



Friends of [the keep] Archives

Newsletter Spring 2017

Friends of The Keep Archives

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Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex

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Visit the Friends of The Keep
Archives website at
www.fotka.org.uk

Contact the Membership Secretary at
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Contact The Keep

The Keep Opening Hours

Tuesday-Friday: 9.30-17.00

Saturday: 9.30-16.00

The Keep is closed to the public on
Sunday and Monday

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Cover image:

*Diana Low, Designs on Paper,
late 1930s. © Estate of Diana Low*

Editor's introduction

This edition of the Newsletter has an artistic theme, reflecting the increasing interest in Sussex artists of the twentieth century. Exhibitions have been held in London on Sussex artists and Vanessa Bell, and now an exhibition on Eric Ravilious and his friends will open on 27 May at the Towner Art Gallery in Eastbourne. The Keep has a keen interest in Eric Ravilious, as we hold his archive. Indeed, last year The Keep was happily able to expand this archive by the acquisition, with the aid of funding from FoTKA as well as national bodies, of his wife's diaries, which expand our knowledge of his day to day activities and the society in which he moved. We have articles publicising the exhibition and describing the importance of the diaries. Kate Elms gives a different slant in her account of the pioneering work of Henry Roberts, an early twentieth century curator of Brighton Art Gallery, in bringing to Brighton the very latest in artistic developments, both British and European.

We are also delighted to feature the thoughts of Casper Johnson as he looks forward to an exciting future at The Keep. FoTKA will work in the closest partnership with Casper and his team, as all the partners at The Keep make the most of the opportunities amid inevitable uncertainties, and will give him all possible support as he builds on the foundation established by Elizabeth

Hughes. As we say farewell (or au revoir) to Elizabeth, we have extracts from an interview with her. Christopher Whittick has paid a heartfelt tribute – “ I think she is the only person who could have achieved The Keep”.

The FoTKA Committee has lost Michael Chowen, who has resigned to give support to his wife in her demanding role as High Sheriff. Michael is sad to relinquish his membership of the committee, and we will miss his business insights and acumen and his wicked sense of humour. We trust he will maintain his links with The Keep. We are pleased to welcome Steve Selby as a new committee member; Steve has been a leading light in the Sussex Family History Group, and will reestablish the close links between SFHG and FoTKA which were maintained by the late Colin Excel. Steve was a Metropolitan Police office for 31 years in Wandsworth and Putney, for the last ten years as a crime prevention officer. On leaving the police he moved to Crowborough. He has been married for 50 years, with two children and two grand-children. He has been interested in family history for over forty years and regularly helps at the SFHG room at The Keep.

As usual, at the end of the Newsletter we preview the visit programme. Members will be aware that we have an exciting visit to Firle Place. This visit

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will be a highly privileged occasion, and we aim to raise substantial funds for FoTKA. A further visit will be to the Powder Mills Hotel.

I am pleased to say that after many trials and tribulations, mostly endured by the indefatigable Sheena Parker, the website (www.fotka.org.uk) is up and running; I think the result is both attractive and informative. We also have a new email address for membership queries (membersfotka@gmail.com).

Lastly, members should note an important date in their diaries. On 18 October, following the AGM, Christopher Whittick, whom we congratulate on his appointment as County Archivist, will give the second in the series of Pam Combes Memorial Lectures. He will talk on an unlikely connection between a small villa in Hove and the Spanish Royal Family, by way of a diversion to Trieste (see page 9).

Diana Hansen



Eric Ravilious, Two Women in a Garden, 1933. Courtesy Fry Art Gallery

Ravilious & Co: The Pattern of Friendship

English Artist Designers: 1922 to 1942

Eric William Ravilious (22 July 1903 – 2 September 1942) was an English painter, designer, book illustrator and wood engraver. His archive, and those of his friends Peggy Angus and Percy Horton, is held at The Keep. East Sussex Record Office at The Keep has been closely involved with the genesis of this exhibition, which opens at The Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne on 27 May. The show marks the 75th anniversary of the artist's death in Iceland during the Second World War.

Ravilious & Co brings to life the significant relationships and collaborations within one of the most widely influential – though largely unexplored – networks of English artists and designers of the twentieth century, and includes work by Paul Nash, John Nash, Enid Marx, Barnett Freedman, Tirzah Garwood, Edward Bawden, Thomas Hennell, Douglas Percy Bliss, Peggy Angus, Helen Binyon and Diana Low.

