

# SUSSEX INDUSTRIAL HISTORY



**NUMBER 43**

**2013**



**Printing Works, St John's Street, Chichester**  
**Heathfield Natural Gas**  
**Argos Hill Post Mill**  
**Offham Smock Mill**  
**Turnpike through East Grinstead**  
**Turnpikes of the High Weald**

**£5.00**

# SUSSEX INDUSTRIAL HISTORY



**Journal of the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society**

*AIA Publication Award 2010 and 2011*

**FORTY-THREE**

**2013**

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*Cover illustration — Painting of Offham Mill, near Lewes, by William Luker, 1865  
(Reproduced by permission of Somerset County Council Heritage Service)*

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## FORMER PRINTING WORKS IN ST. JOHN'S STREET, CHICHESTER

*Ron Martin*

The site is located at SU 863047 at the rear of No.4 St. John's Street, Chichester and adjacent to St. John's Street Chapel. The plot is 32.2 m (106 ft.) long, east to west and 10.8 m (35 ft.) north to south and this orientation has been used throughout this article. The site is bounded on the east side by the City wall, although it is recognised that the wall as extant was probably built on top of the foundations of the original wall, and possibly using some of the material from its demolition. The south side is the boundary wall of St. John's Chapel, which is ramped up towards the east. The ground level of the rear of the site and all the other plots was banked up, probably over the remains of the demolished city wall and this is shown on the 1812 Street Plan (fig. 1). The west side is the rear boundary wall of No.4 St. John's Street and the north side is the recent wall of Nos. 51 - 55 East Street.

The various buildings on the site have been indicated on the site plan (fig. 2) with letter references (A to F). The buildings on the site comprised a two storey longitudinal range along the

south side (C), with a cross wing at the east end (A and B). To the west of the longitudinal wing was a single storey extension (D) and beyond this at the southwest corner of the site was another single storey building (E). Along the north boundary was a recent Store and Toilet Block (F). The area between the buildings A and C was an open yard partly roofed in.

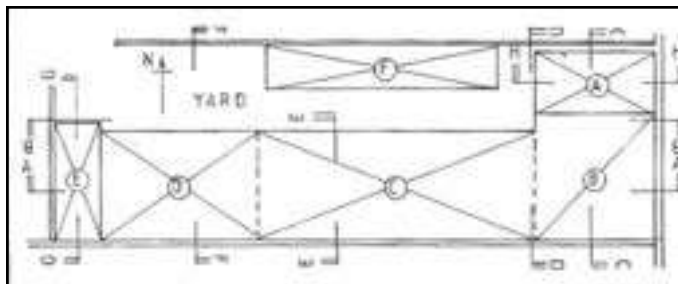


Fig. 2 Site plan (author)

The site was formerly part of the land known as the Black Friars and at the early part of the nineteenth century was owned by John Augustus Crosbie. In 1807 he entered into an agreement with one John Dearing to develop the area to be known as New Town.<sup>1</sup> This area is bounded on the north by East Street, and on the west by Baffins Lane and George Street, and on the south and east by the city wall. The area was divided into plots each 30 feet wide and the objective was to encourage the building of town houses suitable for occupation by the "professional classes", no industrial development being allowed, although this seems to have been honoured in name only.

Three plots were bought in 1811 in what was then known as Friar Street, by a group of business men with the intention of building a chapel, known as a 'peculiar' and directly under the control of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Mr. John Cooper was employed to construct a boundary wall on the north side of their side. This wall is still extant and formed the south boundary of the site of the printing works.

In a sale of 1811 John Cooper, bought three plots immediately to the north of the chapel. He is described as a coal merchant but was also a general builder. It was John Cooper who built St. John's Chapel but later got into financial difficulties and the site was sold in 1830, when it was described as "72 feet by 168 feet and occupied by a timber yard and several messuages or tenements."<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1830s, No.4 St. John's Street was erected on part of the premises of Mr. Cooper's timber yard. It latterly was occupied by William Johnson, who



Fig. 1 Extract from 1812 Chichester Street Plan by George Loader. The chapel is marked F and the boundary of New Town is indicated by a broken line.

was described as a builder, surveyor, contractor, plumber and painter but also practised as a funeral-furnishing business on the site. In 1907 the northern party of the site was sold by Johnson and became part of The Chichester Motor Works.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1875 *Chichester Directory*, W. Johnson's premises were referred to as "The City Steam Saw Mills"<sup>3</sup> and a newspaper advertisement for April 1875 referred to "capacious sawmills ... The works will contain a powerful horizontal engine and two Cornish boilers which will be fitted up by Mr. Buchan of the Caledonian Ironworks, Chichester [See Note 3]. Sawing and planing will be undertaken".<sup>4</sup> An 1876 map (fig. 3) shows the eastern range of buildings extending as far as the north boundary of the site, but there is no positive evidence for the location of the boiler and engine house.

The firm of Moore and Tillyer "Regnum Press" was established in 1875 and the printing operations were transferred to St. John's Street in c.1908. The business continued on this site until September, 2003, when the firm relocated to Fernhurst. The two windows in the south boundary wall were inserted in 1950 with

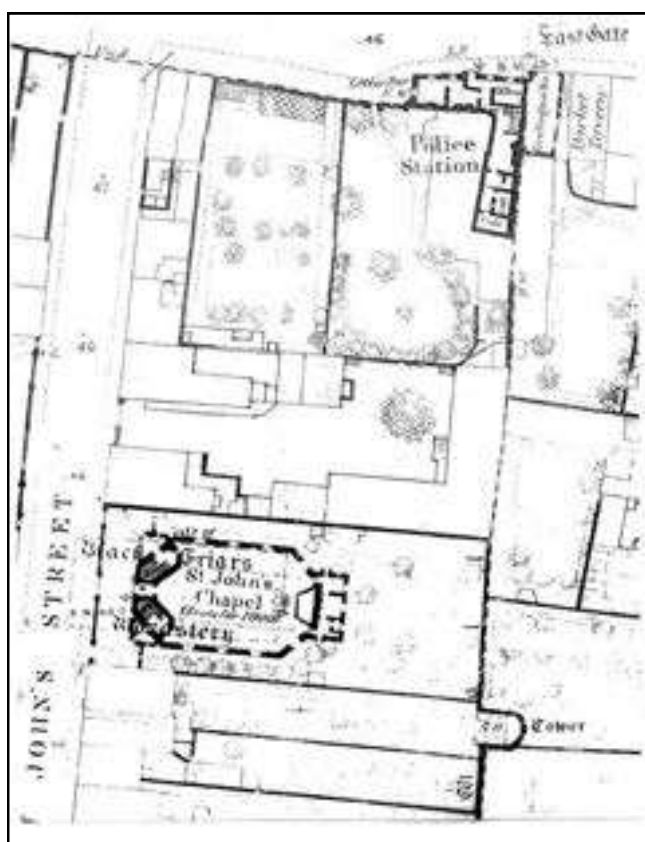


Fig. 3 Part of 1:500 Ordnance Survey 1st edition map of 1876, sheets LXI/7/22 and LXI/22/17, partially redrawn by the author to eliminate distortion

the permission of the St. John's Trustees to whom Messrs. Moore and Tillyer paid an annual way leave of 19s 11d (99.5p).<sup>5</sup>

The use of the building as a printing works went through various phases. The upper storey of Building A was once used as an Art Room with western part as a Dark Room. It had more recently been used as the Bindery together with the room under. The ground floor of Building B and east part of C was used as a Warehouse, with the west end of Building C and part of D as the Machine Room. The first floor of Buildings B and C was the Compositing Room (see Fig. 4) with the Monotype Keyboard Room partitioned off at the west end in the 1950s. This more recently became the Manager's Office. The room at the east end of Building B was another Office. Area D was formerly the Monotype Keyboard Room until this was moved upstairs in the 1950s but had recently been use as a Reception Area. Building E was possibly originally a stable, but was then later used as the Monotype Casting Room.



Fig. 4 An interior view of the Compositing Room of Moore and Tillyer's printing works prior to the arrival of new technology (Derek Tillyer)

Building F, comprising Toilets, Stores and Bicycle Stores, were built in c.1974 and at the same time part of the yard was roofed over. The whole site was demolished in 2011 apart from the boundary walls, prior to its being redeveloped.<sup>6</sup>

### Description of the Buildings

The north boundary wall is brick. All the other boundary walls are of flint rubble, the south one being the north wall of the St. John's Chapel premises. The east wall is raised on the foundation of the original city wall, in which there is a bricked up door opening and two windows.

**Building A** was two storeys high 6.4 x 3.4 m (21 ft. x 11 ft.) and was built against the city wall at the east side. The walls of the ground storey were a mixture of flint rubble, sand lime brickwork (See Note 1), breeze concrete blockwork and brick piers with flint panels. The first storey was timber framed with the corner posts still extant but the west side had a brick wall half-brick thick supported on a 6"4" RSJ, above which were timber casements. The east wall was timber-framed, but with an inner skin of 3" breeze concrete blocks and contained a timber casement. The north wall was brick and there was evidence of an external chimney breast (see fig. 5). The south wall was part 3" breeze block and part timber framing.



Fig. 5 A view of the printing works and St John's Chapel from the north in 1974 when the adjacent garage was being demolished (Derek Tillyer)

The ground floor was softwood boarding on 2" x 4" joists on brick sleeper walls built on oversite concrete. The first floor was supported on 2" x 7" softwood joists running north – south carried at the north end on a 5" x 13" wooden beam.

The roof was supported on one king post roof truss at the north end and on the breeze partition at the south end, with 3" x 6" purlins, two to each slope and 2" x 3" rafters. It was covered with clay plain tiles. There was evidence of a former staircase on the east wall, with a quarter space landing returning along the north wall.

**Building B.** occupied the south-east corner of the site and was 6.4 x 7 m (21 ft. x 23 ft.) and was built against the city wall at the east and the boundary wall to the Chapel on the south side. The east wall was flint rubble, the inner face having been rebuilt in brickwork. It appears that this wall had been raised as the nature of the upper part the rubble walling changes, when viewed externally. There is a corbel to support a chimney stack at the south end, which was carried up to eaves level with an 1'6" x 1'6" brick chimney stack which had been demolished down to roof level. There is a blocked up door opening in the east wall with a segmental brick arch over. There are also blocked up window openings,

two in the east wall and one in the south wall

The west side was a timber framed structure three bays long, with chamfered timber posts supporting a timber beam at first floor level. There was evidence of two other posts at the north and south ends and there was probably one at the south end, subsequently replaced with brick piers. This side appeared to have been originally open at ground floor level but at first floor level the west side was probably weatherboarded. The south wall above first floor level was timber framed, and was covered externally with weatherboarding.

The ground floor was solid concrete covered with herring-bone pattern hardwood blocks, but some of these had been lifted and a concrete trolley track inserted.

The first floor was boarded and supported on 2" x 7" joists which were carried on two timber beams running east to west, each with an intermediate timber post. In the centre bay there was a filled in trap door 1.52 x 1.98 m (5' 0" x 6' 6"). There was no evidence of any hoisting apparatus.

A new straight flight open tread staircase had been inserted in the north side giving access to the upper storey, enclosed by 2" timber stud framing.

The roof was half-hipped, with a projecting open eaves and was carried on a timber plate along the west wide supported by the timber posts and on a 4" x 3" wall plate bedded on the top of the east wall. The rafters were 2" x 3" with two 3" x 6" purlins to each slope, which were carried on two king post roof trusses. The roof was covered with clay plain tiles with half round ridges and bonnet hips. In the north roof slope a timber roof light had been inserted. In the south east corner there had recently been built an office with 2" stud walls, with a false ceiling, a door and a borrowed light. The east and south walls had been battened out and lined with hardboard.

**Building C** was a two storey high extension of the main block along the south boundary wall 14.9 x 5.8m (49 ft. x 19 ft.) and was five bays long. The ground storey was constructed with brick piers along the north and south sides, the latter abutting the flint wall of the Chapel boundary but were not bonded thereto. The north side was originally open fronted and at a later date was infilled with a dwarf brick wall 9" thick with fixed timber casements above.

In the south boundary wall are two fixed steel

casements which had been inserted into the flint rubble wall with brick dressings and concrete lintels.

The upper storey was entirely timber framed. Along the north and south sides there was a timber plate resting on the brick piers. The upper surface of this plate could be seen where a new staircase had been inserted and this showed where rafters have been notched over the plate, thus indicating that this building was originally single storeyed with a pitched roof.

The first floor was supported on 2" x 7" softwood joists running east to west with softwood steel tongued timber boarding, and was subsequently covered with plywood sheet flooring. The joists were carried on timber beams carried on the piers, which were stiffened with wrought iron tie bars, bracketed down at the centre and strapped at each end. At about the centre there were supplementary supports, two with 3" diameter cast iron posts and two with 9" square brick piers. In the north side a timber staircase had been cut into the floor with a straight flight and open treads.

The upper storey walls were all timber framed covered externally, along the north and south sides with weather boarding and on the west side with wooden shiplap boarding. Internally, there was a mixture of weather boarding, plain edged boarding, Essex boards and hardboard.

The roof was half-hipped with a projecting open eaves constructed with 2" x 3" softwood rafters with two 3" x 6" purlins to each slope, supported on wooden trusses, with principal rafters, ties and struts and with two wrought iron hangers to each truss. The roof was covered with triple angle clay tiles (See Note 2) with matching ridges and angular hip tiles, which extended over the south-west part of Building B. There were two wooden roof lights in the north slope with wooden glazing bars.

Along the ground storey of the north side there was a continuous row of fixed glazing with vertical glazing bars and lapped glass and a pair of double doors, hung directly to the structural frame. Immediately above the floor plate was an almost continuous row of clerestory lights with wooden top-hung opening casements. In the south wall there were four small timber fixed windows and in the first storey in the west wall there were five windows at various levels some fixed and some with opening casements.

The west end bay had been partitioned off at first

floor level with a 4" stud partition including a door and borrowed light and the external walls had been battened and lined with hardboard. The staircase had been surrounded with a 2" stud framing

Over the easternmost double doors there was a loading beam, the tail held down by a wooden beam and the front end projecting beyond the external wall face and lead capped.

**Building D** was a single storey 8.6 x 5.9 m (28'3" x 19'4") built against the south boundary wall. The east end of this area was contiguous with Building C, but the west end was divided into an Office area, Toilets and a Boiler Room. Between the two parts was a 9" brick wall located not quite centrally with another wall across the east end of 9" thick concrete blockwork. The north external wall was of brick, 9" thick, with timber casements and two external doors. The roof is pitched, asymmetrically and was covered with asbestos-cement sheeting, Canada pattern to the north slope and with standard corrugations to the south slope, the latter containing four recent roof lights.

The toilet area contained a WC with a high level cast iron flushing cistern of interesting bow-fronted pattern bearing the legend "Holt & Sons, Builder, Chichester".

The remains of a sloping timber chute ran originally from the upper end of Building C. This was used to return lead type to the Caster Room in Building E.<sup>7</sup>

**Building E** comprised a single storey building, 2.6 x 6.6 m (8'6" x 21'8") built against the south and west boundary walls. The south wall had been raised in brickwork 4½" thick and the west wall had been raised in brickwork 9" thick. The east side was a 9" brick wall and contains two door openings leading into Building D, one of which had been filled in. The north wall is 4½" thick and contained a wooden door and sidelight. The floor was asphalt laid over weak concrete. The gabled roof was close-coupled with 2" x 4" timber rafters and ties, and was covered with clay plain tiles with angular ridge tiles. There was one timber and one small cast iron opening roof light in the east slope of the roof.

**Building F**, along the north boundary was a recent store and toilet block, 12.4 x 2.3 m (40'8" x 7'6") comprising Ladies and Gents Toilets and four Storerooms, two open fronted. The walls were of red/brown facing bricks in stretcher bond and the toilets had softwood windows and doors. The roof was covered with low pitched corrugated fibreglass



sheeting. Part of the area between Buildings C and F had been covered with corrugated fibreglass roof sheeting, open fronted and supported on purlins and beams. The double door at the east end on the first storey of Building C had been rendered incapable of being opened as a result.

### Interpretation

The phasing is conjectural. It seems probable that the ground floors of Buildings A, B and C were built before the upper storeys over these areas. It also seems likely that Building E predated Building D as an isolated building, possibly a stable.

The first building on the site was almost certainly Building A, with an open front, probably extending northwards into the adjoining plot. Buildings B and C were probably used originally for timber storage as a single storey with an open front.

The upper floor extension over Building A was possibly used as an office with staircase for access built against the City wall, possibly as a single straight flight extending northwards into the adjacent area.

The first floor extension over Building B was probably originally used for timber storage with an open front, the access trap in the floor being used for hoisting material to the upper level. At this stage the west side would have been open at the top with dwarf height weatherboarding under. The staircase in this building was inserted some time before 1974 when the one in Building A was removed.<sup>8</sup>

Building C was originally one storey high with a pitched roof. It is possible that the ground storey of Building C was infilled with glazing along the north side before the upper storey was added. It was noted that none of these windows had opening lights, so it is speculative what this part was used for at this time. A strange feature was the clerestory windows along the north side of area C which were inserted when the upper storey was built. They provided very little additional light as they are partially masked by the new floor. What they did provide was ventilation as none of the windows below were capable of being opened.

Building E was possibly built as a free -standing stable.

### Notes

1. Sand lime bricks

Sand lime bricks were being made at the Midhurst

Brickworks from 1913, but the large scale production of this material, later known as Midhurst Whites, was from 1925<sup>9</sup>.

