

Friends of
[the keep]
Archives

Newsletter Autumn 2016



Friends of The Keep Archives

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Peter Field,
Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex

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Assistant Treasurer: Colin French
Secretary: Diana Hansen
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Visit the Friends of The Keep Archives website at

www.fotka.org.uk

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The Keep Opening Hours

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Saturday: 9.30-16.00

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*Front cover: Skull of Piltdown man,
dubbed Eoanthropus dawsoni
(Natural History Museum)*

Editor's introduction

The arresting cover of this edition is nothing to do with Halloween; read John Farrant's article below for an explanation.

We are very sorry to announce that Elizabeth Hughes, County Archivist and well known to many Friends, will be taking early retirement at the end of November. ESCC are combining responsibility for Archives and Records Management with Archaeology. The new department will be headed by Casper Johnson, currently in charge of Archaeology. Elizabeth says "I am confident that The Keep will be in good hands. I will miss The Keep, its staff and the Friends terribly, but this is an opportunity to spend more time with my husband". We wish Elizabeth a very happy and active retirement.

We welcome our new Assistant Treasurer, Colin French, and finally say farewell to Sue Tompsett. She will continue to be a familiar face at The Keep as she has more time for volunteering!

We are modifying the FoTKA website in the light of experience. The new address is www.fotka.org.uk. We hope that this will make it easier to use.

Members will have received the fantastic Accessions Report, put together by Christopher Whittick and his staff. This beautifully illustrates, at much greater length than is possible in this Newsletter, the amazing scope of acquisitions to The Keep aided by FoTKA. I hope you will read it with interest, and place it on your coffee table to intrigue your friends. New members are always welcome.

The summer visit programme was particularly imaginative, and with good weather delighted those members lucky enough to be at Ashburnham, Knole and Great Ote Hall. Many thanks are due to Sheena Parker for devising and organising the visits.

Friends of The Keep Archives

Colin French – our new Assistant Treasurer



Colin qualified as a Chartered Accountant with Peats (now KPMG) in London in 1966, subsequently becoming the financial controller of a magazine publishing group. In 1981 Colin and his family moved to Ditchling, where he still lives, and joined an aerospace group as Financial Director. Subsequently Colin became Financial Director of a Group of packaging machinery companies spread across England and Europe.

Retirement is spent primarily servicing the needs of the grand-children, plus when possible visiting the lesser known stately homes and trips abroad.

Colin is somewhat nervous at taking over from Sue after all her work for FOTKA and would like to thank her in particular for her help both now and undoubtedly in the future, as well as John and all the other Trustees for their help and welcome.

Whilst Colin has as yet little direct knowledge of the Keep's work his family would say that he does have one affinity with the Keep as he has an almost total inability to dispose of any form of printed word in any form, not just books and magazines but almost any piece of paper with writing on it. Whether these archives will be of any interest to anyone in the future is unlikely but his family certainly have plans to recover use of large parts of the house.

AGM Report

The first AGM of FoTKA took place at The Keep on 26 October. The proceedings were ably guided by our President, Peter Field, who remembered Pam Combes with affection. The meeting observed a minute's silence in her memory. He paid tribute to Elizabeth Hughes for her work over the past 16 years, and above all for her greatest achievement, The Keep itself; he welcomed Casper Johnson as her successor. Elizabeth thanked the President for his kind words, and in her review of the year expressed her appreciation both of the great staff at The Keep and the support of the Friends, and her confidence in the future.

The Chairman's report is reproduced below. Our Treasurer, John Barkshire, reported a satisfactory financial outcome. FoTKa remains in the happy position of being able to respond at short notice to requests for assistance with important acquisitions.

The trustees nominated by the Committee were approved by the meeting.

Diana Hansen

Chairman's report

It has been a sad year in so much in that we have lost two highly valued members of the Friends. Phyllida Stewart Roberts was always ready to give her support to any of our ventures. Her role as Custos Rotulorum, Keeper of the Rolls for the County, kept her in touch with our precious archives. In 2000 she received from the University of Duke in North Carolina a set of Court Rolls of the Manor of Fletching which had been unlawfully exported in 1953, quite a triumph. She also played an important role behind the scenes in the negotiations which led to the building of The Keep in which remarkable building we now sit. We were exceptionally fortunate to have her as our President until she retired as Lord Lieutenant in June 2008.