Ravilious was educated in Eastbourne, where the Borough Council awarded him scholarships to its own School of Art, and to the Royal College of Art, where he studied under Paul Nash. He married Eileen Lucy 'Tirzah' Garwood, daughter of a retired Colonel

of Engineers. She was also a noted artist and engraver, and his pupil at Eastbourne, to which he returned after his time at the RCA. His early works depicted the countryside around him in the south east of England, as well as urban scenes of London. Many of his works are seen as capturing a sense of Englishness that existed between the wars. He designed a number of popular pieces for Wedgwood between 1936 and 1940 including a commemorative mug, originally produced for the Coronation of Edward VIII, which was adapted for that of George VI.

Ravilious was an official war artist in World War II and received a commission as a Captain in the Royal Marines. He was killed in 1942 at the age of 39 while accompanying a Royal Air Force air sea rescue mission off Iceland that failed to return to its base.

Ravilious & Co comprises over 400 paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, engravings, books, ceramics, wallpapers, textiles and other ephemera, brought together from 26 galleries and museums including Tate, National Portrait Gallery, V&A, the British Museum, Imperial War Museums and over 30 private collections. Towner Art Gallery holds one of the largest public collections of works by Eric Ravilious in the country, with a selection of his finest watercolours, prints and ceramics including many

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paintings of his beloved Sussex landscape.

The Keep's contribution to the show includes Eric's last letter to Tirzah, written from Iceland on 31 August 1942, political cartoons by Peggy Angus and her Soviet sketchbook, and one of Tirzah's diaries (see following article), the purchase of which was greatly assisted by FoTKA. Perhaps of greatest interest are Edward Bawden's preparatory drawing for the Morley College murals of 1930, and the cartoon for Ravilious's portrait of Bawden in his studio, the original of which hangs at the RCA. These two precious pieces have been expertly conserved by Melissa Williams of ESRO.

In April 2017, Thames & Hudson published Ravilious & Co: The Pattern of Friendship, the first biography about the group, by the co-curator of the exhibition, Andy Friend, with an introduction by Alan Powers.

Copies of the book will be available at The Keep on Tuesday 27 June, when the author will be presenting an account of his research for the exhibition and the book (see page 21).

The exhibition will open at the Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne on 27 May and run until 17 September 2017. Thereafter it will be at the Millennium Galleries, Sheffield from 7 October 2017 until 7 January 2018, and at Compton Verney, Warwickshire from 17 March to 9 June 2018.



Eric Ravilious, A Rust-Coloured Ferruginous Light, illustration for The Writings of Gilbert White of Selborne, 1938

Tirzah Ravilious (née Garwood)

1908-1951: diaries, 1931-1938

Eileen Lucy Garwood, known to her family as Tirzah, was born at Gillingham in Kent on 11 April 1908, the third child of Col Frederick Scott Garwood of the Royal Engineers and his wife Ella Corry, daughter of a Belfast shipbuilder. Early in her childhood Tirzah showed a gift for drawing, and studied at the Eastbourne School of Art from 1925 to 1928. There a new teacher, Eric Ravilious taught her drawing and wood engraving. Introduced by Eric while still a student, Tirzah showed her work at the prestigious annual exhibition of the Society of Wood Engravers, and in the autumn of 1928 moved to London in the hope of earning her living as an illustrator. Ravilious, also from Eastbourne, was the son of a chronically insolvent shopkeeper with religious mania, and whose brother's businesses operated just within the law. To the annoyance of her family and the perplexity of his, Tirzah married Ravilious in 1930. Unlike the down-at-heel Ravilious family, the Garwoods were the sort of people who, at least in the popular imagination, formed the natural inhabitants of Eastbourne. The sharp contrast between the two families typifies the reality of life in the Empress of Watering-places, where Colonel Garwood served as a Poor Law Guardian and Eric's father ended his days as an inmate of the former workhouse.

With marriage Tirzah reduced her output of wood engravings, but whilst bringing up her family of three children she made and marketed marbled paper, a craft at which she excelled. Eric Ravilious went missing over Iceland in 1942 when serving as a war artist, and in 1946 Tirzah married Henry Swanzy of the BBC's Overseas Service. She was able to resume her artistic work, cut short by her own premature death in 1951.