### 2 Triple angle tiles

It is not known when these tiles were applied – they were being made in Bridgwater in the 1860s and may have been exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition. Prior to the First World War Bridgwater had been for 100 years the most important centre of manufacture of clay tiles in Britain and probably the World. However, due to competition of the popularity of plain tiles, and to the Arts and Crafts Movement, the introduction of Marley concrete tiles and the importation of cheaper French and Belgium tiles, the production at Bridgwater declined.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. The Caledonian Ironworks

This was located in Caledonian Road and was founded by Peter Buchan in 1874 as a rival to Halsted and Sons. In 1896 the work was extended into Stirling Road but the firm closed down in 1905 leaving Halsteds with the Chichester monopoly.<sup>11</sup>

### Acknowledgements

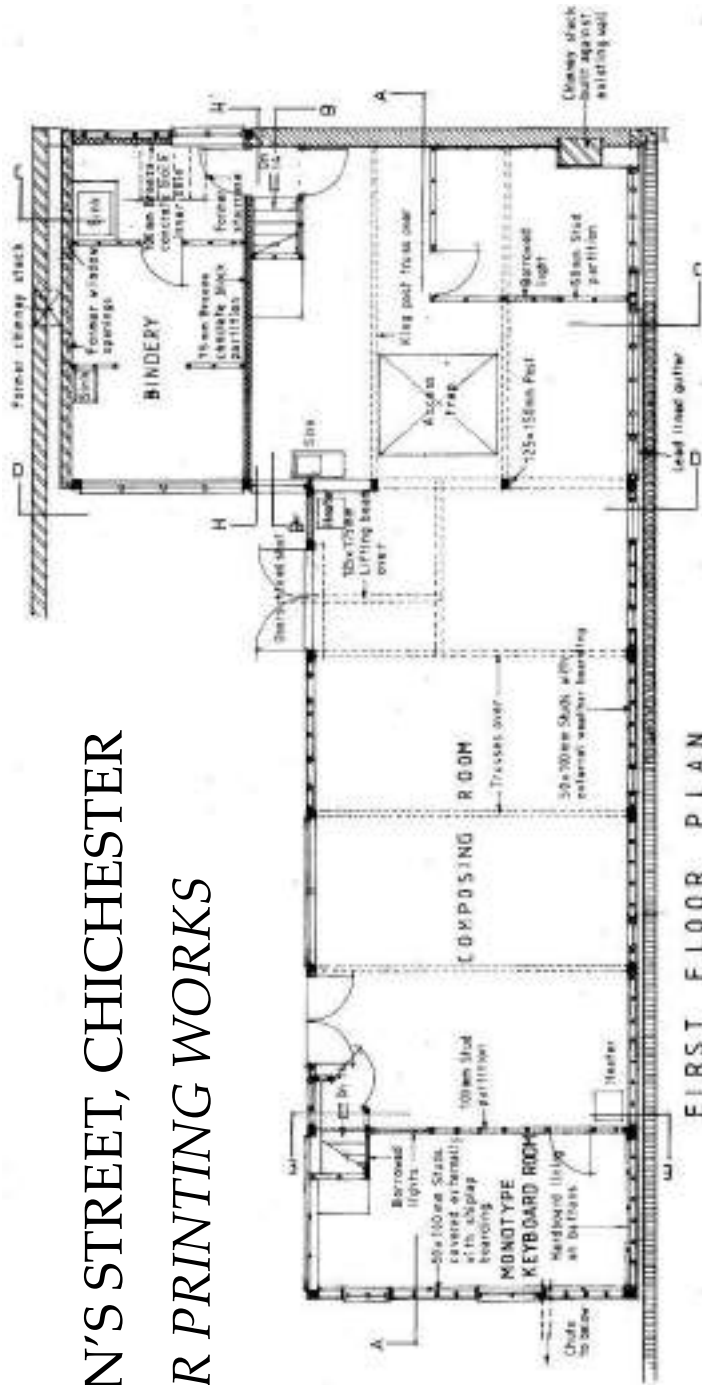
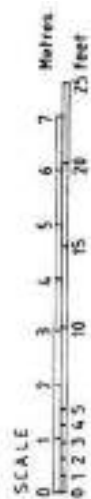
The author is grateful to Mr. Mark Penfold of Provincial and Western Homes for allowing free access to the site and to Mr. Derek Tillyer for his advice and comments about the history of the family firm, the use to which the buildings were put and the printing processes. The assistance in carrying out the survey and support and encouragement from Mr Alan Green are also appreciated.

### References

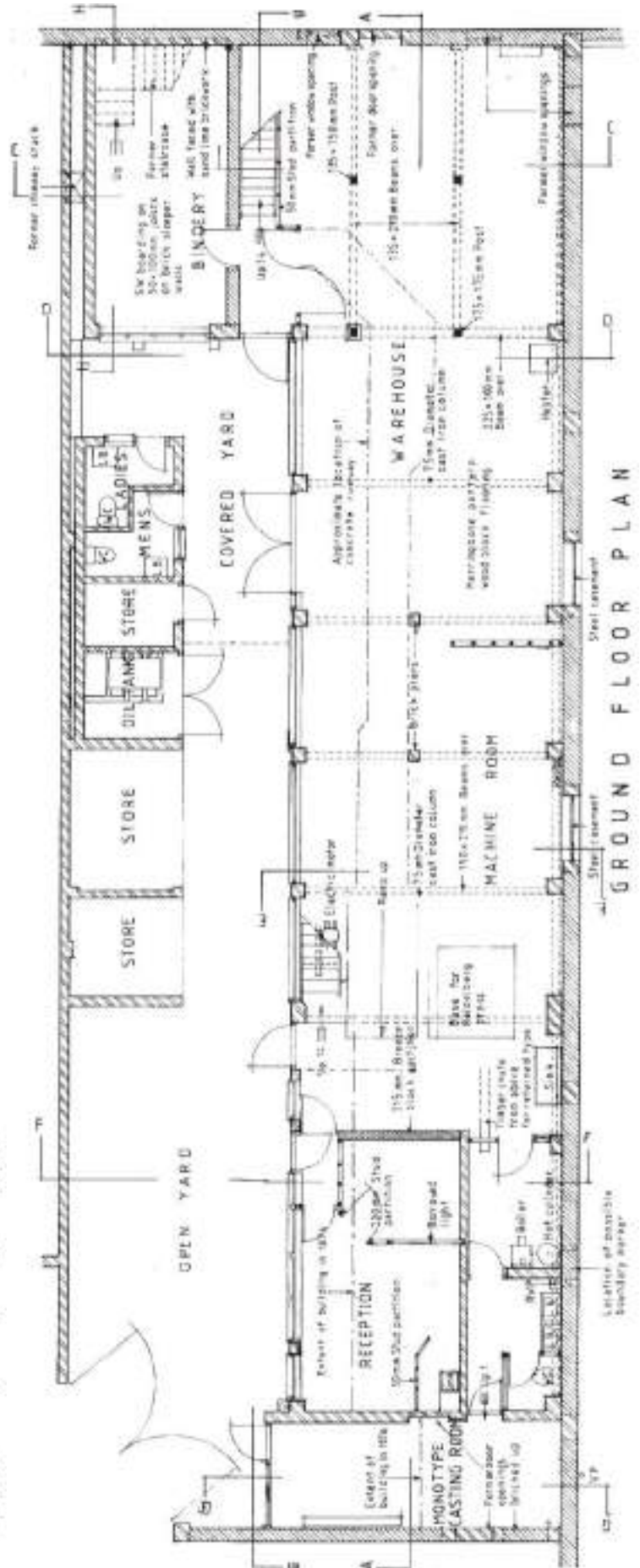
1. A.H.J. Green, *St. John's Chapel and the New Town* Chichester, (2005), 50
2. *Ibid*, 14
3. *Ibid*, 133
4. *West Sussex Gazette*, 15 April 1875
5. A.H.J.Green *op.cit*, 140
6. A.H.J. Green, personal comment
7. Moore & Tillyer Archive
8. Mr.Derek Tillyer, personal comment
9. Ron Martin, *Cocking Lime Works*, Sussex Industrial History Issue 33, (2003), 23-31
10. Thornton Kay, *Roof Tiles – Bridgwater, demise of, The Salvo Guide* 2000, 219
11. A.H.J. Green, personal comment

# ST. JOHN'S STREET, CHICHESTER FORMER PRINTING WORKS

<b>KEY TO MATERIALS</b>	
	Brickwork
	Roof truss
	Concrete structure
	In situ concrete
	Timber structure
<b>ST. JOHN'S STREET, CHICHESTER</b>	
<b>FORMER PRINTING WORKS</b>	
DRAWING No. 1	
Ground and first floor plans	
SCALE: 1:50 (on A1 sheet)	
DATE: August 2005	
Drawn by and © R.G. Martin	



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

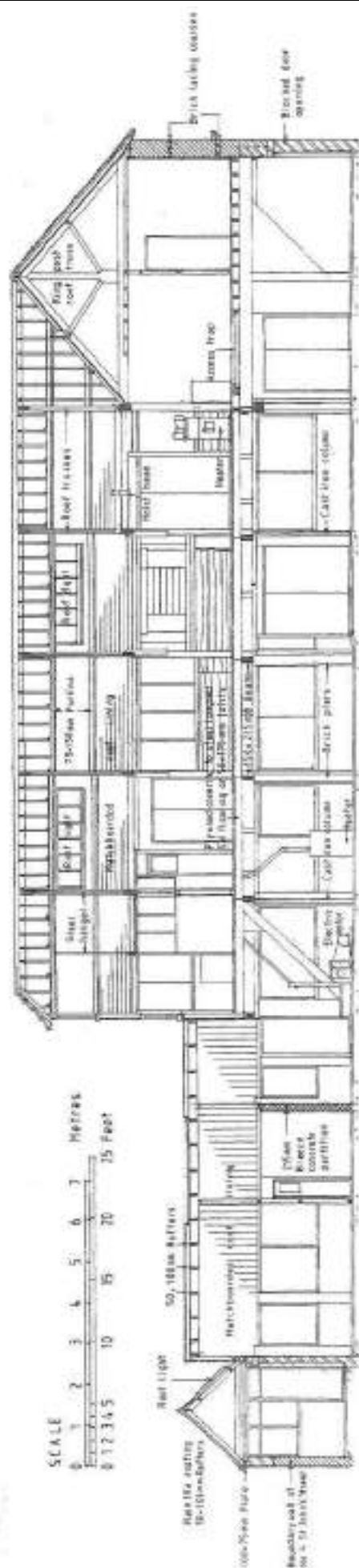


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

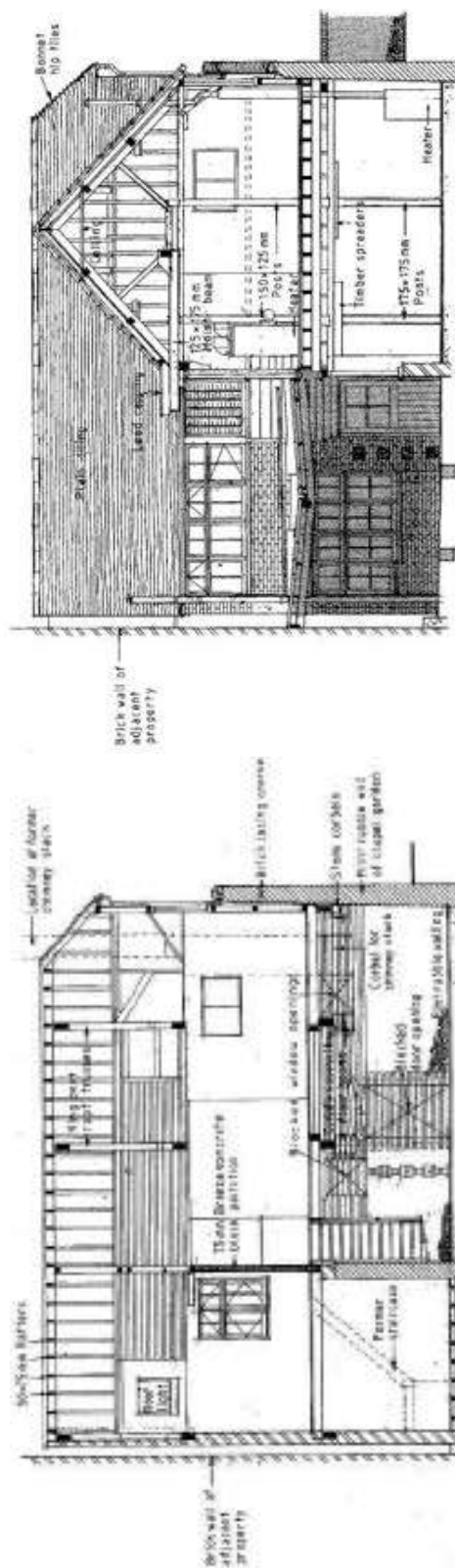
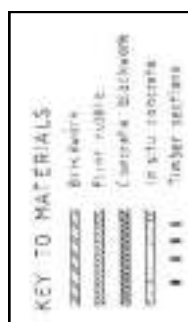




ST. JOHN'S STREET, CHICHESTER  
FORMER PRINTING WORKS

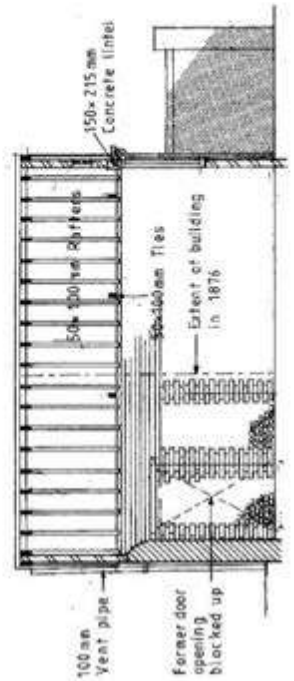


SECTION A-A

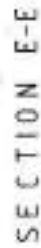


SECTION D-D

SECTION C-C



SECTION G-G G-G



St. JOHN'S STREET,  
CHICHESTER

**FORMER PRINTING WORKS**

DRAWING No. 4

Sections E-E, F-F, G-G and H-H

SCALE: 1:50 (on A1 sheet)

DATE: August 2005

Drawn by and © R.G. Martin

## THE STORY OF HEATHFIELD'S NATURAL GAS FIND

*John Blackwell*

*"If we can prove incontestably that we have one immense gas field lying under the whole of the Weald then we can revolutionise the industrial life of southern England."* (Richard Pearson. Evidence before the Royal Commission on Coal Supplies, 1903)

### Introduction

Natural gas was not widely used in the United Kingdom for domestic or industrial purposes, coal (town) gas being used, until the conversion programme during the decade 1967-77. This followed the development of the North Sea gas fields. In the USA natural gas was first piped a few miles to the city of Pittsburgh in 1884 and in 1891 a (rudimentary) 120 mile pipe line carried gas from the fields in Indiana to Chicago. By 1900 gas had been discovered in 17 states. It quickly became the primary heating fuel for the iron and steel and glass making industries inaugurating a rapid expansion; by 1911 Pittsburgh was producing between one third and one half of the nation's steel. However in the opening years of the twentieth century a small town situated in the weald of Sussex sought to emulate these transatlantic cities. It would be a story of misplaced optimism and complete failure, a footnote in the county's history with only one tiny fragment now remaining; a reminder of a few months when derricks blotted the landscape and boring operations shattered the peace of the inhabitants for twenty four hours of the day.

### Initial Discoveries

In 1880 the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LB&SCR) extended its branch line from Hailsham to Eridge to join the route to Tunbridge Wells. Watering facilities were provided at Heathfield where surface water was collected in a sump and pumped up to a cast iron storage tank situated on top of a brick tower. From there it was fed by gravity to two water cranes, one sited at the end of each platform. Heathfield being on the high weald meant that the water table level fluctuated considerably, and during very dry spells the well was prone to run dry. In August 1896 it was decided to drill for a more reliable source.

"Accordingly a 6 inch bore-tube was sunk,

commencing at the bottom of the (existing) sump 73 feet deep, into which the surface water had been allowed to flow. Gas appears to have been discovered a long time before its inflammable properties were tested, a strong odour of gas having been noticed for some days, but the smell was attributed to the presence of 'foul air' in the bore-tube. At the depth of 312 feet from the level of the permanent way the smell and rush of the gas were so pronounced that (by way of experiment) someone applied a lighted match to it, when a body of flame sprang up, the height of which is variously stated, the maximum estimate being 16 feet. It was extinguished with great difficulty, by means of damped cloths being thrown over the mouth of the tube. The gas continued to increase during the remainder of the depth bored. The boring was abandoned at the depth of 377 feet, no useful amount of water having been obtained. The wrought iron tubes were withdrawn from the borehole with the exception of about one length which still remains in the ground, the tube being continued upward to near the top of the sump. A cast iron cap has been screwed on to the top of the bore-tube with a ½ inch bend and stopcock affixed thereto allowing a continuous escape of gas for the past 18 months".<sup>1</sup>

The railway company were apparently unaware that only one hundred yards away in the stable yard of the new Heathfield (later Station) Hotel, now the car park of a Sainsbury's supermarket, an artesian well had been sunk in 1895.

"At a depth of 228 feet, the foreman of the work noticed that water that had been put down the bore-hole to assist the working of the tools was 'boiling'. As he was about to lower a candle to discover the cause, the gas arising from the bubbles caught fire and burnt to 'about the height of a man' Subsequently the foreman attached small tubes and ignited the gas at a distance of 15yards from the bore-hole. Although he appears to have reported the details of the strata traversed to his employers he does not seem to have mentioned the discovery of the gas".<sup>2</sup>

The boring was not carried any deeper as no water had been discovered. The bore-hole was capped and used as a sump.

This was not the first recorded discovery of natural gas in Sussex, that was contained in the 13th Quarterly Report of the *Record of Sub-Wealden Exploration* (Netherfield) edited by Henry Willett, published in 1875. At this site near Battle borings were being made to ascertain whether coal bearing strata as in Belgium and the Boulonais district of France extended across the English Channel. The Report stated:

"that in making experiments on the temperature, etc. at

various depths, and on lowering a light in the bore-tube, an explosion occurred. Strange oscillations in the depth of the water are reported to have been noticed, which at the time were attributed (*inter alia*) to the discharge of inflammable gases derived probably 'from the petroleum-bearing strata beneath' (the Kimeridge Clay)".