What can one say of Pam Combes? I was her Vice Chairman for some years and when she decided to retire from the position it was with some considerable dread that I realised that these were shoes it would be exceptionally difficult to fill. Pam had a wonderful way with people, always ready to listen, always ready to consider what had been said. She seemed to know everybody connected with and everything about archives, not just in Sussex but many other counties. I remember her for her warmth, energy, style, scholarship, hospitality, integrity, effort, achievement and an attitude to life of a cup half full – preferably of good claret.

Our outings to Ashburnham Place, Knole and Great Ote Hall have been most successful and blessed with good weather. We will have an equally interesting and unusual programme next year.

We hope to increase our membership over the coming months so that we can continue to support The Keep with the purchase of acquisitions, especially those in danger of some horrible fate or the skip.

From April 2015 to May this year we have assisted in some 50 purchases which include a programme for the West Pier Theatre from 1916 and a Mountfield Chancery document of 1694.

Our thanks to Sue Tompsett, our Assistant Treasurer for many years, who stepped down this year. She has been a great support to our Treasurer. Thanks too to Elizabeth Hughes and Christopher Whittick for their attendance at our committee meetings, with helpful guidance and suggestions and to Elizabeth for her excellent choice of biscuits! Finally I must thank my very hard working committee, without whom I know we could not function so successfully, as I hope you will agree as Friends.

Mary Teviot

The Sussex Archaeological Society and Charles Dawson, the Piltdown Hoaxer

This is a short summary by John Farrant of the first Pam Combes Memorial Lecture, which he delivered following the FoTKA AGM on 26 October 2016. Those members who were there will confirm that this was a fascinating talk, which would have greatly pleased Pam. John has written extensively on the history of Sussex for 40 years – on harbours and shipping, on early modern Brighton, on buildings in their landscape, on travellers and the accounts they wrote, on artists and their pictures and most recently on Charles Dawson. He is a Vice President of Sussex Archaeological Society and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, as was Pam, his long-standing friend and colleague.

Before her FESRO days, Pam Combes was much involved with the Sussex Archaeological Society, chairing its Council in 1987-90. In common with Charles Dawson a century earlier, she helped the society to expand its activities and widen its appeal. She steered the most far-reaching reorganisation since the 1930s. Pam had a very wide concept of what 'archaeology' comprises – using the word as the SAS's title. The meaning current in the 1840s, approximating to today's 'local history', emphasised

geographically narrow studies to reconstruct the past using the widest possible variety of evidence. Not only did Pam read at ESRO and elsewhere, she studied place-names, she undertook fieldwork and she excavated.

This breath of research she also shared with Charles Dawson who published on a great range of topics relating to Sussex, principally artefacts, from Mesozoic mammal teeth to 19th-century pottery but also embracing Hastings Castle (at great length), natural gas at Heathfield and the crystallisation of beeswax. But Dawson fell out with the old guard, ostensibly because he bought Castle Lodge in Lewes and ousted the society as the sitting tenant. He went on to greater things: he found the fossils which eminent palaeontologists reconstructed in 1912 as 'Piltdown Man', widely accepted as the missing link between ape and man. Yet even 20 years after his death, the society was ignoring his achievements. Did its leading members in the inter-war period have doubts about the skull's authenticity but were unwilling to challenge the scientific establishment? Or were the personal grievances of L. F. Salzman playing a significant part? Were they unsurprised when in 1953 the skull was revealed

as a forgery using 'modern' human brain case(s) and an orang-utan's jaw? As reported this August, today's scientific techniques applied to the 'fossils' have provided new evidence which indicate that they were the work of one person, with Dawson most credibly in the frame.

Piltdown has generated a huge literature. Authors focusing on Dawson have tended to assume that, because he was implicated in that find, everything he claimed to have discovered was fraudulent. Maybe so, but close examination of individual objects, where there is sufficient documentary evidence, shows that the truth is unlikely to be quite so straightforward.