The Ravilious archive forms part of a group of the papers of inter-war artists living in or associated with East Sussex, including Peggy Angus, Percy Horton, his brother Ronald Horton and Harold Swanwick, which has been consciously acquired by East Sussex Record Office over the last two decades. The sequence of seven diaries kept by Tirzah Garwood between 1931 and 1938 constitutes a unique resource not only of her own life and work but also the artistic milieu (which included Paul and John Nash, Barnett Freedman, Henry Moore, Percy Horton, Enid Marx, William Rothenstein, Edward Bawden, Peggy Angus and Ravilious himself) of which she was part. While they have the general character of appointment diaries (rather than an authorial narrative) the density of detail recorded in them serves to add both colour and accuracy to the information available in the relevant collections of artists' letters and related papers, of

which those of Percy Horton and Peggy Angus are already held by East Sussex Record Office at The Keep. Tirzah Garwood's autobiography *Long Live Great Bardfield*, published for the first time by the Fleece Press in 2012, has added significantly to our understanding of specific aspects of this group of artists, many of them members of the 'outbreak of talent' identified by Paul Nash when teaching at the Royal College of Art in the 1920s.

These diaries provide accurate dating and supplementary surrounding detail to a full understanding of the events she describes. An example of their value is provided by the entry for the week of 17-23 October 1938, written in a diary illustrated by Evelyn Dunbar. On Monday Tirzah sorted marbled papers and the following day hung them in an

exhibition at Braintree; her participation in the harvest supper is cut short by her son's illness; and at the weekend Eric returned from Dungeness with 'a good painting', which can be identified as Dungeness Lighthouse (private collection), usually (from the date of its appearance in his show of 1939) attributed to the following year.

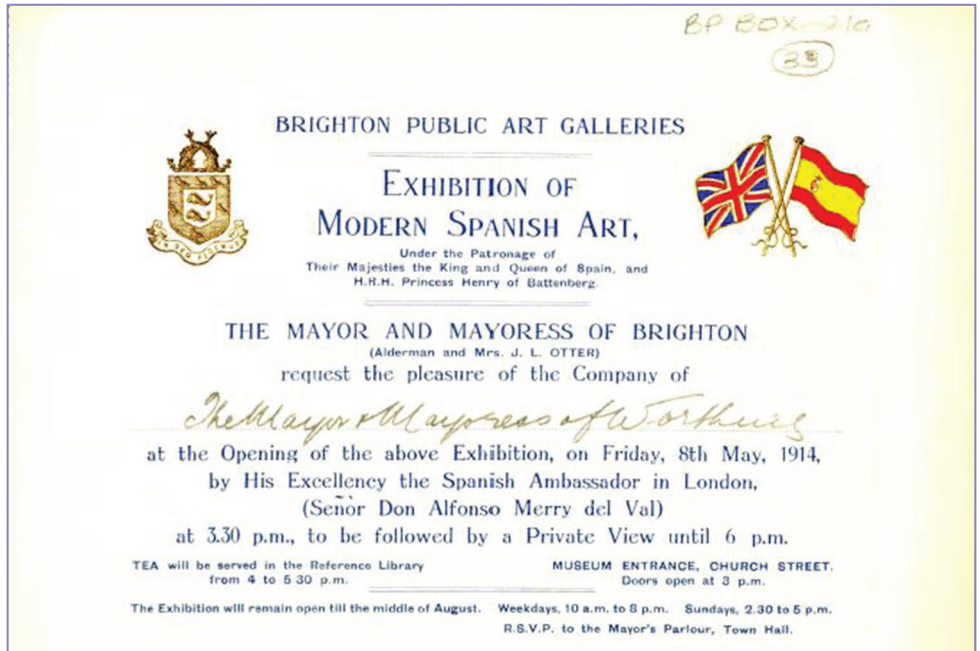
The diaries are kept in notebooks printed by the Kynoch Press of Birmingham, and as scarce examples of craft printing are themselves of considerable antiquarian value. Each was illustrated by a different artist including Ravilious himself, who provided wood engravings for the 1933 volume.

Christopher Whittick
East Sussex County Archivist

Art in the archives

Art is in the air at The Keep this summer – our events programme includes a series of talks inspired by Sussex artists – so it seems a good moment to explore a series of ground-breaking exhibitions held at Brighton Museum & Art Gallery in the early years of the 20th century, and to look at how they are represented in our archive. The museum collections held at The Keep feature not just the catalogues of some of these exhibitions, but also the scrapbooks compiled by their curator Henry D Roberts, which include local and national press cuttings and some fascinating ephemera.

Henry Roberts was a librarian by trade and arrived in Brighton, full of ideas, in 1906. He was soon making plans to promote not just the town's library but its art gallery too. Historically, the exhibition programme featured the work of English artists or, in Roberts' own words, displays 'of a miscellaneous character'. He decided to break with tradition and mount an ambitious series of shows based on the modern art of a single European country, starting with France in 1910.