There the matter could have rested were it not for the interest taken by Charles Dawson an Uckfield solicitor and amateur geologist (later to be implicated with the Piltdown Man fraud). How Dawson heard of the discovery is not clear but it is possible that his friendship with John Taylor, the Uckfield Rural District Council's Inspector of Nuisances, Surveyor, Sanitary Engineer and (strangely) Petroleum Officer was the source. Another friend Samuel Allinson Woodhead, a lecturer in chemistry at Uckfield Agricultural College<sup>3</sup> set up a makeshift laboratory at the Heathfield station bore-hole to analyse the gas. He found a high percentage of marsh gas (methane), no impurities and stated the gas was a 'petroleum derivative';<sup>4</sup> exciting news implying there may be oil deposits lying below the Sussex Weald. Dawson submitted a preliminary paper to the journal *Nature* which was published in December 1897, and following receipt of Woodhead's analysis a fuller report was published in the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* in August 1898. Dawson gave demonstrations to the Royal Geographic Society in London on 8 June 1898 and to the Brighton & Hove Natural History and Philosophical Society at Heathfield station on the following Saturday. There "four lights were shown in the pumping station, three incandescent and one naked and as far as could be seen there was no difference between the natural supply and that obtained from public companies".<sup>5</sup> In August 1899 the railway company laid a two inch main from the tubing in the borehole and the "whole station was lighted with upwards of 20 incandescent burners which have since given great satisfaction and would be even more satisfactory if a gasholder had been used to regulate the pressure".<sup>6</sup>

Dawson's papers and demonstrations prompted much coverage in both the local and national press including an article in the *Standard* where the writer stated "the quantity of gas escaping from a single bore at Heathfield would yield a sufficient supply for lighting a small town and it has been suggested that it might be 'piped-off' to illuminate Hailsham, Eastbourne, or Tunbridge Wells".<sup>7</sup> This prompted a

Mr William Carter who lived at nearby Cross in Hand to write to the editor stating "the whole of the surrounding land (about 18 acres) on either side of the railway is my property ... and I am open to negotiate to ascertain the quantity, as no doubt now exists as to the presence of petroleum".<sup>8</sup> It should be noted no oil (petroleum) was ever discovered in these borings.

In 1900 a company was formed for the development of natural gas and other minerals under the title of the East Sussex Minerals Syndicate Ltd with a capital of £5,000 in £1 shares. The directors were a member of the local gentry Thomas William Hanmer of Framfield Lodge Uckfield and Thomas David Owen Oil Merchant of Liverpool. Two solicitors were named in the prospectus, dated December 1900, as vendors for land owned by William Carter to which the company had the right to enter and make borings.<sup>9</sup> It is doubtful whether any operations were carried out by this company as it was sold in August 1901 to a newly registered company the Natural Gas and Power Co Ltd which had a slightly larger capital of £8,000, to whom the boring rights were sold. Work was soon underway and photographs of three boreholes being drilled and a gas holder under construction (fig. 1) appeared in an *Illustrated London News* (ILN) Supplement dated 22 February 1902.



Fig. 1 Gas holder under construction east of Heathfield station in 1902 (*Illustrated London News*)

There was a persistent rumour at the time that American finance was behind this Company. The *ILN* reported it 'was whispered to be John Pierpont Morgan', the billionaire industrialist. No proof of either fact has been found.<sup>10</sup> In May 1902 yet another company was registered under the grand title of the Natural Gas Fields of England Ltd (NGFE) with an enormous authorised capital of £100,000 in £1 shares, equivalent in today's money of £5,000,000. The Natural Gas and Power Co Ltd is described as an



intermediary to this company which means its services namely exploration and boring could be purchased by the new company. The Managing Director Richard Pearson was a wealthy Australian, who was also Engineer to the Natural Gas and Power Co Ltd. In the same month an engrossment (the final version of a legal document) with the LB&SCR was prepared whereby a piece of land on the up side of Heathfield station adjoining the footbridge was to be let to the gas company for the erection of a gas holder (shown under construction in the *ILN* the previous February) together with the right to lay two pipes under the railway from this land.<sup>11</sup> After concluding this agreement the gas company installed pumping apparatus to raise water into the storage tank above, for use by locomotives taking water. The equipment was powered by a one and a half horse power gas engine, worked by natural gas from the borehole, performing the work previously done by a six horse power steam engine. Publicity claimed "Natural gas first used for power in England".

Also in September the local and national press reported that

"Six boreholes have or are being sunk, four of which have reached a depth of 400 feet and are each giving out a large quantity of gas. The work was being carried out day and night, and the gas itself supplied both light and power for the work. In the deepest bore the pressure of the gas was stated to be 200lbs per square inch. In the next few weeks other borings will

commence some distance away in the parish of Mayfield. At present there is but one gas holder which contains 8,000 cubic feet (see above) but Mr Inverness Watts, the company's engineer has designed and is carrying out the construction of an underground gas holder 12 feet in diameter and 75 feet deep, lined with boiler plates. From the bottom a bore-tube descends into the gas bearing strata and from the top a main is led away underground to any desired point. The big reservoir thus formed may be covered with turf, and no one will know of its existence".<sup>12</sup>

Although a photograph<sup>13</sup> exists of one such gas holder allegedly under construction, no information has been found as to whether it was in fact completed or used.

### The Boring Process

This was a percussion process known as 'cable tool drilling' where a wooden derrick some 30 to 40 feet high was erected over the intended bore-hole.

"A heavy metal bit with a chisel shape at the striking end is raised by a 'crab' or winch situated near the top of the derrick and worked by a belt from the engine shed. The rod and bit are dropped, and then raised, to create the striking force to loosen the earth. After a while the chisel bit is removed and a baler, a hollow iron tube with a flap on the bottom, is attached to the rod. The bailer is forced down and fills with loose earth. When raised the flap closes allowing the spoil to be pulled out of the bore and be dumped. The process is then repeated until sufficient depth has been removed when lining tubes are forced down the bore hole with the aid of a solid iron "monkey".<sup>14</sup>

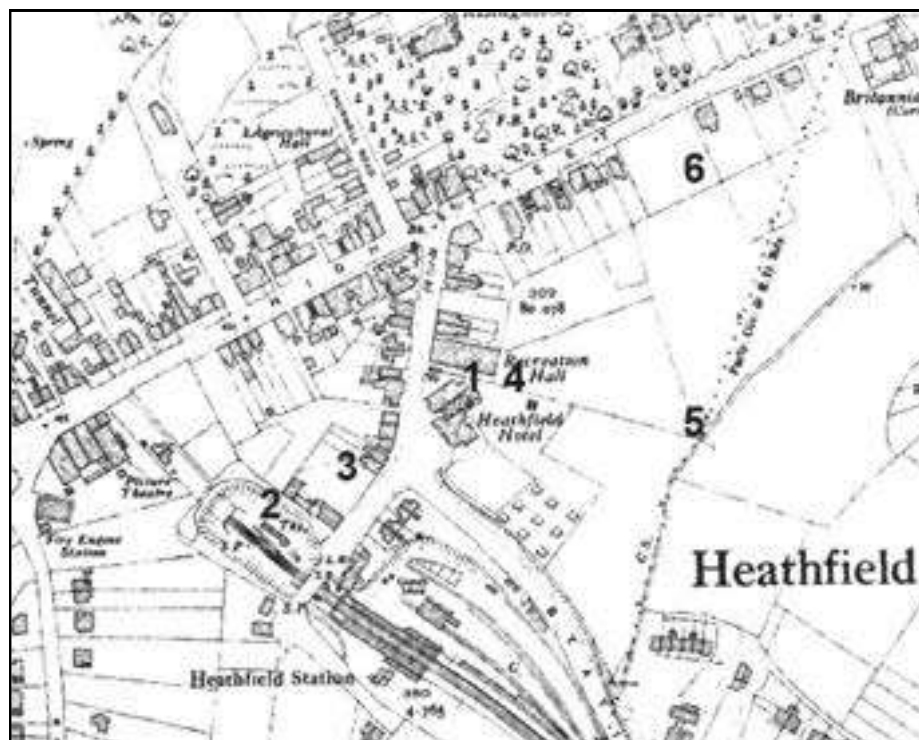


Fig. 2 1930s street map of Heathfield showing the positions of the earlier boreholes

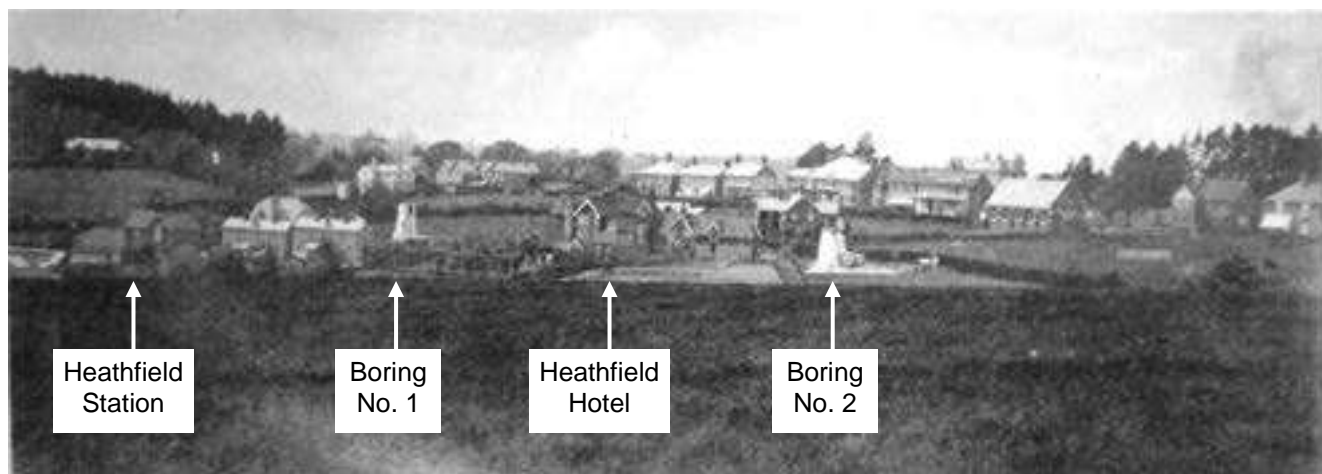


Fig. 3 Panoramic view of Heathfield c.1902 with High Street at the top, showing Boring Nos. 1 and 2 (Boring No. 4 is off the photograph to the right). From an album in the possession of A W Knapman.

The boreholes varied from 5 ½" to 10" in diameter and cost was estimated to be between 12-15s (£0.60-£0.75) per foot to sink.<sup>15</sup> The boring was in operation 24 hours per day and being a percussion process must have caused a considerable nuisance to any nearby residents.

### Location of Bore-holes

(Nos. refer to street map, fig. 2)

#### 1 Heathfield Hotel TQ582214

In the yard of the hotel, in Station Road, behind the coach house which survives in use as an estate agent. Capped after no water was found in 1893 and never re-opened.

#### 2 Railway Station TQ580214

Between the road bridge fronting the station and the tunnel mouth to the north, on the down side of the line. Here were situated initially one (1913), then a pair (1920's and 1930's), and in the final years a single gas holder. No trace now remains.

#### 3 Boring No1 TQ581214

On ground to the north of Station Approach now the rear garden of the fish restaurant only 50yards from the railway station borehole.

#### 4 Boring No 2 TQ582214

On ground immediately behind the State Hall (formerly Recreation Hall, built 1909) and a few yards north of the steps connecting the public and supermarket car parks.

#### 5 Boring No 3 TQ583214

Also known as 'Boring in a Valley' (from a

brochure photograph). This was situated on the east bank of Waldron Ghyll between Wren Close and Gibraltar Rise.

#### 6 Boring No 4 TQ583215

Was to the south of present No. 7 High Street, (to the rear and in between the present Rother House and Wealden House).

#### Mayfield TQ578368

A photograph exists showing a derrick in Mayfield station goods yard.

#### Ghyll Road TQ581206

This was about half a mile SSE of Heathfield railway station bore, immediately to the south of the bridge over Waldron Ghyll and about 12 yards west of the road. A small gasholder stood here for many years. Here can be found the only remaining artefact of the natural gas borings, a six inch stand pipe flanged at the top (fig. 4).<sup>16</sup>



Fig. 4 Stand pipe at site of gas holder in Ghyll Road

### Coronation Celebrations

The coronation of King Edward VII had to be postponed from 26 June until the 9 August 1902 but was an occasion celebrated with much pride and festivities by the inhabitants of Heathfield. The Natural Gas Fields of England contributed to the celebration in several ways. In a lantern on top of a



Fig. 5 Coronation medal (obverse and reverse)

derrick a natural gas flame of 1,400 candle power was shone on Coronation night. A bronze medal designed by R Neal was presented to all schoolchildren. It measured 37mm in diameter and 4mm in thickness. On the obverse were the heads of Edward VII and Alexandra, with the legend around the border 'EDWARD VII AND ALEXANDRA CROWNED JUNE 26. 1902'. The reverse had the legend 'HEATHFIELD SUSSEX 1902' around the border with in the centre 'NATURAL GAS FIRST USED FOR LIGHT & POWER'. In the lid of the presentation case were the words, "The Coronation of Their Majesties, owing to the illness of the King was postponed until August 9<sup>th</sup> 1902, when a Thankful Empire saw them Crowned in Westminster Abbey".

A note in the Heathfield Coronation Sports Programme informs "At intervals balloons will be sent up inflated with Heathfield Natural Gas". The balloons were released from a site immediately to the west of the station next to the company's gas holder.<sup>17</sup> Attached to the string of each balloon was a alloy medal, 37mm diameter and 2mm in thickness, bearing the King's head with the Union Flag either side of the head, with the legend 'EDWARD VII 1902' and the flower emblems of the four United Kingdom countries, rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock as a border. On the reverse was the legend 'NATURAL GAS CARRIED ME FROM HEATHFIELD SUSSEX CORONATION DAY JUNE 26<sup>TH</sup> 1902'. The following day 10 August, the



Fig. 6 Balloon medal (obverse and reverse)

coronation having been delayed, one of the medals was picked up near Ulm in Germany, having travelled 600 miles in 24 hours. A postcard, addressed to the wording on the medal, stating this fact was received by the gas company in Heathfield by the end of November.<sup>18</sup>

## Optimism and Failure

In October 1902 a contract for street lighting was entered into with the parish council. This was to light eight existing (oil) lamps plus an additional one at Tilsmore Corner at a cost of 55s (£2.75p) per lamp for eight months of the year. The money to be raised by subscription and 27 persons were named as guarantors at £1 each.<sup>19</sup> Supply pipes had also been laid to a number of houses.

In late 1902 an illustrated brochure was produced by NGFE entitled "*Why the Discovery of Natural Gas is a Matter of National Importance*".<sup>20</sup> This included photographs of the boring operations and a detailed introduction to the company and its prospects for the future. It is the publicity awareness of the company which seems so impressive with its vision of the future, comparing the prospects of developing the 'gas field' with its counterparts in the United States stating

"In America glass works, iron works, potteries, and strawboard (cardboard made from straw pulp) manufactories are establishing themselves in the vicinity of the wells. Pittsburgh is the most important economic locality with 107 wells and 500 miles of pipe. Why not the same in Sussex? In America direct mains have to be laid 200 miles long, we are in Sussex within 46 miles from London the largest city in the world".

As part of their ambitious plans they had applied to the LB&SCR to lay a 12-inch pipe along the railway line from Heathfield to Polegate for the supply of natural gas to that district. The brochure trumpeted agreements had been made with both the LB&SCR and the South Eastern and Chatham Railway to lay mains on all the lines of local railways; needless to say none were ever laid. One cannot fail to draw a comparison between these expectations and the fact that 8 street lamps, about 50 domestic customers<sup>21</sup> and a railway station were the only users of the gas. What was the point of the brochure? Probably to raise more capital. On 22 January 1903 NGFE applied to the London Stock Exchange for a special settling day (when shares issued must be fully paid up).<sup>22</sup> The company stated 20,000 £1 shares were fully paid up (out of 100,000 that could have been subscribed to). The aspirations of the NGFE were



Fig. 7 Gas struck at No. 2 Boring  
(from Prospectus of The National Gas Fields of England  
Ltd, SIAS Collection)



Fig. 8 Natural Gas Holder at Heathfield Station c.1960  
( SIAS Collection)

sadly out of touch with reality and despite optimistic snippets appearing in the press such as “borings were being made over 200 square miles”<sup>23</sup> and that several glass manufacturers were already “arranging to commence operations there with the new fuel”, by December 1904 creditors were pressing for the company to be wound up. This took until 17 November 1905 following delaying tactics by some of the directors.<sup>24</sup> They never looked like making a fortune for their investors. According to official figures in Redwood and Eastlake’s *Petroleum Technologists Pocket-Book* aggregate production at Heathfield in 1902 was 150,000 cu ft; in 1903 972,460; and in 1904 774,800 – respective values being £30, £194 and £155. In 1906 the *Sussex Daily News* reported the removal of the gasholder at the station, “The legend on the gasometer in huge letters (NATURAL GAS) always caught the eye of passengers ... with the removal of the gasholder it may be taken for granted that ... natural gas ... has shed its last ray.’ Except for a final postscript this ended Heathfield’s brief flirtation with natural gas.

Although it is not the purpose of this article to investigate whether the NGFE was a company set up mainly to relieve investors of their money, it can be noted in passing that it had elements associated with such fraudulent concerns as described in Brian Sturt’s paper ‘Low Finance in the High Weald’;<sup>25</sup> namely registering a new company with a grossly inflated capital (NGFE, £100,000) buying and using an intermediary company (Natural Gas and Power Company)<sup>26</sup> to provide services on inflated terms (boring operations?) and issuing prospectuses extolling the company in glowing terms.

### Later Developments

The plant of the company was sold by the liquidator for £1,140<sup>27</sup> to the East Sussex Gas Light, Coke, and Water Co Ltd which was incorporated in 1905 with a registered capital of £25,000 to provide town gas to the inhabitants of Heathfield. It can be assumed that while the town gas plant was being constructed in Marshlands Lane (in production June 1907 closed 1938) natural gas was still being supplied to previous customers, indeed in 1908 the company entered into an agreement with the LB&SCR to take natural gas from their boring at the rate of 1s 6d (£0.75) per thousand cubic feet,<sup>28</sup> an indication perhaps that supplies from other bores were diminishing. A couple of months later the company sought of the LB&SCR the right to lay a six inch main along the line from Rotherfield to Polegate,<sup>29</sup> this agreement was however never signed. On 23 June 1909 a liquidator was appointed thus ending the supply of natural gas to domestic consumers.