Wealden iron, a subject close to Pam's heart, provides an example. She was an active member of the Wealden Iron Research Group from the 1970s, with the great fieldworker Fred Tebbutt as her mentor. Charles Dawson to his great credit organised in 1901 the SAS's only significant loan exhibition in at least its first century, of 'ancient Sussex iron implements, ornaments and utensils'. Pride of place was given to the Beauport Park statuette which Dawson claimed was Roman and the earliest known example of cast iron. The fourth and most recent, 2005, technical analysis confirms it as cast iron but

*Excavations in progress
(Natural History Museum)*



almost certainly post-medieval, and the authors conclude that his account of the statuette's provenance was almost certainly spurious ('Dawson's stories... were usually total fabrications'). However, his correspondence with the British Museum has recently surfaced and shows the lengths to which he went to prove the statuette's provenance. It allows the possibility that he was the innocent victim of another's forgery.

John Farrant

News from The Keep

Accreditation

We have been working hard on our application for Accredited status. The Accreditation scheme is managed by The National Archives(TNA), which has oversight of all archive services in England and Wales but has a particularly strong relationship with local authority archives who are Places of Deposit for Public Records such as court and hospital archives. All Places of Deposit (PoD) are expected to achieve Accredited status by 2017 and external funders will question any applications for grants from PoDs who are not Accredited. Accreditation requires us to demonstrate that we achieve certain standards. In the course of preparing our application we have realised that although we are following good practice we have not brought that practice together into written policies and procedures. So some of the work has meant formalising what we already do, but it has also given us the incentive to review and improve.

In August we submitted the application for ESRO and the University of Sussex Special Collections as a single application for The Keep because so much of our activity is either in common or benefits the other partner. The Royal Pavilion and Museum collections at The Keep are already accredited under the museums accreditation regime. TNA assessors are visiting in October and we should hear the results by the end of November.

User surveys

We use a number of different means to find out how we are doing and how we could make improvements to our services. These include direct feedback from users by email, via the website and on comments cards, evaluation of events and feedback from The Friends and the User Group. We also take part in a number of country-wide user surveys. These surveys gather information from all archive collections, that is national, local authorities, universities, charities and so on. We can compare ourselves with the national picture, and also with local authorities who are closer in nature to ourselves.

Last year the survey was of remote users (ie those who use the enquiry services and the website). In general, the profile of Keep users was similar to the UK and Local Authority (LA) averages. Users tend to be middle aged and older. Most respondents were white (95%) and 85% did not declare a disability.

However, Keep users are different from the nationwide profile in a number of respects:

- Keep users were predominantly male (71% compared to 53% for both UK and LAs)
- Fewer respondents were retired (45% compared to 52% and 54% respectively)

- More respondents were in paid employment (45% compared to 38% and 37%)
- More respondents came from outside Europe (21% compared to 14% and 13%). 14% came from Oceania.

The main reason for using the service was family history research (55%, followed by personal leisure/recreation (17%), higher than the UK and LA returns. Noticeably lower than the UK and LA averages was use by students. For 82% of respondents this was the first time that they had used the service.

Overall, responses to The Keep's enquiry service were very positive and there were some excellent comments.

Speed of response scored particularly highly. However, in most categories The Keep achieved lower scores than our comparators. Navigation to The Keep's website was a particular concern. Although this might be expected for a partnership website – the most used reference sites are those of the three partners – we are running our own survey on the website to find out more.

This year the survey is of on-site visitors and will run in October. If you are visiting us while the survey is on please do fill in the survey – we would really appreciate your views.

Elizabeth Hughes
County Archivist

Update on Mass Observation Day 12th May 2016

Readers of the spring newsletter might have read my article about the Mass Observation Archive's 12th May diary project. I'm pleased to say that the project was a success, with 1163 diaries being received in total. This is almost double the number we received in 2015.