Invitation to private view of exhibition of Spanish Art organised by Roberts in 1914 (Royal Pavilion and Museums)

This exhibition, in which much of the work was for sale, included paintings primarily by living artists – Degas, Derain and Sisley among them – as well as a few recently deceased big hitters, such as Cezanne, Gauguin and Pissarro. We know that in some cases this was the first time their work was seen in the UK, and the introduction to the exhibition catalogue sounds a note of warning:

‘Many visitors to the present exhibition, brought face to face for the first time with pictures so different from those that they have been accustomed to see on the walls at Burlington House [home of the Royal Academy of Arts in London], will be tempted to laugh at them as mere eccentricities... They would do

well to suspend judgement. They are not asked to pretend to like what they do not; but they are asked not to jump to the conclusion that the unaccustomed is necessarily ridiculous.’

Then, as now, people didn’t always warm to contemporary art that appeared to reject canonical values, but in fact reviews in the local papers were generally positive and in a report written by Roberts in 1911 the exhibition was commended as ‘the means of bringing both the town of Brighton and its fame as an art centre prominently before the public.’

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In subsequent years, the modern art of Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Belgium, Russia, Serbia, Holland and Italy was brought to Brighton in this way, with a second exhibition of French painting in 1923. Roberts gave lectures and wrote introductory notes for the exhibition catalogues, providing context to the work on show as well as revealing his eye for patronage – monarchs and ambassadors often lent their support. And his meticulously compiled scrapbooks hint at a man ahead of his time, hugely aware of the value of publicity and the shock of the new; one reviewer described the first French exhibition as ‘importing not a few bombshells into our placid art circles,’ while the Swedish work exhibited the following year was referred to as ‘a new world of art of extraordinary virility and brilliancy.’

Seen together, this material provides a fascinating glimpse into Brighton Museum & Art Gallery’s history, as well as an interesting perspective on the European art world at a time of conflict, upheaval and economic hardship.

Kate Elms
Royal Pavilion and Museums,
Brighton and Hove

For details of The Keep’s forthcoming talks and events, please see page 21.



Catalogue for the Spanish Art exhibition (Royal Pavilion and Museums)

The Letters of John Collier of Hastings, 1731-1746 edited by Dr Richard Saville

Many members will remember Wendy Walker as the Project Manager for the construction of The Keep. Wendy is now the West Sussex County Archivist, and has kindly contributed this review of a recent publication from the Sussex Record Society. The Society was set up in 1901 and publishes original records of the county's history from documents at the West Sussex Record Office, the East Sussex Record Office and in national institutions such as the British Library and The National Archives. Over 90 volumes have been published so far and further details of those in print, online publications and membership can be found on the SRS website.

The latest volume from the Sussex Record Society, published in October last year, features smuggling, family life, and society in Georgian Hastings all seen through the eyes of John Collier, five times Mayor of Hastings, and his devoted wife, their family and friends. His letters, dating from 1731 to 1746, have all been transcribed and brought together by Dr Richard Saville to form the basis of this fascinating book. The original letters are part of the archives of the Collier, Milward, Lane and Sayer families of Hastings, 1565-1925, which are held by the East Sussex Record Office at The Keep (ESRO ref: SAY).



Portrait of John Collier

Originally from Eastbourne, John Collier trained as a lawyer and aged just 20 was appointed town clerk of Hastings and joint solicitor for the Cinque Ports. With his boundless energy and thirst for new endeavours he played a key role in the politics of early Georgian Sussex and Kent as agent for the Duke of Newcastle, grappling with the cross Channel smuggling trade, developing an intelligence network on both sides of the Channel and ensuring that elections in the Cinque Ports returned supporters of the government.

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The letters also provide a touching insight into Collier's family life. They show his wife, Mary Cranston, supporting his career whilst bringing up their children, eleven of whom died in infancy. The death of the eldest son from smallpox whilst at Westminster school in London is particularly poignant and described at length.

The five Collier daughters, who survived into their teens, also make their way into these letters, with the girls moving between the great houses, organising dances and games, socialising, going on country walks, and dealing with servants and staff. All this with an insistence on the latest fashions and accessories bought by their father or Mary's brother, William Cranston, and at a time that predates the world of Jane Austen by over half a century.