In March 1909 yet another company was launched, The South of England Natural Gas and Petroleum Co Ltd, with Charles Dawson as consultant geologist who in letter dated 15 February 1910 stated we “are going to sink a boring 2,000 feet through the Ashdowns to the Portlands ... we may find petroleum and almost certainly Natural Gas”.<sup>30</sup> This is the only shred of evidence that the company may have been intending to start exploration; their main aim was to defraud as many investors as possible.<sup>31</sup> The only operational bore remaining was at the railway station and this continued to light the station until 1934 after which coal gas was used. A

gas bottling plant was set up by the pump house and as the gas was of high quality being 94% methane it went for research purposes, including to Harwell Atomic Energy Research Establishment. The 40 cubic feet cylinders took 15 minutes to charge and were transported in open wagons. Another destination being the Safety in Mines Research Board ('Establishment' after 1947) in Buxton (later Sheffield) where 'flameproof' electric motors were Type Tested prior to the issue of what was known as 'The Buxton Certificate'. Such motors were used in coal mines, oil refineries, and chemical and gas works where excessive sparking could cause an explosion.<sup>32</sup> The bore was sealed in 1963 when supplies had dwindled. Closure of the station followed on 16 June 1965.

The last bore-hole at Heathfield was drilled by BP in 1955, on the recreation ground 2,000 feet east of the original railway station bore, but as was discovered 50 years previously, there were no worthwhile amounts of gas or oil.

## Appendix 1—Geological Note

The discovery of natural gas at Heathfield requires some knowledge of the geology of the Weald, as understood at the time c1900. The principal geological strata of south east England consists in descending order, chalk, greensand, clays, Ashdown sands and Purbeck beds. Over a period of millions of years these layers have been subjected to upward movements that have created a high east west ridge, roughly the centre line of the Weald. This ridge has been subject to erosion, so approaching it from the north or south downland scarps one passes over progressively deeper strata that have been exposed by erosion. In the Heathfield area the Purbeck beds are at their closest to the surface, between 300 and 400 feet below the Ashdown sands, before outcropping west of Battle. Within the Purbeck beds are strata of Kimmeridge clays and oil bearing shales. Natural gas was discovered at Heathfield when the Purbeck beds were penetrated whilst drilling artesian wells. At the time the consensus was that gas either originated from the shales or had percolated from the lower beds where oil bearing strata was thought to exist. This was what was discovered, in 1973, in Dorset with oil being tapped at Wytch Farm, near Poole, the UK's largest onshore oilfield. However in Sussex conjecture was not backed up by deep level exploration and it was concluded the gas field was merely a small local pocket.

## Appendix 2—Chemical Analysis of the Natural Gas

Three analyses of the gas were undertaken:

	1 J T Hewitt for LB&SCR	2 Charles Dawson	3 Dixon for NGFE
Methane	91.9%	72.5%	93.2%
Higher Hydrocarbons	-	5.5%	2.9%
Hydrogen	7.2%	-	-
Carbon Monoxide	-	4.0%	1.0%
Nitrogen	0.9%	-	2.9%
Oxygen	-	18.0%	-

A spat arose between Hewitt and Dawson concerning the oxygen content of the gas. Dawson (or Woodward who had conducted the analysis) stated it burnt with "a brilliant light" and "the presence of so much oxygen was surprising but nevertheless it was present and in such proportion as to make the gas slightly explosive. It was so remarkable that I carried out the analysis twice with similar results..."

Paul Sowan of The Croydon Natural History & Scientific Society provided the following comments:- Sample 1 provides the sorts of results I would have expected, as (more or less) does Sample 3. Sample 2 with high oxygen content suggests contamination by admixture with air (careless sampling) - but in that case why is there no nitrogen? And the carbon monoxide is unexpected. It was of course a major constituent of town gas from coal but I am not aware it occurs naturally. As with so many things to do with Dawson, his figures strike me as distinctly dodgy!

It would be good to know: (1) Were all samples dried (to remove water vapour) before analysis, and perhaps "scrubbed" to remove carbon dioxide? (2) Did all three samples, at the start of the analyses, have equal volumes and at the same temperature and pressure? Much depends on what was being looked for by the analysts.

## Acknowledgements

Barry Russell, author of several books on the Heathfield area, for information from his 'Coronation Sports Programme' and allowing inspection of his Coronation Medal and presentation case.



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John Cooper Keeper of Natural Sciences, Booth Museum, Brighton. Vetting of my Geological Note. Appendix 1.

Molly Beswick, Peter Holtham, and Martin Snow for invaluable assistance in accurately identifying the bore-hole sites.

## References and Notes

1. Charles Dawson FGS FSA *Journal of the Geological Society* Vol 54 August 1898 pp564-574
2. Dawson *op cit*. All reports of these two discoveries are based on this paper and this continues to be so up to and including the present day.
3. Later to become the College Principal and Public Analyst for East Sussex County Council.
4. Dawson *op cit*.
5. *Sussex Courier* June 1898
6. ESRO. Acc 6790/33 East Sussex Mineral Syndicate prospectus 20 December 1900. Various other reports state ordinary burners were substituted as incandescent mantles were blown to pieces owing to the pressure; probably the reason for the gas holder note. However Dawson states the gas "is of such purity that several of the Welsbach mantles originally employed still remain uninjured". *Proceedings of the Geological Society* Vol 17 p 171 1901. Paul Sowan notes I would have expected the gas to have been led through a pressure reduction/regulation device and the high oxygen content indicated in Dawson's analysis may have led to the mixture falling within the 'explosive limits'.
7. *Standard* (later to become the *London Evening Standard*) 3 May 1898
8. *Standard* 6 May 1898
9. ESRO Acc 6790/33 Company prospectus
10. ESRO ASH 2095 'Why the Discovery of Natural Gas is of National Importance' In this brochure it is stated "...he put his scheme before a group of American financiers, who at once commenced operations, he reserved the right, within a given time by paying 100 per cent profit on the whole of the money spent to regain possession of the entire undertaking this he has done with the aid of the gentlemen now well known as the founders of The Natural Gas Fields of England Ltd the entire capital of which is English money". The 'he' referred to is Richard Pearson.
11. National Archives RAIL414/160 LB&SCR Engineering Committee Meeting 24 September 1902
12. *Sussex Express* 9 September 1902, *The Times* 10 September 1902
13. Alan Gillet and Barry K Russell, *Around Heathfield in Old Photographs*, Alan Sutton (1990) p41
14. *Illustrated London News* 27 September 1902
15. Richard Pearson Evidence before the Royal Commission on Coal Supplies 1903
16. In 1968 a derrick 20 feet high composed of four iron sheer legs with a pulley at the crown stood over the stand pipe. It was unlikely to have survived from 1902 and has now disappeared but no information has been discovered of its origins or purpose.  
A large workshop originally used by, or possibly built for, NGFE stood at the south end of Station Road next to the house named 'Carradale', and was demolished when Ash Tree Close was constructed in 1989.
17. *Around Heathfield in Old Photographs* p41
18. *Manchester Evening News* 24 November 1902
19. *Sussex Express* 1 November 1902
20. ESRO ASH 2095
21. *The Times* 6 July 1904
22. *The Times* 22 January 1903
23. Boreholes at Mayfield, Ticehurst Road (now Stonegate) railway station, Crowborough, Netherfield and Wadhurst were reported to be 'starting' in the local press. It is doubtful, other than at Mayfield, if any boring was carried out at these locations.
24. National Archives BT34/1842/73815 Liquidator's Statement of Account for The Natural Gas Fields of England Ltd, dissolved 31 March 1908. Creditors received a final payment of 13s 7d (£0.68) in the pound.
25. ESRO AMS 6920 Brian Sturt 'Low Finance in the High Weald'. Paper to London and Southern Gas Association June 1993. An excellently researched paper using the archives of the contemporary editions of the *Gas Journal* and *Gas World*.
26. National Archives BT34/1779/70974 Liquidator's Statement of Account for The Natural Gas and Power Co Ltd. When this company was wound up it was holding 60,000 of The Natural Gas Fields of England's worthless shares.
27. National Archives *op cit* 24
28. National Archives RAIL414/160 LB&SCR Engineering Committee 5 August 1908
29. *ibid* 14 October 1908
30. Archive of the Natural History Museum, Dawson letters DF/100/49
31. Sturt *op cit*. 25
32. Note in Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society archive by Wilfred Beswick

## ARGOS HILL POST MILL

### Past, Present and Future

**Bob Bonnett**

A windmill has stood on Argos Hill, near Mayfield, East Sussex for over three hundred and fifty years. A book entitled *Rotherfield* by Miss C. Pullein (revised edition published 1928) states that "a 'quit rental' of 1656 proves that there had been, or still was then, a mill on Argos Hill." An entry in the Mayfield Parish Register for the 14 June 1584 records the baptism of John, son of Wylliam Weston 'of the Myll'. This, however, may refer to a watermill as a later entry of 1587 for the baptism of Debora, William's daughter, refers to 'Cokynghsmill' [Coggings Watermill]). Later in 1692 Nicholas Puxte of Garden House, Rotherfield held 'Ye windmill field att Argatts Hill'.

The Newnham and Shelley Family Records held in the East Sussex Records Office, ref. AB 338a dated 10 September 1707, show that the Argos Hill Mill was in the occupation of Thomas Weston: 'Messuage or tenement and windmill called Argos Hill Mill, on Argos Hill, with stable and two pieces land (heretofore one piece) whereon said windmill is erected, of six acres, in occupation of Thomas Weston, in Mayfield.'

The mill is shown on Budgen's map issued undated in 1723. The mill is not shown on the first Ordnance Survey map of the area. The mill is not shown on the Gardner, Yeakell, Gream large-scale map of Sussex issued in 1795. The survey for this map was probably made in 1793, or possibly as early as 1781. Therefore, at some time prior to 1793, the old mill had disappeared.

Simmons records that a descendant of Thomas Watson, Edward Watson, who previously occupied the windmill at Luggers Crouch not far away, purchased the land and built the mill. In *Windmills and Argos Hill*, published by Uckfield Rural District Council, one time owner of the mill, it reports that the mill was built by Edwin Weston in 1835, son of John Weston, Yeoman, who died in 1831 and owned Luckhurst Crouch Windmill and Merrieweathers Watermill at Mayfield. I can find no written proof of either of these; however, a new mill was built in the 1830s most certainly to replace an earlier mill.

Another report records that in 1831 Merryweather Watermill and Windmill was sold under the will of John Weston. The watermill was occupied by Aaron

Weston and the windmill by Edward Weston. The reports seem to show a link between the two families. Perhaps, Watson should read Weston and Edwin should read Edward.

The tithe map of 1843 shows that Aaron Weston was in possession of the mill and used it until he died in 1861. During this time he was helped by James Weston. Many of Aaron Weston's effects were auctioned as the *Sussex Advertiser* of 19 March 1861 records: "To be sold by auction on 20 March, 1861, on the premises at Argos Hill Mill, Mayfield, by direction of the executors of the late Mr. Aaron Weston. Cows, a horse, a cart, a millers van, farm implements, corn winnowing machine, scales, beam and weights, and household effects." Aaron is said to have made £10,000 out of the mill and other side lines.

Aaron's son, another Aaron, took over the mill on his father's death. He presumably didn't inherit his father's effects, or, perhaps didn't want them. It would be unfair if to continue the business he had to buy them at auction, not even being able to purchase



Fig. 1 Argos Hill Windmill in 1928, showing the sweeps with only the leading edge shutters in place. (from the Fuller family collection, by courtesy )

them directly from his mother.

From around 1890 Raymond Weston carried on the business to 1913, possibly helped in the early days by John Weston, another son of Aaron Weston. It would appear that Aaron Weston's widow retained ownership of the mill because it was she who sold the mill just prior to the 1914-18 World War to Mr Wickens. Mr Lampard of Home Park, Rotherfield then bought the mill before selling it to Mr. Hardy, also of Rotherfield. The mill was used by Raymond Weston, a nephew, until 1925. It is intriguing to know if the Weston family milled continuously at Argos Hill from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until 1925. Or did the mill disappear from Argos Hill at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and with it the Weston family to another mill before returning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century?



Fig. 2 Argos Hill Windmill c.1910 showing the unique cartwheels.

Gurney Wilson's note book records that the mill ceased working in the spring of 1916. This may be the case commercially, but a local resident can remember that the mill ground corn into the 1930s. It is recorded that the mill stopped work in 1927 when rented by Mr J. Fuller, a farmer, who possibly used the mill. The last miller recorded being Mr. Richardson from Burwash Mill who carried on until 1927, two years after Raymond Weston.

A photograph of the mill, taken in 1926, shows the sweeps complete with shutters and the fan-tail with blades. On another photograph taken two years later the sweeps have only the leading edge shutters. In 1931 all the shutters and the fan are missing. Mr. Joseph John Fuller became the owner in 1941. He sold the mill in 1951 to Mr. George Scott Williamson.

Between 1927 and 1955 the mill was practically abandoned. In 1929 the fan was blown off in a gale. In 1932 the shutters were removed.

On the 8 November 1955 the mill, together with the land under the roundhouse, tailpole and fantail was purchased from Innes Hope Williamson (G. Williamson's son?) by Uckfield Rural District Council for one shilling. (5p) The County Council agreed to pay half the legal costs on the acquisition of the mill. A later agreement between Uckfield Rural District Council and the Council for the Administrative County of East Sussex was signed recording that the District Council 'have agreed to the carrying out of the works of repair and preservation of the Windmill hereafter specified upon the terms hereafter appearing ... and shall thereafter preserve it in as good and weatherproof a condition as the same shall be in.' The County Council agreed to reimburse the District Council one half the net costs, less grant income, gifts or contributions received. These terms included the District Council carrying out the following repairs:

'Supply and fit one new stock in pitch pine

Refit existing three stocks into metal box on shaft

Repair four sweeps with dummy shutters complete with leading edge and trailing edge stiffener

Repair stays

Refit tail with dummy fan

Paint whole two coats lead – white

Clean down body of Mill

Repaint the metal-clad upper portion two coats of lead paint to an approved colour (Was the roof red?)

Repair weatherboarding of lower portion Paint two coats of lead paint – white

Repair steps to Mill

Cover roundel with mineralised felt fixing to existing oak with copper brads' [Oak roof boards?]

This work was given to the millwrights W. Sands of Heathfield. It may be that the roof was then painted its now iconic red as Simmons in his detailed report on the mill, dated 28 April 1947, records that the mill is only painted white. Simmons also records that the tailpole had collapsed and was supported by bricks, but this was not scheduled to be replaced.

In 1957 the roundhouse roof was replaced with red wood. A later leaflet printed by Wealden District Council mentions that between 1955 and 1960: 'anchoring the temporary tailpole in a box formed to a post in the ground, the collapsed flytackle being left where it came to rest when the Mill was last used and over the years becoming partly rotted.'

Lightning struck the mill in 1963 damaging one sweep and the roundhouse wall.

From 1965 until 1990 millwrights, Ernest Hole & Son (Tony) of Burgess Hill, West Sussex, carried out all the restoration and repairs to the mill. The work was recorded in notes, reports, letters, quotations and invoices and gives a very detailed and interesting historic account. The following information has been gleaned from their files.

In April 1965 Ernest Hole carried out a detailed inspection of the mill and reported that the front frame was in a very dangerous condition. The report states:

"Both of the girts have shattered where they join the front corner posts of the front frame. I estimate that the front has already sunk some 8 inches (162mm.) out of position in relation to the back. This is the usual trouble that develops in post mills but it is more common for the girts to break over..." [part of the report missing].

"It is essential that first tie bars with adjustable couplings be fitted from brackets on each end of the crown tree to the lower ends of the four corner posts. This will hold the frame from collapsing. Then I suggest 5 posts of square steel tubes are erected on concrete foundations blocks under each of the four corner posts and one under the central post of the front frame to hold the weight of the windshaft. We will fit double parallel wedges on the posts to lift the frame slightly.

The front is also leaning sideways and the cross members are nearly off the notches in the front posts and need to be pulled together with a tie bar. This is urgent as the front stones are built over this joint.

These repairs are urgent to save the mill but are not the whole story. The front frame of the mill must be renewed in the near future. The central post (prick post) of the front frame which is supposed to help bear the weight of the windshaft is becoming rotten and being crushed down by the horizontal beam (breast beam) which is also rotten and is part hollow. To renew these the windshaft will have to be lifted from the ground by posts and jacks and the timbers replaced as found necessary. This we have had to do to several mills as the front of the mill is the most vulnerable part due to the water coming off the sweeps and getting in around the windshaft.

If it was necessary to restore the mill to its original condition we could replace the girts but this is a major operation and very expensive. Also we note one of the sweeps had been spliced and if we have to move it, it should be replaced by a new one. I would like to point out we are very busy this season and we could only

undertake the urgent repairs of supporting the mill. The new frame could be prepared and fitted next year and any new sweeps if these are considered necessary.

I note that the windmill was fitted with a fan-tail turning gear and of course the ideal repair would be to replace this as it would appear the iron ... [part of the report missing] ... mill is dangerous and it is certain to attract a lot of visitors."

In May a 'Dangerous Structure' notice was posted. In June an order was placed with Hole's for the emergency fitting of tie bars and couplings and this was done in July. In August Hole's quoted for a new whip.

The Wealden Council leaflet also mentions that a new weatherbeam was fitted (believed to be in 1966/67) and:

"certain necessary repairs to the side-girts and corner posts were carried out, as by 1964 both side girts had shattered where they joined the corner posts of the front frame which had by then already sunk 8 inches and there was a danger that in a gale the whole Mill might have collapsed and been lost to posterity."

The girts were not replaced or restored but reinforced by a thick steel plate with a top angle iron bolted internally on to each side-girt and joined to its respective corner post.

A storm during 1967 damaged a stock, two sweeps and the tailpole. The cost of the damage was estimated in October and the work completed in September the following year. An estimate for a new tailpole was given.