"My day began having to drag myself out of bed as I had been at my book club the night before and unusually I did not shower in the morning as I had done the night before... so today I have felt more grubby than I would have

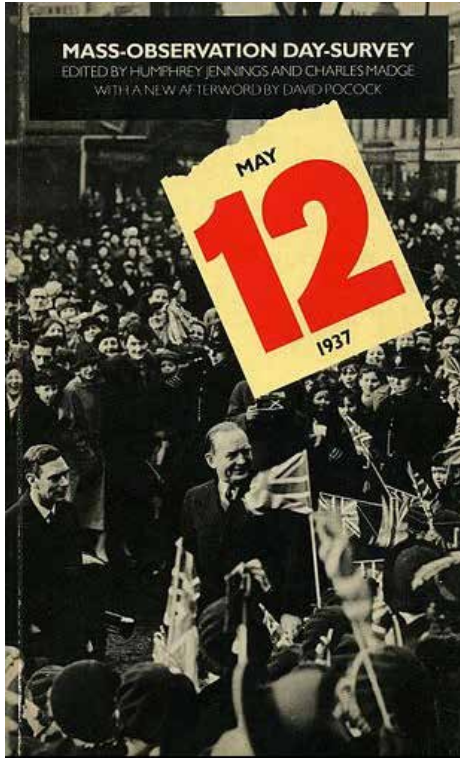
liked. I got dressed, turned on BBC news and had my usual breakfast of 2 wheat-a-bix with a spoon of flax, almond flakes, pecans and blueberries with a guzzle of almond milk"

(MT_2016_67, 27 year old woman from London)

Mass Observation first asked the nation to record 12th May in 1937. This was the day of George VI's Coronation. The diarists wrote about everything they did on this day from the moment they woke until going to bed. Most of them joined in the day's festivities, and there

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are reports from those who queued on The Mall to catch a glimpse of the Royal procession as well as diaries written by those who attended celebrations in their local area.



Mass Observation Day Survey, edited by Humphrey Jennings and Charles Madge, with a new Afterword by David Pocock (SxMOA33)

The 12th May 2016 was, by contrast, a very ordinary Thursday with no 'major events' taking place. The diarists wrote about their usual everyday patterns: problems at work, gardening successes, TV watched, games played with children and meals consumed. Such discussions are gold mines for the Mass Observation Archive users:

primarily historians and sociologist who use the Archive in order to understand how people in 21st century Britain understand the world around them. The diaries are currently being used by a group of computer scientists and linguists who are working together in order to research how regional differences affect language.

"We have a bottle of Riesling with the dinner, which is supposedly light on alcohol but goes straight to my head. After the meal, which we eat while The Archers is being broadcast (must listen to the iPlayer to find out what happened to Helen while we were away on holiday) we go through to the lounge with mugs of tea and I return to writing this diary."

(MT_2016_464, 65 year old woman from Aylsham)

The 'big' news story of the day was the renewal of the BBC's charter, with many (but not all) of the 12th May diarists praising the organisation and its outputs; we received diaries from fans of the Archers. We hope that these will be of use to those researching the history of the media in Britain.

We also received diaries from local school children (286 diaries) and from prisons (143 diaries) across the country and from the Brighton Housing Trust (a street homelessness charity, 7 diaries). We are pleased to add these diaries to the collection because they are records that represents the lives of people not traditionally represented in archives. This is something that we are hoping to build upon in our new Heritage Lottery

Fund project, Beyond the Boxes. This is a 2-year project which we are working on in partnership with Blind Veterans UK, the Brighton Housing Trust and Lewes Prison. The project aims to break down the barriers many people face in trying to use archives, be these physical, attitudinal or educational. The project is just getting going, but we hope to be able to update you in a future edition of this newsletter.

We will be running the 12th May diary project again next year. So please put the date in your calendar and submit your diary to the archive.

www.massobs.org.uk/write-for-us/12th-may

Jessica Scantlebury
The Mass Observation Archive

Looking back on a summer of sport at The Keep

This summer, The Keep took inspiration from the Olympics and Paralympics in Rio to explore sport in the archives. The UK has a rich sporting heritage and our collections include fascinating historical material relating to local clubs, teams and activities which we were keen to share and promote.

First up was an illustrated talk about the Brighton Swimming Club archive. Much of Brighton's history as a seaside resort is mirrored in the Club's archive, which is a treasure trove of original photographs, log books and letterpress posters dating back to the 1860s. Speaker Paul Farrington initiated a project in 2011 to make the archive accessible to the public, working closely with ESRO archivists, swimming club members and volunteers, and his knowledge and passion, both for sea-swimming and for the material itself, made this a memorable event.