The correspondence also includes details of the local weather, the varying conditions for travel over the Weald, the value of regular coastal shipping to and from London and the Cinque ports, the struggle to obtain a regular supply of drinking water for Hastings and the fears in the early 1740s of a French invasion and Jacobite rebellions.

Sussex Record Society Vol.96, October 2016 ISBN 978 0 85445 078 7
Price: £25 (£20 for SRS members) and available at the West Sussex Record Office or through the SRS website: <http://www.sussexrecordsociety.org/about-us/>

Wendy Walker
West Sussex County Archivist

Photograph of Old Hastings House



Casper Johnson introduces himself

After ten years as County Archaeologist for East Sussex County Council I took over as 'Head of The Keep' on the 1st December 2016, following the retirement of Elizabeth Hughes. In the course of that time I had worked with Elizabeth Hughes and Christopher Whittick, amongst others from East Sussex Record Office, on a range of projects and was involved in the original plans for The Keep when it was proposed that the site could include an archaeological archives store. As the HLF grant went to the London 2012 Olympics, this latter aspect could not be realised, but thankfully with the support of all partners, including in particular East Sussex County Councillors and FoTKA (or FESRO as it was then) The Keep was built.

A key aspect of my contact with staff at The Keep focussed on the potential for links with the Historic Environment Record (HER) and the creation in 2012 of the first permanent Historic Environment Record Officer post, to be based at The Keep. The HER comprises over 22,000 records of heritage assets in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove and is the basis for all planning-led archaeological and heritage work in the county as well as being an essential resource for research and education. The term 'heritage assets' was brought into use through government planning policy to describe man-made elements from the past, above and below ground, which are considered to have significance for this



and future generations. So the HER, which comprises a wide range of digital-mapping options to establish where heritage assets were or are, has huge potential to be more closely linked with the archives and the information they contain, held at The Keep.

The HER is managed by Sophie Unger who, along with colleagues Greg Chuter (County Archaeologist) and Christopher Greatorex, make up the ESCC Archaeology Section. Greg and Chris are based at County Hall and using the HER they provide archaeological advice to ESCC, partner District and Borough planning authorities, Brighton and Hove City Council and the South Downs

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National Park Authority. My official job title is now Team Manager Heritage and Records, and I split my time between managing the Archaeology Section, Records Management at Hailsham and The Keep.

My archaeological work now focusses on advising on large infrastructure projects such as the Bexhill Hastings Link Road (now in post-excavation 'writing-up' phase with final reporting due in 2020) and advising on strategic, local and neighbourhood planning in the county.

East Sussex County Council's more recent records go to Ropemaker Park in Hailsham where they are kept along with the records of other organisations such as Wealden District Council, East Sussex Fire and Rescue and the Hastings and Rother Care Commissioning Group. Records deemed worthy of permanent retention are regularly transferred from Hailsham to The Keep, to take their place in the authority's archive, probably the largest and most diverse of any in the UK.

I have joined The Keep partnership at an interesting moment; three years since Her Majesty the Queen opened the building in October 2013. I join a tremendously knowledgeable group of staff from the three main partner organisations (East Sussex County Council, University of Sussex and Brighton and Hove Royal Pavilion Museums). The award of Accredited Status (see News from The Keep) on 22 February recognised the unique qualities of the collections, building, systems and staff. I have spent the first four

months since taking up the new post familiarising myself with all aspects of The Keep – though I realise there is still much for me to learn! What is clear to me already is that The Keep will attract more and more archives and visitors as a result of its unique qualities. This is of course good but it comes at a time when local authority budgets are decreasing in real terms as costs go up and support from central government decreases. To continue to maximise the potential of the archives, the knowledge and skills of the staff and to ensure that The Keep is a great place to work and visit, we will all need to work together to use our resources efficiently and generate more income. I know that with the staff we have, the support of the partner organisations and the help of FoTKA we will be able to continue to meet and improve on the qualities that won us accredited status.

News from The Keep

The award of Accredited Status was made to The Keep at a ceremony on 22 February 2017. The event was attended by the Lord Lieutenant Peter Field who was welcomed by County Archivist Christopher Whittick and introduced to Cllr Pragnell (Vice Chair ESCC), Cllr Glazier (Leader ESCC), Becky Shaw (CEO ESCC), Jeff James (Keeper at The National Archives), Professor Adam Tickell (Vice Chancellor University of Sussex) and Sarah Posey (Royal Brighton Pavilion Museums).

The accreditation award was presented by Jeff James, who unveiled a plaque which can be seen at the front reception desk. In his speech, Jeff praised the innovative partnership, building, systems and archives at The Keep as a world leader.