In 1969 the iron work, gearing and still solid portion of the fan-tail were removed from site, the frame was restored and fixed to a new tailpole. A letter mentions that "the old fan-tail collapsed" and that the "tailpole was quite flat on the ground." The fan-tail was, however, erected at 90 degrees to the tailpole not, as originally at 90 degrees to the ground. This was corrected by fitting a wedge-shaped block of wood. The carriage wheels did not line up with what appeared to be the old wheel track 29 feet out from the roundhouse. The wheels were only 26½ feet away. The Rural District Council proposed that the tail pole be extended by 3 to 3½ feet. A new tailpole was fitted in March the following year. The cost for making the patterns, making the brass castings and fitting; making open framed fan-tail blades and fitting them to the hub; assembling the frame and fitting a new tailpole was £782.33.



Fig. 3 Hole's working on the mill c1967.

In August 1974 Holes were again carrying out work on the mill, now at the request of Wealden District Council who had replaced Uckfield Rural Council in the national council reorganisation. A stock and new sweep were fitted. WDC were advised that the front bearing had moved 2 inches forward off the pillow block and should be rectified by hooked bolts pulling the bearing housing back into position.

In October 1976 due to storm damage an order was given for the removal of a broken stock and one sweep. The remaining stock was to be left in the vertical position. A quotation of £2,418 was submitted for a steel stock and, if available, a pitch pine whip. Douglas fir would be used if pitch pine was unavailable. In March of 1977 two sweeps were fitted. The work was completed the following year when the remaining pair was installed.

In March of 1978 two sweeps were fitted. There was then a gap of nine years where there appears that no work was done or, perhaps, needed.

In May 1987 (before the hurricane) a quotation was submitted to block up the fan-tail and remove the

damaged fan-tail frame and renew. Prices to renew three fan blades; repair the cart wheels; renew the fellows; reassemble all on site and refit to existing anchor points were also included. The hurricane struck in the October and it was not until April 1988 that a report was done on the damage:

"The rear wooden stock was broken either side of the canister as were the sweeps. Front sweeps were damaged but repairable. Fifty percent of the roundhouse was damaged. The fan-tail had sustained further damage. The mill was in the past (date unknown) covered with a sheath of fibre glass which was almost completely stripped from the sides exposing rotten weatherboarding."

The recommendation for the repair was to:

"Fit a new steel stock and two new pitch pine sweeps and repair the damage to the other pair.

Obtain tapered sections and repair the roundhouse roof to the original specification, including treating with Signpost black tar varnish or similar.

Strip off remaining fibre glass sheathing together with all weatherboarding below roof line which is defective. Re-weatherboard to existing pattern, pre-paint boards before fixing with galvanised wire nails, incorporating zinc or aluminium flashing at all joints."

It was recommended that the leading edge boards and mock shutter battens were removed from the existing sweeps and omitted from the new ones as it would minimise the wind resistance and reduce rot traps. Also the fan-tail should be completely reconstructed including two main uprights and all skeletal fan blades. A quotation was sent for this work which was accepted and work started in April 1989 following erection of the scaffolding. The work, excluding snags, was completed in October 1989 at a cost of £21,600.

In 1994 the exterior was painted and the red covering on the roof renewed. Further work was carried out in 1999 when the sweeps were removed.

Due to the mill's very poor condition, in 2002 it was placed on the English Heritage 'Buildings at Risk' register. During 2005 a scaffolding shroud was erected to protect the mill against the worst of the weather and the steel stocks were removed by gas cutting the external section away leaving the part in the canister in situ.

Threats were made that the mill would be dismantled and removed for storage. Other mills have disappeared when this has happened. Through the 'Friends of Argos Hill Windmill', interested parties



and individuals, with the help and encouragement of Wealden District Council, the Argos Hill Windmill Trust was formed in 2010 to restore the mill to full working condition. Everyone felt that it was important that the mill was saved for posterity because it still retained almost every piece of milling machinery, lost by many other mills, and many features of special interest, some unique.

The shape of the mill's body is unusual and unique because the steps have remained attached to the body proper and pass through the middle of a tail-end extension. All other post mills have the steps connected to the back of their extension. Argos Hill Mill's extension has two rooms either side on the lower floor and one room above covering the full width. From the upper floor a ladder rises through a buttress-like tunnel to the attic bin floor. This is also unique.

The addition of the extension would have altered the balance of the mill. To overcome problems in turning the body due to the out of balance load, two circular iron bands were fixed onto the post at the head of the quarterbars to provide the track for four iron rollers to run against and transfer the load to the post. The rollers are held in a semi-circular iron casing bolted to the underside of the sheers. Few mills are fitted with this arrangement.

Made by the miller the lock to the spout floor door is also of interest and most certainly unique.

Argos Hill Mill has a tailpole mounted fantail, once a common feature of Sussex post mills. These were never common in England being mostly confined to Sussex and Norfolk. All have now gone except two Sussex examples: Jill Post Mill and Argos Hill. Cross in Hand New Mill had a fine example until recently, but sadly it has now gone. The cart wheels used to support the fantail were also unique as others have cast-iron wheels.

During 2011 the Friends set about raising funds. The tailpole broke due to rotting and was removed. Because of the dangerous condition of the fan-tail it too was dismantled. A detailed investigation of the body's framework was carried out after removing weatherboards from key areas. The girts were found to be in a very poor state and because of this it was decided not to remove front weatherboards to expose the front corner post, also expected to be damaged by rot, until a steel support structure was erected to hold up the mill's body. Campbell Reith Consulting Engineers were commissioned to inspect

the girts, report on their condition and make recommendation as to their repair.

Twelve recommended millwrights were approached to tender for the restoration work, only two agreed. Campbell Reith designed the steelwork support and quotations were sought for its manufacture and erection. The structure would also be used to lift the body so that repairs could be carried out on the damaged cross-trees.

In 2012 Planning and Listed Building Applications were submitted and approved for the 'Erection of a steel support frame to secure and ensure the structural stability of the mill during the course of repairs and restoration.' Concrete bases for the vertical steels were cast in September and the steelwork erected in October by Jeremy Hole Engineering Ltd. (J.H.E. Millwrights). Jeremy Hole is the grandson of Ernest Hole and son of Tony who worked on the mill from 1965 until 1999.

The holes for the concrete bases were dug by hand. The dig was witnessed by the Assistant County Archaeologist, Greg Chuter.



Fig. 4 North end pit for concrete base.

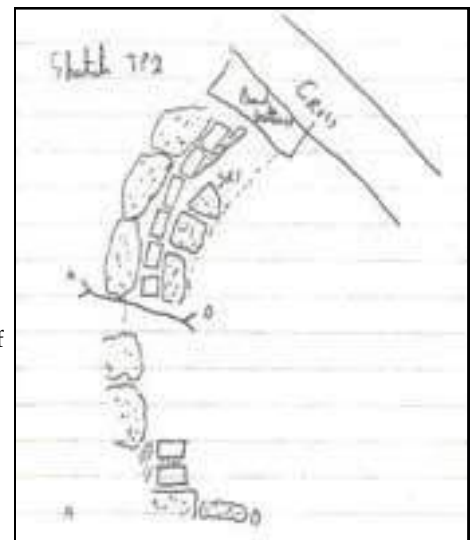


Fig. 5 Sketch of south end pit.  
(G. Chuter)

It was seen that earlier piers had been replaced and/or the existing piers enlarged. The brick work is stepped and 'weather stock pointed' ('parget up' in local Sussex bricklayer's parlance). There are two circular sets of sandstone foundation stones not concentric with each other. They both abut the piers. The current sandstone roundhouse appears to be built on the outer foundation as does the low brickwork wall supporting the oak timber floor joists. The brick wall to support the floor was probably built in the 1950s. See photograph above (fig. 4) and sketch, fig. 5.

The cross-trees are of slightly uneven lengths. The cross-trees protrude into the existing roundhouse wall.

The observations are difficult to interpret; therefore, a number of conflicting assumptions can be made:

Because the piers were 'weathered' an open trestle post mill may have stood on them. A roundhouse for this mill may have then been built at a later date on the inner sandstone foundations. Because of the size of the foundation, the roundhouse may have been built of wood with perhaps a stone skirt.

Later, new piers were built, or the existing piers enlarged, to support a larger post mill (the current mill). A new roundhouse was then built on new, larger, sandstone foundations. A small test pit needs to be dug on the outside of the roundhouse to fully inspect the walls' foundations.

The ends of the cross-trees may have originally extended into or through the roundhouse wall causing the wood to rot. These ends were then cut back and the holes in the wall partially bricked in.

Looking at the topography of the ground close to the current mill, an impression of an earlier post mill can be seen which may be the site of the sixteenth century mill. This will only be proven with further archaeological investigation.

Listed Building applications were also submitted and approved, subject to conditions:

"To repair and restore the roundhouse and structural and frame timbers of the body. Renew weatherboarding and reinstate the windows and hatches as fitted when the mill was working. Make and install new sweeps and steps into the mill."

The steps will be made with 19 steps as originally fitted when the mill was milling.

Using a decay evaluating drill, Harraway Tree Services examined the cross-trees to establish the extent of the rotting. The results provided information that new cross-trees were not required, but repair was required to both.

With the steelwork support structure holding the buck in place the front weatherboarding in key areas was removed and Campbell Reith Consulting Engineers inspected the front corner posts and reported on their condition and made recommendations for their repair.

With all the survey results, a meeting was convened on site with representatives from Campbell Reith, English Heritage, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building (S.P.A.B.), Wealden District Council and Argos Mill Trust to agree the ways to repair/replace damaged timbers. Campbell Reith's recommendations were agreed: the right hand front corner post, left hand main side and bottom girts would be replaced. The front end of the right hand side girt will be fitted with a new front section with steel plate reinforcement. To minimise disruption to the mill structure, the replacement of individual timbers, where necessary, would take place in two halves in accordance with a methodology that incorporates temporary propping of the existing members.

It was hoped that work would start in the spring of 2013. However, a new report written by millwright Vincent Pargeter on another way that the buck might be restored was considered. This has delayed the start until the method of restoration is finally agreed and competitive quotations for the work can be obtained. It is still hoped that by the winter of 2015, work to the mill will be completed. It will take a further two years to restore the milling machinery.

## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Tony Hole for letting me obtain details of Hole's work on Argos Hill Windmill. Also Greg Chuter MA MIFA, ESCC Assistant County Archaeologist, for his help in interpreting the foundations seen when digging the holes for the steelwork bases.

## Selected Sources

The Simmons Collection.

Windmills and Argos Hill, a narrative by T. Sydney Rogers.

Wealden District Council Leaflet c1995.

Argos Hill Windmill Trust Archive.

*Sussex Industrial History* No. 41 (2011).

East Sussex Record Office.

The Fuller family.

## ARGOS HILL WINDMILL

### Evaluation of the Cross-trees by Resistograph Technology

*Bob Bonnett*

The post of Argos Hill Post Mill is uncommon as it is made up of four pieces of red pine united by loose tenons set in mortises inside and secured by pegs. Jill Post Mill, in Sussex, also has a four-piece post. Most windmill posts are made of oak.

The quarterbars are of oak, about 280 mm square at the bottom and 240 mm at the top, although these dimensions are slightly variable. They are morticed into the post at the top and morticed into the cross-trees at the bottom with a birdsmouth joint. There are retaining straps made of wrought-iron at these joints. Three joints have been repaired due to rot by bolting on thick oak battens with birdsmouth cut in them to match.

The cross-trees are made of red pine, 300 mm square and 6.7 m long. They rest on narrow brick piers at their ends; their weight being taken on 50 mm thick oak templates. The cross-trees are installed almost north/south and east/west. The south and west cross-tree ends show signs of severe rot or beetle attack, the extent hidden within the timbers under the quarterbar joints.

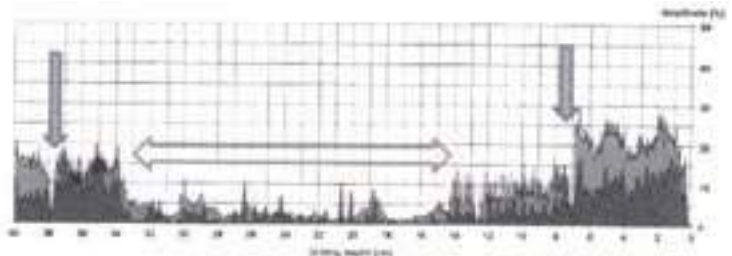
Local tree surgeons were approached to see if acoustic techniques, used on trees to determine decay, could be used on the cross-trees. John Harraway, of Harraway Tree Services, was recommended as the expert the Trust should contact. John advised that acoustic techniques would not provide accurate results and recommended using a decay evaluation drill; importantly he said that he would be pleased to visit the mill to survey the cross-trees for the Trust. This technology is used around the world to

evaluate decay in standing trees, the structural integrity of timbers in historic building, utility poles and children's play equipment.

The instrument used is manufactured by IML – Instrumenta Mechanik Labor GmbH, Germany, model IML Resi PD400 decay evaluating drill. This instrument measures the drilling resistance of a very fine 1 mm drill to a maximum depth of 40 cm. The instrument measures simultaneously both the feed and the torque of the drill and their amplitude curves are shown and recorded by the machine and can be shown in real time remotely. The feed speed can be adjusted up to 250 cm/min. and the rotation speed of the drill up to 5000 rpm. Because the size of the drill and the drill dust remaining in the hole, very little damage is done.

The difference between the resistance to forward motion is shown dark grey and drilling resistance is shown light grey. Dense wood can mask drops in drilling resistance because of the shaft dragging in sound wood. This machine makes such decay visible as resistance to forward motion will drop even if torsional resistance does not.

An example of the results from the test drillings is shown below:



It shows the results drilling through the west end. The brief dip in drilling resistance highlighted by the vertical arrows indicates the point at which the drill transverses the boundary between the strengthening oak battens fixed to the quarter bars. The horizontal arrow bar shows the cavity inside the timber.

Numerous test drills were carried out. (Members wishing to see the results in full should contact the author.) From the results the rot and damage was precisely located. The method and extent of repairs needed could now be made.

#### Acknowledgement

My sincere thanks to John Harraway F.Arbor.A, MICFor, Dip Arb, of Harraway Tree Services telephone number: 01903 756153; e-mail: john@harrawaytrees.co.uk for visiting the mill to carry out the survey and for his expert advice.



Fig. 1 John Harraway using the Resistograph Drill

## OFFHAM SMOCK MILL, HAMSEY

**Bob Bonnett**

There are in Sussex, like other counties, a few windmills that were destroyed around the end of the nineteenth century, where there is seemingly no photographic evidence of their existence. Many mill enthusiasts and deltiologists seek three windmills close to Lewes: Offham Smock Mill to the north, which was blown up around 1900; Broyle Post Mill in Ringmer to the east, destroyed by fire in 1905; and half way in between, Hamsey Post Mill, also destroyed by fire in 1885.

Looking through a collection of early photographs of purported Sussex topographical scenes, there was a photograph of a white smock mill amongst the Downs. It was unknown to me, but it looked as if it might be a Sussex Mill. The arrangement of the buildings next to the mill and the mill itself almost corresponded with the description of Offham Mill in the Simmons Collection of Records Relating to British Windmills and Watermills. Further proof that the photograph was of Offham Mill was William Luker's painting dated 1885 and an engraved image of the mill shown in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* published 21 February 1891.

It is difficult to determine when and who built Off-

ham Mill. The mill is shown on the first issue of the one inch Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1787. A sales notice for Offham Mill in *The Miller*, 1 December 1879 provides information that: "The mill and stable on the hill are lease hold for 99 years commencing 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1791". *The Sussex Advertiser* of 18 December 1797 reports that Mr. Sicklemore's "windmill on Spital Hill was broken into and robbed of a sack of flour." It is unknown if Sicklemore took, or took over, the lease in 1791.

From the Defence Schedules of 1801, John Sicklemore at the mill undertook to grind three sacks of flour every 24 hours during times of invasion and would supply his own wheat for the purpose. The mill was again robbed, as reported by the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* of 28 September 1801:

"[The mill was] feloniously entered by some person who stole therein six bushels of flour and got clean off, with the same. Three bushels of the stolen meal was the next day found in bags, concealed under two tomb stones in St. John's Churchyard."

It appears that John Sicklemore suffered more misfortunes as reported by the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* of 18 February 1811:

"Between 6 and 7 o'clock on Saturday morning, a heavy gale of wind sprang up, that continued about an hour, and with much violence that blew off the top of a substantial smock mill on Spital Hill, belonging to Mr.



Fig. 1 Painting of Offham Mill by William Luker 1865  
(reproduced by permission of Somerset County Council Heritage Service)



Sicklemore, which is the more to be regretted, as it is feared from the visitations of repeated misfortunes, that the poor man will not be enabled, without assistance from a generous public to repair the injury.

The fall was witnessed by a grinder, on his approach to the mill. The gale, it seems, put Mr Kennard's post mill [Spital Mill] standing nearly in a similar position, upon the totter, but it never the less resisted the violence without receiving any apparent injury."

It is unknown if John Sicklemore received any financial help, but he did carry on until his son took over the mill in 1818. The son later worked Southern Post Mill to the south of Lewes.

From around 1823/24 James and William Steere of North Street, Lewes, worked the mill. For some time the mill was known as Steere's Mill. Between 1824 and 1831 William disappeared from the mill because an advertisement in the *Sussex Advertiser* of 7 February 1831 gave notice that: "the co-partnership between Samuel Medhurst and John Steere, millers and corn chandlers, of Lewes is this day dissolved." It appears that James retired or died and that John his son or perhaps a relation had joined Medhurst in the business. John was to continue at the mill for a further twenty nine years when it was sold to Mr. Benjamin Aylwin of Offham in 1860.

Eli Ashdown commenced as foreman to Aylwin and left in 1866. Ashdown was later to work at Cross in Hand Post Mill. The *Sussex Advertiser* of 5 October 1869 reports:

"Benjamin Aylwin begs to return his most sincere thanks to the inhabitants of Lewes and its vicinity for the favours bestowed on him during the last ten years, and having disposed of his business to Mr. E. G. Lea, begs to introduce him as his successor."