Brighton Swimming Club poster: One of the gems from the Swimming Club archive, Floating Memories/Brighton Swimming Club (AMS 6946/9/x)

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A few weeks later, we hosted an equally inspiring talk by local historian Andrew Lusted about the early days of women's team games in Victorian England, with particular reference to cricket and stoolball played in the Sussex villages of Glynde and Firle. This beautifully illustrated talk ranged from local and social history to fashion (19th-century women bowled and batted wearing corsets), while uncovering some extraordinary facts and fictions about women's participation in competitive sport.



From an album belonging to Maud Bevan (nee Brand) of Glynde Place (ACC 12012/1)

We're always keen to enable visitors to The Keep to view original material from the archive, and a small display was created specifically for each of these talks. We have also recently acquired an impressive glass case from the University of Sussex library, which allows us to showcase items from our collections for a longer time period (although these are mainly scanned copies for conservation reasons). Building on our sporting theme, archive assistant Drew Boulton put together a lovely display of documents and ephemera relating to both stoolball and swimming, which was much appreciated by visitors to The Keep's Reference Room in the summer months.

We use our blog and social media channels to keep in touch with those not able to come to The Keep in person, and during our 'Summer of Sport' we posted articles about other gems in the archive. These included stories about the London to Brighton Walking Race and the Bexhill Cycling Boulevard, as well as responses to the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics collected by the Mass Observation Archive. The Paralympics inspired another post about the role of sport in the rehabilitation of the many wounded soldiers cared for in and around Brighton during and after the First World War.

This research and writing encourages us to dig deeper into our own archive, making unexpected connections between the different partners' collections.

RACE BY LIMBLESS SWIMMERS.

A swimming race that must have been the first of its kind in history took place off the Palace Pier on Tuesday afternoon. Twenty-three men who have lost either an arm or a leg in the war took part in it. One of the competitors, indeed, Private Pittendrigh, had lost both legs. For some weeks past the men had been in training under the care of Mr Jack Hurst, a well-known swimmer. Nearly all of them could swim before they lost a limb, but there were men who had learned afterwards.

As one of the prize winners afterwards told the *Herald*, there is no great difficulty in swimming for a man who has lost a leg or an arm. The moment one gets into the water one has no consciousness of the loss of the limb. One strikes out with the stump of the leg or arm as if the whole were there. If the leg is missing, however, one

*Report from the Brighton Herald,
16 August 1919, Royal Pavilion &
Museums*

Often a picture can say more than a thousand words and, over the course of the summer, we also shared some fantastic sporting images from the archive on Twitter. Who knew, for example, that a show jumping event once took place in Preston Park? Or that Brighton Grammar schoolboy Aubrey Beardsley's first published drawing was inspired by the game of cricket?

Kate Elms
Collections Officer, Royal Pavilion
and Museums

Knights of the Black and White Dogs

Two related families: Lamb of Beauport in Hollington, and Adamson of Rushton Park in Mountfield



Preparing for battle (AMS 7173 2-2-13)

Thanks to FoTKA we were lucky to acquire three photograph albums, a game book and a family visiting-book in an auction at Bellmans of Wisborough Green on 3 August 2016.

Much of the material related to the Lamb family of Beauport in Hollington, but one album was inscribed by F Margaret Adamson with the date 1890. A few clicks of the mouse soon revealed that the link between the two families came through the marriage of Charles Antony FH Lamb (1857-1948)

to Leila Frances Adamson in 1886; Leila (born c1862) was the sister of Frances Margaret (born c1860). They were part of the large family – there were ten other siblings – of William Rushton Adamson. He was a West India merchant who bought Vinehall in Mountfield in 1860 and renamed it Rushton Park; we do not need to look far for his source of inspiration.

The Lamb family had been settled longer in the locality. Charles Lamb's great-grandfather Sir James Bland

Burges, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1789-1795, had purchased Beauport after the death in 1794 of the owner Major General James Murray, successively governor of Quebec and Minorca. Sir James changed his name to Lamb in 1821 in honour of his patron John Lamb, and was the first Lamb baronet. Charles's brother Archibald was the third.