Peter Field responded on behalf of the three partners who share The Keep in his role not only as President of the Friends of the Keep Archives but also as Custos Rotulorum – Keeper of the Rolls – of the county of East Sussex and of Brighton and Hove. Peter explained to the audience that this is an ancient office which requires him to take a close interest in the welfare of the county's archives.

Accreditation defines good practice in the world of archives, and sets agreed standards for archive services across the UK; in so doing, it encourages and supports the development of the services who measure up to its exacting

standards. Only 62 archive services have achieved accreditation since the scheme began in 2013.

Peter went on to note that 'Here in East Sussex, we know we have an archive service which is second to none, and an archive building – The Keep – which must rival any such repository in the country. It is gratifying to see our convictions, which could be described as partial, confirmed by The National Archives, which is the arbiter of standards for archives throughout the UK. To achieve accreditation requires more than a building, however splendid



Peter Field and Jeff James cut the celebratory cake



Elizabeth and colleagues at the Accreditation ceremony

– the process examines and tests all aspects of the service provided – governance, policies, resources, staffing and facilities of all kinds. It is a stringent process which depends on extensive preparation by the applicant, a validation visit by the National Archives and the services of a peer reviewer.

It was particularly gratifying that Elizabeth Hughes, who led The Keep in achieving Accredited Status, was able to attend the ceremony and receive the recognition for all her hard work. The accreditation ceremony included a wonderful tea provided by local caterers Connie and Cooper and was followed by a lecture on Victorian and Edwardian Brighton and Hove by Dr Sue Berry.

Casper Johnson

Farewell to Elizabeth Hughes

These are extracts from an interview with Elizabeth by Lindsey Tydeman, the full version of which you can find on The Keep blog.

‘I didn’t want to wake up as a retired person. I wanted to wake up on holiday!’ The day after Elizabeth Hughes, County Archivist for Sussex, retired last year, she went to Dorset with her husband Michael. ‘I just didn’t want to be at home on that first morning.’

Elizabeth Hughes always knew she wanted a career in archives. She took a postgraduate diploma in archive studies at London University and from there went to work for Rolls Royce Aerospace. ‘But I really wanted to get involved in local authority archiving – it’s so varied – so I kept applying for those jobs.’ Soon she found a post as Assistant Archivist for Hampshire County Council where she did ‘the full range’, working with the public and cataloguing new accessions. After several years in Hampshire, Elizabeth gained a post as Deputy County Archivist for Berkshire. She had arrived at a crucial time; local government restructuring meant that there was a need for a new building to house the county archive and Elizabeth became involved in designing the public service side of the new Berkshire Record Office.

However, by the year 2000, just before the building opened, Elizabeth had moved on, this time to East Sussex. She remembers the first month vividly: ‘Twelve days after I started, Lewes flooded and so did the warehouse where the modern records were stored. A baptism of water! I learnt the hard way about how to salvage archives – in wellies, boiler suits and masks. I also learnt things about insurance and team building that I hadn’t known before. A specialist organisation took the records away and freeze-dried them, and although the salvage operation itself only lasted a week the whole process of cleaning and restoring the records to the archive took a year.’

The record office at The Maltings in Lewes was an historic building, quaint and full of character, but never suitable for purpose. In 2006, following an inspection by the National Archives, the County Council acknowledged that a new building was needed. ‘I started working with Wendy Walker, who had been seconded to act as Programme Manager for The Keep, and staff members from all three partners at The Keep and began a series of meetings with the design team from Kier. I count myself very fortunate to have been able to work so closely with the architects on the building. In so many cases, you get what you’re given, but here, all the mistakes are our own!’

Elizabeth Hughes has found the last seven years immensely fulfilling, if hard work. Seeing staff from the three partners working together successfully was a particular pleasure. 'Everyone comes from a different perspective with different employing authorities, but we've learnt from each other. I'll miss that dynamic and I'll miss the individuals that make The Keep such a great place.'

There are many plans for the future. 'I'm going to do a lot more music – maybe join a second choir – and get more involved with recorder playing, something I've been doing for 50 years. And I want to be able to go out with my husband Mike whenever the weather is nice, not just at the weekend.'

But I'll miss showing people around The Keep. That was my opportunity to enthuse about archives in general and how important they are. It was very rewarding when I could see visitors responding and understanding. The Keep is an exciting place and I'm sure I'll be back as a volunteer. In fact, there's a project getting underway to read and transcribe poor law vouchers, which were the payments made by parish officers to local suppliers for the goods they gave to the poor. The Keep has one of the best collections in the country.' She's thinking for a moment: 'Actually, that could be right up my street!'