Lea was still working the mill in 1873 when he advertised for a miller to work in a smock mill and also "a young man to work in a post mill; must be a good oat grinder, and have knowledge of cloth sails." Lea was also working Spital Post Mill at the same time. From the advertisement in *The Miller* detailed above, Lea was seemingly only a tenant and that a James Aylwin was the owner.

The next record was a sales notice in the *Sussex Advertiser* dated 18 November 1879:

"Messrs Southern & Morris have received instructions from the trustees of the Will of the late Mr. James Aylwin to sell by auction at the Star Hotel, Lewes, on December 2, 1879 that very excellent Smock Windmill known as 'Steer's Mill', situated close to Lewes Race

Stand, fitted with two pairs of French burr stones and one pair of peak stones, smut machines, bins, etc. driven by four superior patent sweeps, the whole in good running condition. Also a stable within a few yards of the mill, and a freehold house, shop, store room stable on the hill are leasehold for 99 years, commencing from 10<sup>th</sup> of October, 1791."

It was reported in a subsequent edition of the *Sussex Advertiser* dated 9 December 1879 that the bidding did not reach reserve and the property was not sold.

Simmons places Mr. Charles Saunders at the mill in 1882. He was there in 1885 as the *Sussex Advertiser* of 12 January 1885 confirms:

"To be sold by auction at the Bear Hotel, Lewes on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1885. An excellent leasehold Smock Windmill, known as Steere's Mill, close to Lewes Race Stand, with the stable, granary, or store room, and cart shed near thereto, and also a Freehold house with shop, counting house, store room, cart shed, stable, back yard, wood and coal houses, situated in West Street, Lewes, the whole being in the occupation of Charles Saunders as a yearly Michaelmas tenant at £40 per annum, payable half yearly."

Bidding commenced at £400 and went up to £500 at which time the property was sold to Mr. E. Hillman a solicitor. (It was this advertisement detailing the stable, granary and cart shed at the mill that first gave me the clue that the photograph was of Offham Mill.)

The next occupant on the scene was John Hurst who worked the mill from around 1890 (perhaps for Hillman). In an advertisement for the sale of Spital



Fig. 2 Image of the mill shown in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*. (JB)



Mill in the *Sussex Advertiser* dated 16 July 1894 Charles Saunders is shown to have moved there. Simmons writes that the owner, when Hurst and his two sons were millers, was Mr. Broad, a tallow chandler in Lewes who bought up local properties including the mill.

Hurst, working with a good wind up till about 1 a.m., went home and returned to the mill with his son after breakfast. On the way to the mill his son remarked on the peculiar look of the mill. When closer, they discovered that the cap had been blown off. Parts were found over a very large area. It was said that: "the sweeps must have gone over like a bird to have gone that far."

Simmons writes that Hurst reported that the mill was always called Race Mill, but that its proper name was Offham Mill. It was "all wood, and white" and had "stage, fan, four floors, no auxiliary, two pairs of burrs and one pair of peak stones and had worked to the last. Patent sweeps were fitted but the mill once had cloth then spring." No reefing stage has been found on the images of the mill and this is the only reference to a 'stage'. It is, therefore, assumed to refer to a fan stage.

Around 1900 the mill stood derelict for a short while. Hurst was told by the authorities to pull it down as it was unsafe and children often played in it. Royal Engineers were camping at Newhaven close by and were testing a new type of gun cotton. It was suggested to Hurst that the officer in charge might welcome the opportunity of testing the explosive on the mill. This, of course, was too good an opportunity to miss so one afternoon a little later they came up and blew the bottom out. The timbers were collected up and sold.

## Selected Sources

The Simmons Collection.

My thanks to the Museum of Somerset for permission to print a copy of the painting of Offham Mill by William Luker (SM).

East Sussex Records Office.

Image from Justin Brice collection. (JB)

## Notes

The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* was an English weekly magazine founded in 1874 and published in London. It changed its name to the *Sport and Country* in 1945, then in 1957 to the *Farm and Country* before closing in 1970.

William Luker's painting of the mill was done in the middle of his working life. He was known for his landscapes, portraits and animals. He worked in London and Faringdon and exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1852 until 1889.

During its 250 years Lewes Racecourse attracted some of the best horses in the world. The Prince Regent's horse Smoker won the 25 Guineas in 1790. In 1880 one of the most famous races of all time took place when five of nine horses running the two mile long course for the Astley Stakes almost finished at the same time. There was a triple dead-heat for first place and, only a short head behind, a dead heat for fourth place. The racecourse closed in September 1964 falling prey to an ending of finance by the British Racing Board.

Spital Windmill stood about one mile to the south of Offham Smock Mill. It is shown on Budgen's map of 1723 and was a white painted open trestle post mill. It burnt down on 20 May 1885.



Fig. 3 Photograph taken of the mill c1899

## THE TURNPIKE THROUGH EAST GRINSTEAD

*M. J. Leppard*

Dr Austen's article 'Turnpikes to Lewes and Newhaven' (*Sussex Industrial History*, 42, 2012) can safely be regarded as definitive. It may, however, be permissible to supplement part of it from long acquaintance with specific sources for the history of East Grinstead.

### Road improvements

When Charles Abbot, the Speaker of the House of Commons, bought Kidbrooke at Forest Row in 1803 he took an interest in speedier access to and from London than the existing turnpike allowed, becoming chairman of the Surrey-Sussex Turnpike Trust. His papers in the Public Record Office were used by the late Eric Byford to give a detailed chronology of the improvements attributed by Dr Austen to c.1810. To summarise: in 1824 proposals were drawn up by his agent George Robson; estimates were obtained and money raised in 1826.<sup>1</sup> The re-alignment of the road at the eastern end of the town can be independently dated: In 1827 James Chilcott produced a 'Plan of the Ground taken from Lord Delaware's Estate for the New Turnpike Road into East Grinstead Town'<sup>2</sup> and on 17 August that year James Wren of South Park, East Grinstead, tendered to buy the old turnpike gate house for £18.<sup>3</sup> This improvement was effected not to avoid an awkward bend (a misconception by I. D. Margary) but to replace a steep hill with a gentler gradient a little to its south-west.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in 1828, the High Street westwards from the church entrance and the upper part of London Road were lowered to create an easier turn and gradient for wheeled traffic.<sup>5</sup> There seems to be no other extant record than what I have cited in the footnote; for much of that year Lord Colchester (as Charles Abbot had become in 1817) was unable to attend trustees' meetings because confined to home with erysipelas.<sup>6</sup>

### Tollhouses

The tollhouse known from photographs thus dates from no earlier than 1827. The view used in Dr Austen's article is by the local photographer William Harding as reproduced by his son Arthur, with the addition of '1864', as a postcard later in the century, no. 9 in his 'vintage' series. This is almost

certainly the correct date, taken for the record between the expiry of the Trust in that year and its winding-up in the next. No. 7 in the series records the same scene from a slightly more north-westerly viewpoint, clearly taken at the same time but without any people. A third, unattributed, image is known from a single copy in East Grinstead Town Museum, from a closer viewpoint and featuring two men. It could also be William Harding's work, perhaps taken at an earlier date; some of his son's postcards give 1862 for their date.<sup>7</sup> No images are known of the previous structure, nor any maps that show it, but the re-aligned road must have swept across its site.

### Gatekeepers

The first keeper whose name is known appears in Thomas Palmer's rhyming directory of the town in 1799 thus: "Langridge at the pay-gate dwells, All kinds of nets he makes and sells".<sup>8</sup> In the 1803 militia list John Langridge, gatekeeper, is recorded as 'infirm', in the 17-55 age-group.<sup>9</sup> He is still there in the 1811 draft census return for East Grinstead, head of a household comprising one male and three females. Ten years later the draft return names William Green, with one other male and two females, followed in 1831 by William 'Hues' accompanied by one female.<sup>10</sup> Only the head is ever named.

From subsequent censuses we learn that William Hughes was born in East Grinstead, in 1851 aged 53 and also farming 37 acres. Mr and Mrs Hughes were recollected by Edward Steer (born 1845) in his reminiscences of his boyhood years in the town, 1856-59, keeping the tollgate and 'so far as us boys were concerned, the principal sweet shop of the town'.<sup>11</sup> According to W. H. Hills they made enough money out of keeping the gate to build Rock Cottages in London Road and retire to one of them when the turnpike was abolished.<sup>12</sup> William Hughes was buried in East Grinstead on 18 April 1865 and his widow Mary, who by the time of the 1871 census had become a Sackville College pensioner, on 9 December 1879 aged 81. Presumably it is William Hughes who appears in the Harding photographs.

It is understandable that tollgate-keepers should have another activity to supplement their income and occupy their time. The Hughes' were not the only ones to sell sweets; in 1849 a stock of sweets was stolen from the toll-house at Sidley near Bexhill.<sup>13</sup>

## Turnpike tickets

East Grinstead Town Museum also holds two original tickets for the East Grinstead turnpike, dated Wednesday 7 April 1754, one shilling, and Saturday 7 August 1762, sixpence.

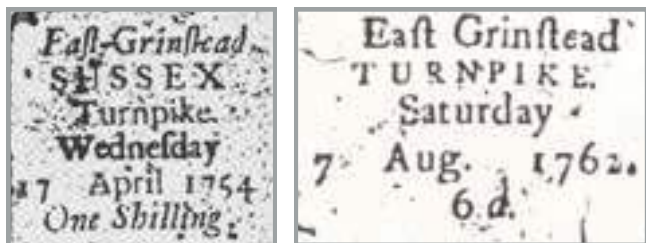


Fig. 1 Tickets for the East Grinstead turnpike  
(East Grinstead Town Museum)

I have reproduced and discussed them in the East Grinstead Society's *Bulletin* 53 and recorded, from an auctioneer's catalogue, the following undated 'little tear-off tickets':

FOREST ROW. This ticket and one from Cat's Street clears Hartfield Gate.

EAST GRINSTEAD. This ticket clears with the same cattle Felbridge Gate.

FELBRIDGE. This ticket with the same cattle clears East Grinstead (Blue Anchor).

They cannot have been issued before 1766 when the road through Hartfield was turnpiked.<sup>14</sup>

## Corrigenda

p.33 'Gratty' should be Gatty; p.43 'Mitchell' should be Michell

## References

1. E. C. Byford, 'Wayfaring in Forest Row', *Forest Row, Historical Aspects and Recollections*, vol. 3, part 2 (Oct. 1986), pp.5f., citing P.R.O. 30/9/10/17, /18 and /37 (Colchester papers)
2. Sussex Archaeological Society Figg maps 26d (P.D. Wood) 'Descriptive catalogue of topographical maps and plans....in the old parish of East Grinstead' (1964), p.14
3. Manuscript original, among papers at Sackville College (transcription by R.H. Wood in my possession)
4. M. J. Leppard, 'East Grinstead before the town', *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol.129 (1991), pp.29-31
5. *Brighton Gazette*, 18 Sept. 1828 (quoted in T.W. Horsfield, *History of the county of Sussex*, vol.1 (1835), p.388)
6. E.C. Byford, personal communication, 1 May 1996
7. Mounted with a later, post-turnpike, view of the same scene and one of the Playfield and stamped by W. Hayler of Pimlico (EGRTM 2095.30). Harding pencilled the numbers on the back of the cards, which are quite common; 'vintage' is the designation used by the Museum's keeper of photography, Mr David Gould, to distinguish them from Harding's parallel 'contemporary' series.
8. East Sussex Record Office SAS/SM 167; reproduced *East Grinstead Observer*, 7 Nov. 1896 and elsewhere.
9. Sussex Militia List, Pevensey Rape, 1803, Northern Division (PBN Publications, 1988), p.21
10. West Sussex Record Office, PAR 348/26/2, /8 and /7.
11. Reminiscences serialised in the *East Grinstead Observer*, 1899
12. Talk 'The Streets of East Grinstead', 1919 (original typescript in my possession)
13. R. V. Kyrke, *History of East Sussex Police* (printed for restricted circulation 1969, not published), p.48
14. M. J. Leppard, 'Turnpike tickets', *East Grinstead Society Bulletin* 53 (Autumn 1993), p.11

## EAST SUSSEX TURNPIKES OF THE HIGH WEALD

*Brian Austen*

This article will review the turnpikes of the northern part of East Sussex, the area ranging from Forest Row in the west to Flimwell (Kent) in the east. A number of the turnpikes described extend into West Kent. The region was one of varied soils, many somewhat unproductive. The western part was forest and common grazing forming Ashdown Forest. This was according to Young 10,000 acres of poor barren sand. Further to the east some areas

allowed general farming and cattle grazing but farms were often small in size, productivity uninspiring, and much of the land forested. In the east of the region the growing of hops provided an alternative income stream which was to increase substantially as the nineteenth century progressed. In 1835 John Ellman was able to comment that this crop "affords much employment for the labourers, their wives and children"<sup>1</sup>. Transport facilities were initially poor with no turnpike roads developing between the line of the Godstone to Wych Cross Turnpike (part of the London to Lewes road) in the west, and that of the Tonbridge to Flimwell (part of the London to Hastings road) in the east. Settlements were small with no major towns until the rise of Tunbridge

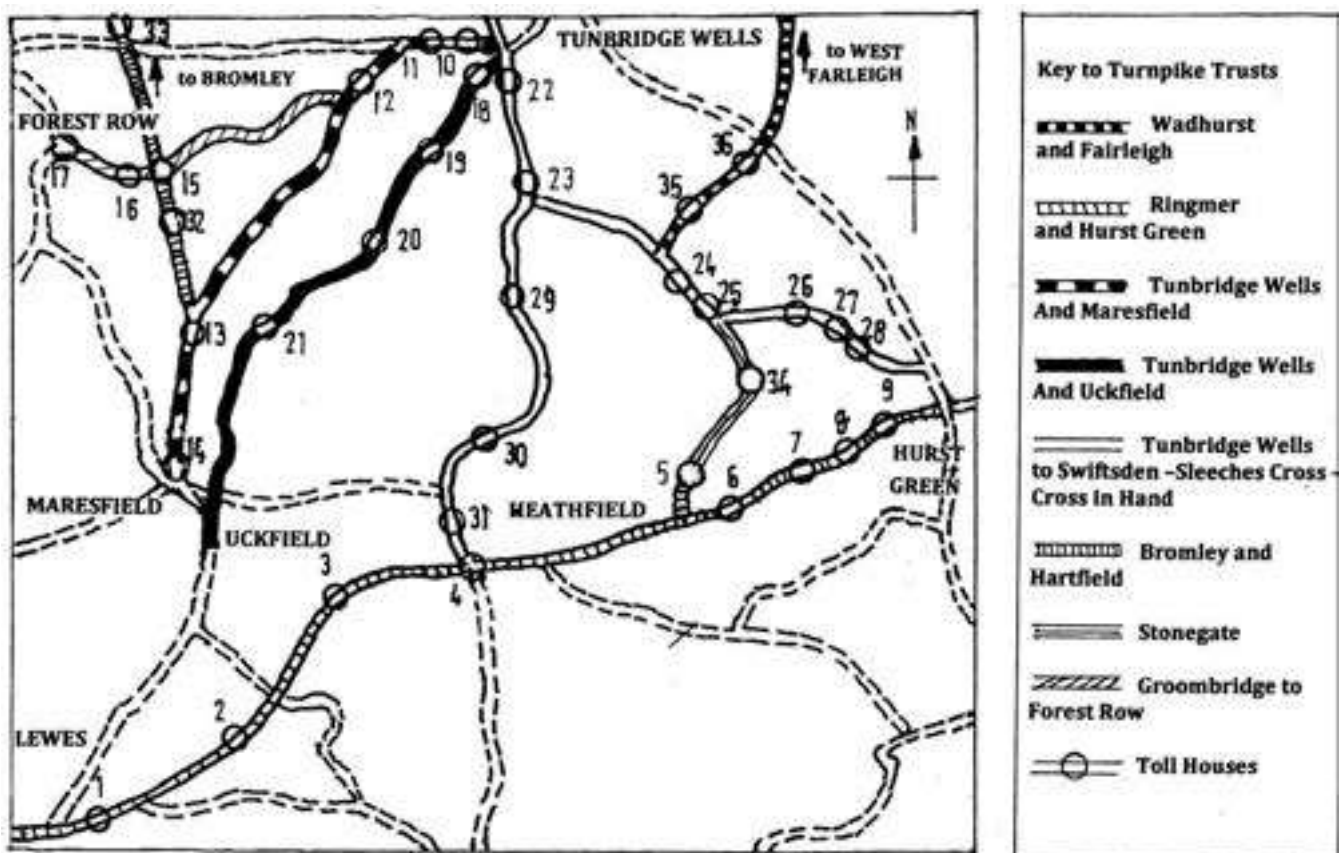


Fig. 1 Map – East Sussex Turnpikes of the High Weald (Philip Spells)

### Key to Toll Houses

- |                       |                         |                          |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Ringmer South       | 13 Duddeswell           | 25 Wadhurst Lower Toll   |
| 2 Shortgate           | 14 Lampool Gate         | 26 Ticehurst Burnt Lane  |
| 3 Blackboys           | 15 Hartfield            | 27 Ticehurst Upper Gate  |
| 4 Cross in Hand       | 16 Cat Street           | 28 Ticehurst Lower Gate  |
| 5 Burwash Swing Gate  | 17 Forest Row           | 29 Mark Cross            |
| 6 Burwash Wheel       | 18 Ropers Gate          | 30 Butchers Cross        |
| 7 Burwash Town Gate   | 19 Eridge Green         | 31 Dudsland              |
| 8 Burwash Church Gate | 20 Crowborough          | 32 Cotchford             |
| 9 Etchingham          | 21 Handel               | 33 Colstock              |
| 10 Rusthall           | 22 Tunbridge Wells Gate | 34 Stonegate             |
| 11 Langton            | 23 Sleafes Cross        | 35 Wadhurst Pell Green   |
| 12 Groombridge        | 24 Wadhurst Upper Toll  | 36 Lamberhurst The Slade |

Wells. Within the Sussex borders only two parishes had populations of over 2,000 in 1831, these being Ticehurst with 2,314 and Wadhurst with 2,256. Etchingham had only 631.