The photographs portray fin de siècle life in the English country home, a round of house parties, shooting and leisurely strolls around the gardens. Both families loved their dogs, whose names are invariably recorded. But life was clearly not always as sedate as it might appear. An amusing sequence of photographs depict Leila Lamb and her friend Mrs Musgrave dressed up in suits of armour from the Beauport armoury and fighting as the Knights of the Black and White Dogs to champion their pets.

There are useful photographs showing the interior of Beauport and its grounds; the final ones record the house in a sorry state after the disastrous fire of 1 August 1923. It was rebuilt, but on a less grand scale.

Charles had a distinguished career as a Colonel in the Rifle Brigade, and saw active service in the second Boer War of 1899-1902. He was military attaché at Rome, 1901-1906 and 1915-1918. The archive includes a family visiting book, which contains photographs of houses visited with signatures of those present. One entry covers the time that Charles was based at the British Embassy in Rome, and includes the signature of Edward Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, on his visit in May 1918.



During the contest (AMS 7173 2-2-15)

Charles succeeded his brother Archibald as the fourth baronet in 1921, but he and Leila were childless and the title died with him.

We were outbid on other lots at the auction because they related to Charles's military career, particularly during the Boer War, and such items are very sought after. This was frustrating - we would like to have found out more about the lives of these interesting people.

Ironically, the fault was that of the auctioneers, who informed us of the sale too late to allow us to obtain funding from the national grant-giving bodies, which would almost certainly have supported the purchase; indeed had they done so, we would have had literally twice as much to spend. As things turned out, only FoTKA stood between us and a total loss, and we are more than ever grateful that we were enabled to salvage such fascinating material from the sale.

AMS 7173
Anna Manthorpe

Reports from Summer visits

Ashburnham Place

June 6th was a lovely day, perfect for visiting and enjoying Ashburnham Place; the house, gardens and lakes, as well as the beautiful church of St Peter.



Friends at Ashburnham

We were met, in what had been the main entrance hall of the old house, by the welcoming staff of the Ashburnham Christian Trust and shown to the main hall, where generous helpings of delightful refreshments were served. Christopher Whittick and David Martin gave us an outline of

the history and architecture of the house, and details of the family. We were privileged also to have with us Mr Richard Bickersteth, whose father had inherited the estate in 1953 from Catherine Ashburnham. His account and direct personal connections added an extra dimension to the story.

Ashburnham Place was the home of the Ashburnham family from the medieval period until 1953, although the history of the family stretches back to the pre-conquest era. We were provided with a family tree from the 14th Century. The earliest known house, of which only the cellars remain, was abandoned in the 16th century. The Ashburnham family recovered the estate under Charles I, and built the house to its present form in 1665. Over the years the estate has changed a great deal and we were given three plans dated 1638, 1717, and 1797. In 1638, the house appears quite large, built in a square, with a large courtyard in the centre, but with very little land. By 1717, the house is much smaller but with more land much of which was forestry. The estate in 1797 is much enlarged with land in all the surrounding parishes. The drawing opposite shows Ashburnham Place in its heyday.



A drawing by John Preston Neale of Ashburnham Place in 1828 showing the lake.

By the mid C20, the house had reduced to a state of decay, and was much modified and reduced in scale. In 1953 the Revd John Bickersteth, a grandson of the sixth Earl, gifted the house and grounds to a Christian Trust which continues today. We were able to visit the grand rooms that remain, with their rich plasterwork and marble fireplaces, now used for meetings, retreats and prayer days. Despite everything, Ashburnham Place retains a Grade II listing.

After further refreshments, the group was taken to see the restored stable block and dairy, and the beautiful grounds and gardens (200+ acres), designed by Lancelot (Capability) Brown. Also designed by Brown, the Orangery c1767, houses the oldest

camellia in England. We were then free to wander round the Grade I listed Church of St Peter, adjacent to the house, one of the best examples in England of the Gothic style. The interior retains all its contemporary C17 fittings: the iron screens to chancel, chapels and tower, the communion rails, pulpit and marble font. The north chapel is the Ashburnham mausoleum chapel and contains two very good C17 family monuments. Richard Bickersteth was there to help us with more detail.