Visit to Lewes Town Hall on 20 February

About 35 members gathered in the entrance hall of Lewes Town Hall to be met and welcomed by the mayor of Lewes, Councillor Dr Graham Mayhew.

The Town Hall conceals the ancient Star Inn. We descended to the mediaeval barrel-vaulted undercroft, part of a large freehold originally owned by Lewes Priory.

By 1554 the Star Inn was a shelter for pilgrims on their way to the shrines of St Thomas at Canterbury or St Richard at Chichester. In the mid 16th century, Protestant 'martyrs' were held in the

undercroft, before climbing the "Martyr Steps", a 14th century stairway leading from the undercroft up to the High Street, to be burnt at the stake.

Moving back to the eighteenth century, we saw one of the great glories of the building, the fine staircase. Probably dating from between 1580 and 1610, it was brought from Slaugham Place in 1732 by landowner Thomas Surgison. The carvings depict the continents, virtues, the senses and Greek gods. Then to the impressive assembly room: designed by Samuel Denman of Brighton in 1893, in renaissance style,

it was built on what had been the stables and coach houses of the Star Inn. In this room are two fine paintings of Syrian chiefs, by Nicaise (Nicasius) de Keyser of the Belgian romantic school. All but forgotten now, he was much sought after in the 19th century; these examples of his work were formerly in the collection of a King of Holland.



*Portrait of a Syrian Chief
by Nicaise de Keyser*

The council chamber dates from the reconstruction of the building in 1732 by Thomas Surgison. Balls and assemblies took place there, and Jane Austen apparently referred to the room in her unfinished novel 'The Waltons'. In the Mayor's parlour, there is a fine collection of silver. We saw the mace given by W.C. Christie in 1882, the 18 carat gold badge and chain given in 1881 and a small silver mace made by Lewes silversmith Samuel Solomon.

Christopher Whittick then gave us a riveting talk on how the town was governed from the 12th century. A merchant guild (gild) was restored to its members in 1148. Thereafter, reeves and bailiffs played a part in what was the manorial borough of Lewes. By mid-16th century, though, Lewes was governed by an aristocratic corporate body known as the Society or Fellowship of twelve, with high constables, junior constables, two Headboroughs and lesser officers. The power of the Twelve continued until the last election in the late 17th century.

In 1806, Improvement Committees were established and, in 1812, the old Town Hall was demolished. Christopher had brought an original painting from The Keep, the last illustration of the Town Hall before demolition. In 1881, the charter of incorporation was granted allowing the creation of the Lewes Borough Council, with Mayor, Alderman and Councillors. Shortly thereafter the Star Inn was purchased for £5100 but was not fully converted until after the formation of East Sussex County Council in the late 19th century.

Finally the Mayor, Christopher Whittick and Philip Pople of FoTKA came together around an extensive display of maps, plans and documents from the Town Hall, which had been recently assembled and organised by Philip. These were handed over with due ceremony by the Mayor to Christopher for safe keeping at The Keep, a fitting conclusion to a memorable day. Members expressed their appreciation to all concerned.



The Mayor Graham Mayhew, Christopher Whittick and Philip Pople inspect the documents

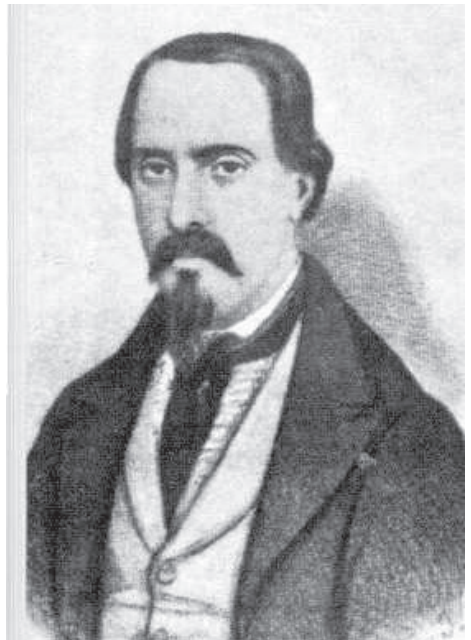
Our friends at WSAS are holding a one day conference on Maritime Sussex on Saturday 23 September at Pagham Village Hall. Further details will be available on their website at westsussexarchivessociety.webplus.net.