Contrasting with these was Tunbridge Wells which by 1831 had a population of 9,154 and in 1837 was stated to be increasing at a substantial rate, in line with other inland and seaside spa towns in this decade. It was calculated that the population had risen by 3,000 since the National Census of 1831<sup>2</sup>. Tunbridge Wells owed its existence to the discovery in 1606 of chalybeate springs which were deemed to have health-giving properties. Development was however initially slow and it was not until the 1670s that permanent structures to provide for the seasonal visitors were provided financed from London. The site of the well was awkwardly placed straddling the border between the counties of Kent and Sussex and located in three parishes, those of Tonbridge and Speldhurst in Kent and Frant in Sussex. It attracted summer visitors because of its convenient access from London by way of the Tonbridge Turnpike Trust which opened in 1736 from Sevenoaks to Kippings Cross, Pembury, with a branch to Tunbridge Wells.

The attractions of sea-bathing at Brighton from the 1730s gradually lured away visitors. Thomas Bengue Burr, the author of the first history of Tunbridge Wells, noted in 1766 the opening of two turnpikes south of the town connecting with other Trusts to provide access to Lewes and from hence to Brighton. He thought these no threat to the trade of Tunbridge Wells as its facilities for visitors, and pleasures provided, were far superior to those of Brighton<sup>3</sup>. He had of course failed to recognise that seaside resorts would capture much of trade that had traditionally been attracted to Tunbridge Wells. Despite this however the town was to continue to flourish as a place of more permanent residence for genteel society and retired persons, providing all the year round trade. Expansion continued, especially from the 1820s into the 1830s when the new town (the Calverley Estate) designed by Decimus Burton gave a rival focus to the Parade (Pantiles)<sup>4</sup>. In the five year period following 1766, turnpike development in the area to the south, east and west of Tunbridge Wells provided no fewer than four new turnpikes and gave the northern Weald of East Sussex a comprehensive system of improved road communication

Before 1750 turnpikes had been absent from most of

East Sussex and the county town of Lewes was not connected by them to London until 1752. In the extreme east of the county the Flimwell Vent (Ticehurst) to Hastings Trust was authorised in the following year. A further year later was to see the connection by turnpike of Lewes to Hailsham and the Pevensey Marshes. Schemes of the mid 1760s were to further improve communication:

1. Wadhurst to West Farleigh Trust and the Ringmer to Hurst Green Trust of 1765;
2. The Tunbridge Wells to Ringles Cross (Uckfield) and the Tunbridge Wells to Maresfield Trusts in 1766;
3. The Tunbridge Wells, Mayfield and Ticehurst Trust (Three Districts Trust) and the Bromley and Hartfield Trust in 1767.

### **Wadhurst & West Farleigh Trust 1765**

Established under powers of the Act 5 Geo III c52. Funding to repair the road 13½ miles long, between Sparrows Green, Wadhurst and West Farleigh in Kent by way of Lamberhurst was raised by mortgages. This is the present B2100 road as far as Lamberhurst where a junction was made with the London to Hastings Road, this section under the control of the Kippings Cross (Pembury) to Flimwell Vent Trust, which had received its Act in 1741. At Lamberhurst the traffic from Wadhurst used the existing turnpike towards Tonbridge for about two miles before diverging and using the B2162 running north to reach what is today the A26 road from Tonbridge to Maidstone. It was the northern section as far as Lamberhurst which was improved first, costing £3,000, raised by mortgages yielding 5% interest, of which £2,400 was raised from three men, John Corke, John Martyr and William Musgrove, all of whom became trustees of this turnpike. The section between Lamberhurst and Wadhurst was not improved until February 1769 when an additional £900 was raised from the inhabitants of Wadhurst. The work was complete by April 1770. From the start the Trust appears to have been able to cover its costs and in 1776 had an income of £346 13s 10d of which £306 1s 7d was from tolls. Costs in that year amounted to £329 12s which included £70 16s paid to the gate keepers and £106 7s 6d to cover the interest due to the mortgage holders. A gravel pit on Lamberhurst Down provided road building and repair materials to the Trust with sufficient to supply other turnpikes, some as far away as Sevenoaks.



Prior to turnpiking the Lamberhurst to Wadhurst section was notorious for its condition, especially in the winter months. The turnpike was one essentially serving the needs of local traffic, landowners and farmers, who aimed to get their produce to market in London using the Medway Navigation. Traffic on the northern section would however have been affected by the opening of the South Eastern Railway line from Maidstone West to Paddock Wood in 1844. The powers of the Trust finally expired in 1877. At this point the southern part of the Trust's road passed to the control of the Mark Cross Highways Board and then to the East Sussex County Council when it was formed following the Act of 1885<sup>5</sup>.

### Sussex Tollhouses

The Trust maintained five toll gates of which three were in Kent, at Yalding, south of Ramshill and south of Horsmonden. The two within Sussex before the boundary change of 1894 were:

Lamberhurst – Slade Gate TQ 671349

To the south of Lamberhurst Down and close to Slade Farm and the present boundary between Kent and Sussex. The tollhouse had already been demolished prior to November 1875 when the remaining land "heretofore used and occupied as a toll house" was sold to Edward Hussey of Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst for £20. The Gardner and Cream Map of 1795 has the words "Pike House" at TQ 6653909 near Ladymeads but there is no other evidence to suggest that a gate existed at this point.

Wadhurst – Pell Green TQ 646331

Also referred to as Cousley Wood turnpike gate. This was at the point that a minor road leading north west to Bells Yew Green and south east to Wadhurst intersects the turnpike. The tollhouse, yard and garden were sold in November 1875 to George Campion Courthorpe of Whiligh, Ticehurst for £35. A photograph of a weather-boarded toll house exists stated to be "on the triangle of grass on the road in front of Ladymeads in Lower Cousley Wood". As the Slade tollhouse was demolished before November 1875 this photograph, if it is concerned with this Trust, may be of the Pell Green tollhouse<sup>6</sup>.

### Milestones

None located or recorded.

### **Ringmer and Hurst Green Trust 1765**

The Ringmer and Hurst Green Trust extended for 23

miles from Ringmer, where it branched from the turnpike to Hailsham opened only the year before. The Trust followed the present B2192 road to the north-east where at Cross in Hand it met the present A267. It progressed north east along the line of the present A265 through Heathfield, Burwash and Etchingham to reach the A27 at Hurst Green. The only branch was an extension to the north for about a third of a mile at Burwash Common towards the village of Stonegate.

On 25 December 1764 fifteen petitions were placed before parliament to turnpike this road as it was stated to be "in many places impassable for wheeled conveyances in winter"<sup>7</sup>. Following this, the turnpike was authorised under the Act 5 Geo III c64 covering the section from Hurst Green to Burwash, the remaining section to Broyle Park Gate, Laughton was added three years later (8 Geo III c65). Both sections involved the improvement to existing parish roads and it was not until c1830 that any new line of road was built. Two sections were then undertaken, a short one at Burwash Common and a more major diversion between Etchingham and Hurst Green to eliminate a hilly section of the original line<sup>8</sup>. Powers were extended by subsequent Acts until they eventually expired in November 1864.

A parliamentary return of 1829 recorded that there were eight gates along the 23 mile line of the Trust and in that year they produced an income of £2,004 5s 3d (£2,004.26) out of a total income of £3,087.7s 3d (£3,087.36) Expenditure was £2,158 18s 8d (£2,158.94) and the Trust were able to employ a Superintending Surveyor. Its mortgage debt was £4,725. 11s 2d (£4,725.56) and it was able to pay £251 3s (£251.15) of interest on this. As late as 1851 it was paying the 4% or 5% specified in the original mortgage documents when the funds were raised to improve the road. A further return of 1840 identified nine gates and two side bars. It declared the road to be in good condition with the exception of the short branch from Burwash Common which was reported to be "not hardened and the trustees are not allowed by their Act to lay out more than the tolls produced at the side-gate"<sup>9</sup>. The arrival of the railways had less impact than with other Trusts as no railway line paralleled the road. Etchingham station on the South Eastern Railway line from London to Hastings opened in September 1851 but although some longer distance traffic may have been lost, short distance journeys to connect with the train would have aided revenue.

## Tollhouses

### Ringmer South TQ 442117

Situated at the point where a minor road to the right to Glyndebourne diverges from the turnpike (B 2192). The tithe award map shows the tollhouse on the south side of the turnpike and to the east side of the minor road. The tollhouse was built into the road with a garden extending in all to 14 perches. The gate keeper's name in 1843 was recorded as Avis. In 1834 the keeper was William Shopland. In January 1840 the keeper had a warrant of distress delivered for an unpaid fine imposed on him for illegally demanding a toll from Morgan Thomas of Lewes on two occasions.<sup>10</sup> When the Trust was wound up in 1866 the tollhouse was sold for £28 to the Rev. Charles Gaisnt of Isfield and the Rev Christopher Dodson of Perton Mewsey in Hampshire. The relatively low price paid and the description that the house was "on or by the side of the said Roads" might indicate that the tollhouse was intended to be demolished to improve road access. This may account for the absence of any illustrations of the building. The gate, being close to Lewes, produced an attractive level of income as attested to by the advertising of the tolls for farming at £256 in May 1817<sup>11</sup>. An SIAS survey in July 1968 failed to locate the building.

### Shortgate TQ 493152

Just to the south of the point at which a road from Laughton joins the B2192 and just to the south of the border of Ringmer and Framfield parishes. The house was on the east side of the road. The plot with



Fig. 2 Shortgate tollhouse photographed June 1938 (Frank Gregory)

garden amounted to six perches and in 1843 the keeper was Henry Cosham. The gate was in place at the commencement of the Trust for in 1767, in connection with the Broyle Enclosure Award it was revealed that William Kempe, a local landowner, who owned Sergeants Farm, Laughton, had been using an unofficial gate to gain access to the common land on the Broyle and thus avoid paying toll at Shortgate. It yielded a substantial income and in April 1820 was offered for farming at £320 per annum. The house and garden were sold in December 1866 for £45 jointly to Abel Smith of Woodhall Park, and Samuel Whitbread of Cardington, both in Bedfordshire. The single story building had been demolished prior to July 1968 when a search failed to locate it<sup>12</sup>.

### Blackboys TQ 520199

Also named as Wheelers Shop in the 1808 and 1826 editions of *Patterson's Roads*. Situated on the east side of the turnpike on a site of 18 perches to the south of Blackboys with a gate across the road. In 1843 the occupier of the house was shown as James Stuart and the owner of the property as William Humphrey (and not the turnpike trust)<sup>13</sup>. This may not have been the original location of the gate as in August 1808 the Trustees advertised that they intended at their next meeting to consider "removing the Toll Gate at Blackboys ... to a more eligible location at or near Stonebridge". Income from this gate was probably modest and the tolls were offered for farm as a package with the next two gates (Cross in Hand and Swife). In 1817 the group was offered at £384 and in 1820 at £416<sup>14</sup>. When the other tollhouses were offered for sale at the closure of the Trust, that at Blackboys was not included and it would seem likely that the building was not owned by the Trust. No illustrations are known.

### Cross in Hand TQ561216

At the point where the B2102 makes a junction with the A267 on the south side of the road west of the Cross in Hand Hotel and a minor road leading south towards Chiddingly. From this location gates could control three roads. The building was not identified as a tollhouse on the 1841 Waldron tithe award map but is marked in the correct position. It is possible that like Blackboys it was not owned by the Trust but merely leased. A document dated 19 August 1774 may refer to the Cross in Hand site. A "Toll-house and a piece of land containing 25 rods in Waldron bounding to the turnpike road" was leased



Fig. 3 Cross in Hand tollhouse c.1910

to Thomas Cornwall and also involved him in the erection of a new toll house for the Trust. The house at Cross in Hand was not included in those sold by the Trust when it was wound up<sup>15</sup>. The tollhouse survived the demise of the Trust and remained well into the twentieth century. It was used by Horace Thorpe as a cycle repair business which also hired cars. The house was of brick construction with a tiled roof, had a frontage to the road of three bays with a central door flanked by windows. There was also a small observation window to the east<sup>16</sup>.

#### Burwash – Swing Gate TQ 642239

In 1767 a branch was added from Burwash Common to Stonegate and Wadhurst but in 1771 the section north of Swing Gate became the Stonegate Trust. The only toll gate on the branch which continued under the control of the Ringmer and Hurst Green Trust was at Swing Gate. Income was probably low. The short branch accounted for its own income and expenditure and is sometimes referred to as the Burwash Trust. The tollhouse was situated on the east side of the road and the tithe map of 1839 shows it without any garden plot. In 1866 the house was sold to James Philcox Esq of Burwash for £10 and at this time was occupied by Edward Dowlen. Today there is no sign of the house but the hill beside which it stood is known as Swingate Hill.

#### Burwash Wheel TQ 652233

Also known as the Lower Pay Gate, Burwash. The gate was just to the east of the turning to Brightling and the tithe award map shows that the tollhouse was built on the southern side of the road with no garden plot. It was demolished as an obstruction when the trust ceased in 1866. The site and materials were sold for £25 to John Crossingham the elder of Burwash, a blacksmith, and before this was occupied



Fig. 4 Swife tollhouse photographed May 1970

by Joseph Morris. A late Victorian cottage opposite the Wheel Inn bears the name "Tollgate Cottage" but is not in the location shown on the tithe award map<sup>17</sup>.

#### Burwash Town Gate TQ670247

At the western extremity of Burwash where a side road extends north to Holton Hill. The tollhouse was situated on the north side of the road, extending into it, and without a garden. There was a side bar as well as the main gate across the Turnpike. The tollhouse was sold in December 1870 for £35 to the same James Philcox who purchased the Swing Gate house. The tollhouse had gone by 1903 when a dwelling was built on the site.

#### Burwash – Church Gate TQ 678248

A side gate was situated near the commencement of the road from the centre of Burwash leading south towards Wood's Corner. A plan shows a gate across the road adjoining the Churchyard but no tollhouse. One did exist but this and a hovel were removed when the Trust was wound up to allow the Churchyard to be extended<sup>18</sup>

#### Etchingam TQ 709259

Placed at the junction of the A265 and an unclassified road leading south to Robertsbridge. The tollhouse was placed into the road with gates across across both roads, three in all. Although there was no ground around the tollhouse, a garden plot was provided close at hand to the west of the Robertsbridge road. The tollhouse, then unoccupied, and land was however purchased by Rev. R.G. Barton of Etchingam for £61.15s (£51.50). It was reported to have survived until the 1960s. A mile to the east improvements in the alignment of the road were made c1830 when to ease gradients at Burgh

Hill a new line of road was constructed to the south nearer Haremere Hall. The old road was retained and at the junction of the two at TQ 718266 a cottage has been identified in an article as a tollhouse. As a deposited plan of 1829 and the tithe award map of 1839 show the tollhouse to be elsewhere, and the author fails to indicate sources, this identification must be regarded as suspect. The income from these gates at the eastern end of the Trust was low and in December 1820 they were offered for rent per annum at:

Etchingham	£100
Burwash Church Gate	£ 59
Burwash Town Gate	£78
Burwash Wheel Gate	£70
Burwash Swingate	£37 <sup>19</sup>

### Milestones

None located. Interwar OS maps show that their presence was fragmentary even then. The stones giving distances from Lewes then in place as far as Burwash were 4,5,11,12,14 and 15.

### **Tunbridge Wells and Maresfield Trust 1766**

Tunbridge Wells had been connected to London by turnpike roads as early as 1736 but it was another 30 years before roads were improved under turnpike control south of the town. The year 1766 was to see improvements to two roads:

1. By way of Langton, Groombridge, Lye's Green and Fairwarp to Maresfield, the slightly longer route of 13 miles and 2 furlongs in extent.
2. A more direct route by way of Eridge and Crowborough to Ringles Cross (Uckfield), also 13 miles in length but making a junction nearer to Lewes and Brighton.

Both roads did however traverse a thinly populated Ashdown Forest with little intermediate traffic. They also both connected with the Wych Cross to Lewes Turnpike authorised in 1752.

Of these two routes the one to Maresfield was the earlier to obtain its Act of Parliament (25 Geo II c50). From Tunbridge Wells it followed the line of the present A264 road to the top of Groombridge Hill, then the B2110 and B2188 to join the B2026 at Kings Standing then south to Fairwarp, the last section being an unclassified road of just over a mile which at a lower level parallels the former A22, now

bypassed. Two significant additions and improvements were made in the course of the turnpike. The first of these was to take over the line of road from Florence Farm (TQ 526368) through Hartfield to Forest Row of seven miles and two furlongs in extent, the present B2011. This was authorised under an Act of 1794 (28 Geo III c56). A further improvement came in 1831 when the Wych Cross to Lewes Trust diverted their line from Lampool Green (TQ 463254) to Maresfield, building a straight line to the east away from Maresfield Park. Previously the road had been closer to the house and on its west side. The Tunbridge Wells to Maresfield Trust took advantage of the new road, connecting with it at Lampool Corner and abandoning back to parish control "the present hilly and circuitous road" to Maresfield Street. This was authorised by the 1 Wm IV c70<sup>20</sup>. After these changes the Trust controlled 19 miles 2 furlongs of road.

For most of its existence the Trust was financially sound, though in some years it was expending more than it received in income. It was however able to maintain the 4% interest due on its mortgage stock. In 1829 income from tolls was £394 14s 4d (£394.72) and the parishes through which the road ran paid an additional £135 composition in lieu of statute obligations, making the total £532 2s 4d (£532.12). Expenditure was however £621 16s 5d (£621.82). Such figures enabled the road to be maintained in a reasonable state of repair though with no fast coach traffic this was sufficient. The original line was described in 1840 as "tolerably good" and the Forest Row branch as "not in so good condition ... but no part under indictment". Direct competition from the railway did not arrive until 1 October 1866 with the opening of the East Grinstead to Tunbridge Wells (West) line. The Trust ended on 1 November 1877 when its powers expired<sup>21</sup>.

### Tollhouses

The Tunbridge Wells to Maresfield Street Turnpike commenced at the foot of Major York Road in Tunbridge Wells, opposite the Parade (Pantiles) then the heart of the town. Here two inns, the 'Swan' and the 'Hand and Sceptre' and a wagon office provided a focus for a transport hub for carriers and conveyances along the roads towards East Grinstead, Cranbrook and Rotherfield<sup>22</sup>. The straight road across the Common brought the traveller to the first turnpike gate.