After moments in the kitchen garden, this memorable visit drew to a close. Our speakers were thanked profusely for giving so generously of their knowledge, time and energy.

**Judith Kinnison Bourke and
Dr Sheena Parker**

Friends of The Keep Archives

Knole

The Friends gathered on 5 July at the gatehouse leading to Green Court at Knole ready to meet Lord Sackville who had very kindly agreed to show the group the private rooms (not open to the public) before we saw the public National Trust rooms. Would he find us, among all the other visitors, in this great English house?

In the mid 15C, Knole was built by Thomas Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, on the site of an older house. A cousin of Elizabeth I, Thomas Sackville, bought the freehold in 1603, and from then Knole became the principal seat of the Sackvilles, whose

descendants – the Earls and Dukes of Dorset and Barons Sackville – have lived there to the present day. Both the title and the house could pass only through the male line; hence Vita Sackville West, renowned poet, author and garden designer, born at Knole in 1892, as the only child of the third Lord Sackville was unable to inherit, despite her great love of the house. The house was given to the National Trust in 1946 by the fourth Lord Sackville. The family negotiated a 200 year lease of the private apartments, and a large proportion of the grounds. The main apartment is now occupied by the current (seventh) Lord Sackville and his family.



Lord Sackville has found the Friends (Judith Kinnison Bourke)

Lord Sackville did spot the group in Green Court! We were taken off to the private apartments, leading from Bourchier's Tower, where he gave a most impressive exposition of Knole's story and its art, and his family's history.

A walk through the rooms followed, leading to the austere private 15 C chapel, a survival from the Archbishop's palace. We also saw the formal panelled family dining room; spacious and ornate, and known as Poets' Parlour, from the many portraits of poets and other eminent figures of later 17th Century England – Congreve and Dryden, Pope, Swift and Addison. Moving on, we saw the stunning formal Colonnade Room, (painted throughout with grey and silver trompe l'oeil,) and boudoir, both with furniture, ceramics and portraits from 17th to 19th Century. The 'French Library' was filled with shelves full of leather-bound books from the same period, and a table overflowing with Victorian photographs of the family. Amongst the treasures, there was the delightful incongruity of a modern kitchen, a teenaged boy's drum kit, tee shirts and other family paraphernalia. Each room was so saturated in history and beauty, and the remarkable presentation by our host ensured that we all left the apartments much more knowledgeable than before.

Lord Sackville answered many questions about the family and the collection. Christopher Whittick then thanked Lord Sackville for generously giving his time to make our visit to Knole such a resounding success. It was a privilege and pleasure to see the private rooms

at Knole at close quarters, and to have their history so vividly brought to life.

After a break for lunch, the members were free to visit the public rooms of the house, some of which were closed as a result of the massive renovation exercise currently being undertaken by the National Trust. Several of the group were very fortunate to be given a guided tour of the state rooms that remain open by a FoTKA member, Stephen Hale, himself a volunteer steward for the National Trust at Knole.

Mr Stephen Hale, Volunteer Steward, National Trust at Knole, and Dr Sheena Parker



A beautiful day in the garden

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Great Ote Hall

On 24 August, the hottest day of the year, the Friends visited Great Ote Hall, a Grade I listed timber framed house in Wivelsfield, set in lovely gardens with far-reaching views over the 300+ acres. The group was welcomed by the owner, Carola Godman Irvine, and treated to coffee with especially delicious cakes.



Those delicious cakes (Annette Shelford)

The history of the house, the family story and aspects of the architecture were described by Christopher Whittick, who had set out concise details in a handout, distributed to members. This included a fascinating 'pedigree of Godman of Otehall' tracking the family line from 15C to 18C through every generation, with detailed names. The Godman family held the estate from 1537. On the death in 1718 of John Godman, cutler and citizen of London, the estate passed to his grandson, William Shirley of the Inner

Temple, who became Governor of Massachusetts and subsequently of the Bahamas. In 1749 he conveyed Otehall to his friend Francis Warden of Cuckfield and the Inner Temple, who in 1816 conveyed it back to William Shirley's son, Thomas Shirley. His son William Warden Shirley sold the manor to William Tanner. After a number of changes of ownership, Otehall was bought in 1936 by the Godman trustees, so that the manor is again held by the Godman family.