Pam Combes Memorial lecture

This second in the series will take place after the FoTKA AGM, at 6.30pm on Wednesday 18 October at The Keep (the AGM will take place at 5.30pm). The lecture is open to all without charge. It will be given by Christopher Whittick, who has contributed this tantalising introduction.

On 18 November 1887, Mr Charles Montfort died at 25 Seafeld Rd, Hove, at the age of 65. While living in London, Mr Montfort had been a founder member of the London Photographic Society, but otherwise lived quietly with his wife and family.

So far so unremarkable. But in the eyes of a significant proportion of the population of Spain, and their supporters in other European countries, Charles Montfort was their king, the Infante Juan de Borbon y Braganza, son of Don Carlos, pretender to the Iberian throne. The most prominent of these supporters was the Earl of Ashburnham, among whose family papers is a mass of material which enables us to tell the story of the remarkable journey undertaken by Don Juan's body, and that of his mother, to the Carlist memorial in Trieste cathedral.



Don Juan in different guises

Looking forward to summer visits

Visit to Firle Place and Church

Members have already been contacted with details of a very special visit to Firle Place and St Peter's Church, which will take place on Monday 5 June. This visit has been designed for FoTKA members in conjunction with Deborah Gage, whose family have owned Firle Place for over 500 years, and promises to be a highlight of our visit programme. Deborah Gage herself and Christopher Whittick will be our guides on the day, which will include a talk and tour of the house and a delicious lunch, followed by a visit to the church. Firle is particularly important to The Keep, which houses its significant archive of muniments and manorial rolls. The records of the manor of Alciston, with only two owners – the Benedictine monks of Battle Abbey and the Gage family – since 1066, are merely the most outstanding.

Firle Place lies surrounded by its park in the shadow of Firle Beacon. The Medieval core was extended by 1543 by Sir John Gage KG (1479-1556), trusted counsellor of Henry VIII, built of Caen stone and re-modelled in the eighteenth century to provide its Georgian façade. The celebrated works of art now housed at Firle reflect the taste of successive generations of collectors and familial relationships. Amongst them are many treasures of national significance.

As befits the importance of this visit, the occasion will be a fundraiser for FoTKA. Tickets at £75 per member and £80 for a guest are going quickly as numbers are limited, so book your place early.

Visit to Powder Mills Hotel

This visit will take place at 10am on September 6th.

Powder Mills Hotel is a lovely Grade II listed building, set in landscaped gardens within walking distance of Battle. Built in 1784 as a Gunpowder Owner's residence, it was restored as an hotel in 1980. The gunpowder mill operated from the late C17 until 1876 and was rebuilt after an explosion in 1796. As well as the proprietor's residence, it housed various process buildings, which probably included the single-storey ranges at the rear. The apparent concentration of processes in one large structure is unique in the gunpowder industry, the buildings of which were usually highly dispersed in single-process structures. We shall be meeting the owner of the hotel and other knowledgeable speakers.

You can book places for these visits via the website www.fotka.org.uk, by contacting visitsfotka@btinternet.com, or by sending in a booking form. Members have already been sent forms for Firle, and a form for the Powder Mills Hotel visit is enclosed.

Talks at The Keep – May to August 2017

Join us for a summer of art, culture and history!

Sussex Modernism, a talk with lecturer and curator Dr Hope Wolf, Thursday 11 May, 5.30-6.30pm, £3; booking advised, pay on the door.

The Lost Theatres of Brighton, a talk with local historian Christopher Horlock, Wednesday 24 May, 2.30-3.30pm, £3; booking advised, pay on the door.

Ravilious and Friends, a talk with author and curator Andy Friend, Tuesday 27 June, 5.30-7pm, £10 including glass of sparkling wine or soft drink. Advance booking and payment essential.

Peggy Angus and British Women Artists, a talk with author and artist Carolyn Trant, Wednesday 12 July, 2.30-3.30pm, £3; booking advised, pay on the door.

Step Back in Time – A History of The Argus, a talk with local historian Paul Green, Wednesday 26 July, 5.30-6.30pm, £3; booking advised, pay on the door.

Conservation workshops – practical sessions with The Keep's conservator

An Introduction to Preserving Old Documents (including family photographs, letters or deeds), Wednesday 7 June, 2-4pm, £10; Advance booking and payment essential.

An Introduction to Bookbinding, Saturday 19 August, 10am-4pm, £80; Advance booking and payment essential.

For more details and to book a place, please call 01273 482349 or visit The Keep's website, www.thekeep.info/events

