the time of, and not unlikely reflecting the persecution of early Christians by emperors such as Diocletian. St Margaret's story became immensely popular in the middle ages, notably to women in childbirth, from the "Golden Legend" of Jacob of Voragine, a thirteenth century Italian archbishop, later beatified, the subject of which included lives of the saints. William Caxton's translation of 1483 was one of the first books to be

printed in English. The scenes are: 1) the saint's birth 2) her entrustment to a Christian nurse 3) espied by the Governor Olybrius



4) approached by him as she spins among her sheep flock 5) apparently rejecting his advances, she is brought before the Governor by two evil-looking tormentors. He sits cross-legged, sword in hand, medieval symbols of power.



6) imprisoned as a Christian, Margaret is seen leaning out of a tower 7) she is stripped and scourged with a knotted lash. One tormentor exposes himself 8) manhandled again before the Governor

9) condemned again to prison. Again a shameless hand. 10) tortured before the Governor 11) tied by the wrists to a stake over a fire of coals, and whipped 12) pushed back into prison. The torturers converse. 13) largely obscured by decay. Margaret can be seen holding a cross. The legend at this point tells of her being swallowed by the Devil in the form of a dragon through whose burst belly by virtue of the sign of the cross (hence the childbirth reverence) she safely emerges.

14) the saint admonishes the Devil and 15) chastises him 16) the Governor, sword in hand, orders further torture 17) Margaret hangs by her hair from a gibbet 18) again before the Governor 19) this painting is virtually destroyed by damp and plaster damage. The legend here tells of Margaret's example converting five thousand souls. 20) again damaged. An executioner stands over a heap, presumably of bodies, from which four heads emerge, perhaps those she converted. 21) condemned to death and again rudely handled 22) the saint is led to execution, the tormentors terrified by the hand of God appearing in blessing 23) she is beheaded. The executioner is seen standing before his sword-stroke, and again, fallen dead after delivering it. The saint is said to have entreated him to resist his reluctance to kill her lest he be punished for disobedience. In accordance with medieval practice, her soul is depicted as a tiny naked figure, and carried up to heaven in a napkin borne by angels 24) Margaret is buried.

The lecturer was at pains to point out that church painting in the middle ages was less for art portrayal than as the means of displaying and conveying to a Christian population largely illiterate and doubtless superstitious, the concepts of their faith. Hence the Governor as a symbol of power, at times abused; the tormentors are bestial and vividly ugly; Margaret herself the essence of beauty and calm. Of the other paintings noted by Brooke, little remains to be seen - biblical figures in the north clerestory window splays
(Moses, John the Baptist?), behind the organ pipes a procession of blessed souls moving towards heaven and reception by St Peter, a fragment in the south wall of the chancel itself, standing figures, unlikely as Rouse observes, to have been the baptism or confirmation conjectured by Brooke. On the wall of the chancel arch and on the south nave wall, eastern end, nothing remains of what Brooke depicted. He described a classic Last Judgement: three royal personages with skeletal figures and the inscription "mors scepta ligonibus equat", "death levels the sceptre with the mattock". The paintings would have been obliterated with limewash after the Order in Council of 1547, and later by the installation (by law) of the royal arms of Charles II. Christ's central figure was flanked by the Virgin and John the Baptist, the saints and a barely decipherable lettered inscription appearing to beg their intervention, and express thanks to Christ, the Virgin; St Nicholas, St Margaret, the Apostles, and Virgin Martyrs. Mr Rouse tentatively suggested that the St Margaret of Antioch's painted series might signify a change of church dedication at some point - unlikely, since the Battle Abbey Chronicle refers to the parish of St Mary in the 12th century.

In conclusion, these original paintings with their accompanying scrollwork, imitation stonework, and stencilled background patterns, are attributed to the late 13th or early 14th centuries. They are likely to have first been defaced during Henry VIII's attack on images and paintings during the later years of his reign, perhaps first the faces scrubbed out, then later totally whitewashed over. Over the centuries the limewashing was repeated if for nothing more than better appearance. Finally, in the mid-nineteenth century, with the rebuilding of the chancel arch all that Brooke was able to see in 1845 appears to have been swept away.

John Springford