Thomas Ellison Godman lived here with his wife Valborg until his untimely death in Malta in 1942, when the ship he was commanding took a direct hit. Valborg Godman subsequently married Sir Bryant Irvine and lived here and ran the farm until her death in 1990. Sir Bryant Godman Irvine died in 1992. The present occupants are their daughter Carola Godman Irvine and her children Matthew, Charley and Nina.

But what do we know of the house? Is it significantly different from the earliest house? Christopher included a report by Ralph Nevill 'Notes on the Architecture of Otehall' dated 1886. Nevill described 'an interesting timber house at Ote hall [dating] from the close of the 16th Century. Accident has preserved the vestiges and much of the actual work of the original and the loving care of the present owner has restored it to almost exactly its old state'. According to Nevill, the house was built in two stages, the East block and later the more elaborate West block. Nevill describes the resultant changes and rearrangements within the house; number and style of windows



Great Ote Hall today (Stanley Bernard)

and removal of external plaster to reveal old timbers, the moving of a staircase, altered function of rooms etc. He mentions the 'nice Tudor fireplaces' and 'nice oak panelling'. One of them has 'a good carved mantelpiece, with inlaid initials and date, TMG 1609, no doubt the date of the panelling and refitting'. He goes on to say that, apart from the two just mentioned, all panelling and mantels, plus an oak door, were collected from old houses in Guildford and Godalming, now demolished. He also describes in lurid detail, not for quoting, the very unsanitary sanitary arrangements!

The important conclusion is that the house 'presents an unusually complete example of the smaller country house of the 17th century'.

Following Christopher's talk, Carola Godman Irvine very kindly addressed the group giving her personal view on many aspects of the house. She brought to life her experience of living there with her family, whilst running the farms, and the wedding venue business. Members were then invited to tour the house with Carola, and were able to see its many striking features; the full height post, the oak four poster bed, the fireplaces, the original detailed map of the manor of Ote Hall (a copy of which was included in the handout) and more.

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Ote Hall, Sussex; from a drawing by Evelyn P. Shirley, 1841

Members felt privileged to see the house and wonderful grounds at close quarters, and to have their history so vividly brought to life by Christopher and Carola. The visitors, many themselves learned historians with continuing research interests, were hugely appreciative of the impressive knowledge and exposition of the story of the house. Lady Teviot gave a vote of thanks for a memorable visit.

A FoTKA member

Talks at The Keep – January to April 2017

The History of Brighton Workhouses with James Gardner,
Wednesday 18 January, 2.30-3.30pm

Arnold Daghani – Artist and Holocaust Survivor,
with Samira Teuteberg and Bill Smith, Wednesday 25 January,
5.30-6.30pm

**The Victorian and Edwardian Eras in Brighton and Hove,
c1840-1914: a period of continuous change** with Dr Sue Berry,
Wednesday 22 February, 5.30-6.30pm

East Sussex Women and the First World War
with Dr Chris Kempshall, Tuesday 7 March, 5.30-6.30pm

**In Search of Colour in the 1840s: Mrs Merrifield's continental
journey**, with Dr Alexandra Loske, Wednesday 29 March,
5.30-6.30pm

German Jewish Families and the Holocaust with Samira Teuteberg,
Wednesday 5 April, 5.30-6.30pm

The Coach Roads to Brighton with Geoff Hewlett,
Tuesday 25 April, 2.30-3.30pm

Talks cost £3, payable on the door. Please book in advance to avoid disappointment! Call 01273 482349 or visit the Events pages of our website: www.thekeep.info/events

Special event:

Getting Started with House History, an afternoon session led by Andrew Lusted, Wednesday 8 February, 2-4pm. £7.50, advance booking and payment essential as numbers will be limited.



Excavation under way at Piltdown, about 1913;
Charles Dawson sitting on the left (Natural History Museum)