## Rusthall Gate TQ 553392

This was situated at the western end of Rusthall Common immediately after a road diverged to the left to Holmewood. An undated map shows an attempt by the Trustees to move their gate nearer to the town just before the turning to Rusthall (TQ 565393) to improve their revenue. There is little doubt that such a plan would have generated great opposition from the inhabitants, traders and visitors to the Town. The gate was not moved and further pressure resulted in the closure of the Rusthall Gate and its removal to near the 'Hare' inn at Langton Green. Tolls were last collected at the Rusthall Gate in 1820<sup>23</sup>.

## Langton Gate TQ 542391

Close to the 'Hare' on a restricted site of 1 pole abutting a pond. It may also have extended into the road for at the time of its sale on 10 November 1877 it fetched only £5. It was bought by James Barrow Esq of Holmewood who owned the pond. It is likely that it was demolished soon after<sup>24</sup>.

## Groombridge Gate TQ 530374

West of the tributary of the River Medway which forms the Kent and Sussex boundary and the first gate in Sussex. It was situated on the east side of the road at the point at which the road turns east towards Eridge and where the 'Victoria' public house subsequently stood. The tollhouse and garden occupied a plot of 5 perches in extent. With a toll income of £73 14s 6d (£73.73) in 1820 it, together with the Rusthall/Langton Gate, provided the highest revenue of the Trust's gates<sup>25</sup>.

## Duddleswell Gate TQ 471289

In Maresfield parish occupying a site of 8 perches on the north-east corner of the road extending east across the common grazing land to Barnsgate and Crowborough. A bleak situation with very limited levels of income, that for 1820 being a mere £17 17s 10d (£17.89)<sup>26</sup>.

## Lampool Green Gate TQ 464254

On the east side of the road just before the road turned east to reach Maresfield Street along the original lower line of road. The gate would have been abandoned in 1831 when the short section of new road was built to connect with the new line of the Wych Cross and Lewes Turnpike which now bypassed Maresfield Park to the east.

Milestones

Very fragmentary. Two milestones only have been located which may refer to this Trust, both of local Kentish ragstone.

## TQ 580387

At the foot of Major York Road, Tunbridge Wells at the commencement of the Trust on the east side of the road close to the junction with the A26. It stands 34 inches above ground level and is 14 inches wide and 11 inches deep. The original inscription is very worn but the figures at the top appear to be "VII". If this is a correct interpretation, the stone has been moved from another location or re-carved. The 7 miles might well reflect the distance to Tonbridge but one would not expect a milestone at this location with distances towards London. It is not shown on an OS map of 1974.



Fig. 5 Milestone on the common at the foot of Major York Road, Tunbridge Wells

## TQ 530374

At Groombridge on the north side of the road just past the point at which the road to New Groombridge and the station diverge. Only the top is visible and this appears to have the number "IV" which must refer to the distance to Tunbridge Wells.

Inter-war OS maps show a larger number of stones, 5,6,8,9 and 10 and 9 and 10 are still shown on OS maps as late as 1974 though not recorded in the SIAS survey in 1972 (*Sussex Industrial History* 5 p11).





Fig. 6 Groombridge milestone opposite the former Victoria public house

### The Branch Turnpike to Forest Row

This consisted of two sections:

1. Florence Farm to Hartfield via Withyham
2. Hartfield Street to Forest Row via Colemans Hatch

The short section of road through Hartfield village was already turnpiked under the 6 Geo III c. 86 for the Bromley and Hartfield Trust.

#### Tollhouses

Hartfield TQ 480359

At the end of the first section of the branch road where the B2110 effects a junction with the Bromley Turnpike (B2026). The tollhouse was on the north east corner of the intersection with a gate across the branch turnpike but not across the road towards Edenbridge and Bromley. A sizeable plot of 14 perches enabled a garden to be provided for the tollhouse. Toll income at this gate was fairly substantial with £58 13s 9d (£58.69) being collected in the year to May 1820. The house and garden plot were sold on 6 February 1878 for £125 to Thomas Killick of Hartfield, grocer and draper. The high sum paid would suggest a sound and habitable structure which no doubt survived for some time after the closure of the Trust though no photographic evidence has come to light<sup>27</sup>.

Cat Street TQ464346

Soon after the commencement of the second portion of the branch. The Hartfield tithe award map of 1842 shows a gate across the road at this point with two tenements and gardens on the north side of the road on a plot extending to 32 perches. This property however did not belong to the turnpike trust but to the Earl de la Warr. The gate is not listed in an advertisement of toll revenue in 1820, nor is it marked on a deposited plan of 1830. The houses and land were not included in the property sold by the Trust in 1878<sup>28</sup>.

Forest Row TQ 430348

On the approaches to Forest Row leading to the junction with the present A22. The property was on the north side of the road and bounded on the west side by "Forest Row Green". Toll revenue for the year to May 1820 was stated to be £48 14s 2d (£48.71). The house and plot was sold in October 1877 for £150 to William Wills of Forest Row<sup>29</sup>.

#### Milestones

None were recorded in the 1972 SIAS survey though one is shown to the east of Withyham on an OS map of 1974. Inter-war OS maps show 11,10,8 and 6 miles to Tunbridge Wells.

### Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield Trust 1766

Authorised by the 6 Geo III c85 to improve the road from Tunbridge Wells through Eridge and Crowborough to Ringles Cross where it made a junction with the Wych Cross to Malling (Lewes) turnpike. From Tunbridge Wells it followed the line of the present A26 road, though much work has been carried out in recent decades to widen it and ease gradients, especially on the section from Eridge to Crowborough Cross and at the southern end the A26 no longer serves Five Ash Down and Ringles Cross. In 1840 the road was stated to be 13 miles and 11 perches in length and had only three gates and one side bar. Despite the considerable gradients between Eridge and Crowborough this appears to have been the preferred route from Tunbridge Wells to Lewes and Brighton and is so shown in Tunbridge Wells guide books from the late eighteenth century. This is backed up by national road books such as the various editions of Carey and Patterson which only list the Crowborough route as the road to Lewes and Brighton relegating the Hartfield route to a minor role as the Tunbridge Wells to East Grinstead road.

Coaches are shown departing from Tunbridge Wells for Brighton weekly on a Tuesday by the 1790s but the frequency has risen to daily by the 1820s. The condition of the road surface was regarded as satisfactory and in 1840 it was reported in a parliamentary report as for the most part “in a good condition” and “no part is under indictment for want of repair”. Where there were problems it was not so much the heavy Wealden clays but sand. The 1829 edition of *Patterson’s Roads* warned travellers across the Ashdown Forest part of the road that it was “very bad; being wholly composed of a deep loose sand”. The Trust must have significantly relied on through traffic as intermediate settlements such as Eridge and Crowborough were small in size,

Financially the Trust appears to have been sound and it was able to offer 5% per annum on the £2,200 raised to finance the improvements before its opening. Of this £500 had been redeemed by 1829. In that year toll revenue was £476 8s 4d (£476.41) and total income declared to be £738 13s 4d (£738.66) with costs fractionally greater. Direct railway competition was late in arriving and it was not until August 1868 that the line through Crowborough from Lewes was opened. Only four years later on 1 November 1872 the Trust powers expired and it was wound up.

### Tollhouses

The Trust is shown as maintaining three gates in 1829, the same number plus a side gate in 1840 and four gates (probably including the side gate) in 1852.

#### Ropers Gate TQ 575386

Named in the original Act of Parliament as the commencement of the Trust and marked on the Tunbridge Wells Museum map as a turnpike gate. It was located at the point at which the A26 road turns sharply to the left and now passes under railway line to Eridge (Spa Valley Railway). It is also named on the map in the 1840 edition of *Colbran’s Tunbridge Wells Guide*, which shows a line across the road at this point. It was situated in Frant parish. It could not however be traced on the Frant tithe award map of 1846 and it is possible that its closeness to Tunbridge Wells led to agitation or its removal. The date of this closure is not known with certainty, but the gate at Eridge Green was its replacement.

#### Eridge Green TQ 561360

Also known as Hamsell Bridge Tollgate. It was in fact placed north of Eridge Green and Eridge Castle.

On the tithe award map it is shown on the west side of the road and built into it, with a gate across the road. The property is not numbered on the map or referred to in the schedule of owners and occupiers. The toll revenue for this gate was listed at £220 15s 10d (£220.79) when advertised for farming in April 1817, and in 1820 was £257. In May 1871 the gate keeper, was named as Matilda Holdstock and she testified in the prosecution of a William Fenner of Eridge, accused of stealing 5lbs of coke from his employer the Earl of Abergavenny. A side gate at Spratts Bottom, Eridge Road was sold to the Marquis of Abergavenny on 5 November 1872<sup>30</sup>.

#### Crowborough TQ 488289

In 1840, at the time of the tithe award map, the gate was in Buxted parish. It was shown on the west side of the road south of where the ‘Crow and Gate’ Public House now stands. The gate house was on a plot of 8 perches. It was sold in January 1872 to John Spearpoint, Innkeeper, for £65 and at the date of the sale was occupied by a Mrs Chapman. A plan accompanying the sale details shows that Spearpoint owned the property to the west and north of the tollhouse plot. This plan also details the shape of tollhouse, situated immediately adjacent to the road. A cottage stands on the site today, having the same ground plan. This is named “The Old Toll Cottage” and is of two storeys, the lower rendered on the front and the full length of one side.. The storey above appears to have modern cladding resembling timber. An observation window exists on the north side. It is likely that the lower storey is essentially the original tollhouse with a further storey and roof added above. The statement in the book *The Story of Crowborough* (Tunbridge Wells 1933) p 60 that the house was destroyed about 1850 is clearly incorrect.



Fig. 7 Crowborough tollhouse

As it was in an isolated position on Ashdown Forest local traffic would have been slight and in 1817 the tolls were advertised for farming on the basis of an income of £112 11s 9d (£112.59) per annum and in 1820 the income was stated to be £190<sup>30</sup>.

Handel Gate TQ 485285

Shown on the tithe map as in Buxted parish, a short distance south of Crowborough Gate at the junction of the A26 and the road leading west towards Duddleswell. The house appears to have had its front to the side road but a dotted line across the main road is shown. The gate is indicated as a toll gate in Horsfield, 2½ miles north of Five Ash Down and a mile south of Crowborough Gate. A gate at "the top of Five Ash Down" is also mentioned in McDermott's history of Buxted<sup>32</sup>. The closeness of this gate to the Crowborough one might suggest that this largely served as a side gate. No figures of toll income are known unless they were incorporated with those for the Crowborough Gate. No records exist for the disposal of the gate house.

Ringles Cross TQ 476227

A tollhouse and gates belonging to the Malling (Lewes) and Wych Cross Turnpike existed here but the Uckfield tithe map shows no gate across the Tunbridge Wells road and no toll was collected here by the Tunbridge Wells and Uckfield Turnpike Trust. See *SIH* 42 (2012) p32 or details of this gate).

### Milestones

None located and none were noted in the *SIH* 1972 survey. Some are shown on the inter-war OS maps recording distances to Lewes. Those recorded there are 20, 19, 17, 16, 14, 13, 12, 10 and 9 at the Ringles Cross intersection.

### **Tunbridge Wells to Swiftsden and Sleeches Cross to Cross in Hand Trust 1767**

This was also known as the Three Districts Trust. It started with a common road from Tunbridge Wells (now the A267) but at Sleeches Cross, south of Frant it divided into two separate branches:

1. The first took the line of the B2099 through Wadhurst and Ticehurst until it reached the A21 London to Hastings road at Swiftsden, then in the parish of Etchingham.
2. The other line continued to follow the A267 road through Mark Cross and Mayfield making a junction with the Ringmer and Hurst Green Trust

at Cross in Hand.

The Trust appears to have been broken up for administrative purposes and in a parliamentary return of 1829 was listed in three parts:

1. Sleeches to Tunbridge Wells with two gates and 2 miles 5 furlongs and 4 perches of road.
2. Sleeches and Swiftsden with ten gates and 6 miles and 6 perches of road
3. Frant and Possingworth with seven gates and a distance of 10 miles, 6 furlongs and 6 perches

The Trust originated in an Act of 1767 (7 Geo III c 84) and its powers continued by means of renewal acts until 1 November 1877 (40-41 Vict c.64). The route changed little over this span, except in the Mayfield area when a renewal Act of 1808 added Pound Hill (Mayfield) to the pond at the east end of Fletching Street in the same Parish. At this time the road from Mayfield towards Tunbridge Wells continued eastwards at the end of Mayfield High Street down Fletcher Street and by way of Coggins Mill and Lake Street to reach Mark Cross. It was only in 1833 that the existing line of the A267 down the hill past Mayfield Convent School, to meet the existing line of parish road from Butchers Cross to Argos Hill Mill was constructed.

As the routes of the Trust served largely rural areas with limited through traffic, the toll income was never large and it struggled to pay the 5% interest due annually on the debt incurred at the founding of the Trust to put the road in order. Despite the considerable length of road involved and the multitude of gates, the total toll revenue in 1850 was only £1,721 6s 8d (£1,721.33) and total debts amounted to £8,693 15s 6d (£8,693.77). Roads were maintained in an indifferent manner depending on available funds and local effort and supervision. In 1829 the Frant and Possingworth section was not employing a "General Surveyor" and the Tunbridge Wells to Sleeches Cross and from thence to Swiftsden had no "Supervising Surveyor". In 1840 the roads in Frant parish were stated to be "in good order" with the exception of about a half a mile. They were also in good order in Wadhurst, Ticehurst and Etchingham parishes but in Rotherfield parish about half of the distance, and in Mayfield parish four miles of road were declared to be "in indifferent order" while the remainder of the road was condemned as "bad". Direct railway competition from the South-Eastern Railway line to Hastings,

opened in September 1851, would have had an effect on the road to Swiftsden, though not all the stations were well sited to the villages they were intended to serve. The line of road through Mayfield would not have been affected as the railway through this village was not opened until September 1880, three years after the demise of the Trust in 1877<sup>33</sup>. For reasons which are not entirely clear some tollhouses were disposed of earlier in the 1870s.

### **Tunbridge Wells to Sleaford Cross**

#### Tollhouses

Tunbridge Wells Gate TQ 582375

On the Eridge Road leading from the town at the crest of Rumber Hill. It also appears to have operated in association with a side gate at Frant Bottom (TQ 585367). This was authorised in June 1796 across the road leading to Eridge Green and Groombridge and would have regulated traffic coming from the Tunbridge Wells to Uckfield Trust road to the west. In 1843, when the letting of the tolls was advertised, the gates were described as "The Tunbridge Wells Gate and the toll bar at Frant Bottom, Rumber Hill and the lane leading to Hall's Hole" with a price of £280, the third highest of the Trust gates. In 1853 the lease was for two gates the Tunbridge Wells Gate and "the toll bar at Frant Bottom". As with many Trusts problems were experienced with the toll collectors and in April 1794 John Tippon had to be ejected. The closeness of the Tunbridge Wells Gate to a rapidly expanding town would have made its presence unpopular and ensured early removal<sup>34</sup>.

Sleaford Cross TQ 587346

Probably one of the initial gates on the Trust for in August 1790 William Dodswell of Frant, labourer, was appointed gate keeper in place of Samuel Woods resigned. The 1846 tithe award map shows this tollhouse in the fork created by the junction of the A267 and B2099 roads with gates across both. The tollhouse extended into the road. The side facing Tunbridge Wells was 22 ft 4" wide with a face to the Mayfield road of 12 ft. A garden 81 ft long was provided at the back, again extending along the Mayfield road. At the closure of the Trust it must have been this garden plot that encouraged the Hon. Percy Ashburnham of Sherriford Park to offer £75 for it. The tollhouse was demolished at the request of the highway authority and the site incorporated into

the road. The tolls at this gate were appreciable and in 1843 their farming was advertised for the sum of £290, the second highest on this Trust<sup>35</sup>.

#### Milestones

None were located and none were found at the time of the SAS survey published in 1972 (SIH 5).

### **Sleaford Cross to Swiftsden**

#### Tollhouses

Wadhurst Upper Toll TQ 637321

Built in the middle of the road immediately to the east of the junction with the B2100 to Pell Green and Lamberhurst (The Wadhurst and West Farleigh Trust). It may have had some garden but does not feature in the tithe award schedules of 1840. When the Trust was wound up in 1877 £10 was paid for land "forming part of the site of the tollhouse". The purchaser was Robert Watson Smyth of Wadhurst Castle, the house being opposite. The rest of the site was "required by the Highway Authority to be added to the Roads". As early as March 1856 a meeting of the Trustees was held to consider the removing of the gate to a site adjoining Durgates Farm and also erecting a side bar "where they should judge necessary". No action appears to have been taken however. Local historians have however asserted that a single story, weather boarded cottage at the top of Tapsells Lane, close by, is a tollhouse. This identification has been made on the basis of appearance, and it is possible that some material from the demolished Upper Toll cottage may have been incorporated in it. The tolls from this gate and the Wadhurst Lower Gate were often let together. In 1840 they were leased with those of Sleaford Cross for £400 and in 1843 the two Wadhurst gates were offered for £290. At the time of the 1851 census the toll keeper was James Cornwall<sup>36</sup>.

Wadhurst Lower Toll TQ 64331

Situated at the eastern end of the main village street and built into the road on the north side. Its situation would have ensured its demolition as soon as the powers of the Trust had expired in 1877. A small amount of land was sold to Robert Watson Smyth for £15. Attempts have been made to identify the tollhouse with a single story cottage standing on the opposite side of the road, and since demolished, and a number of publications have carried this assertion.<sup>37</sup>





Fig. 8 Ticehurst—Burnt Lodge tollhouse

#### Ticehurst – Burnt Lodge TQ 685304

Just to the west of Ticehurst village, where an unclassified road leads north to Three Legged Cross. The tollhouse is situated on the north side of the junction facing towards Ticehurst on a plot of 12 perches, with a gate across the side lane. The three bay single storey tollhouse, with a central door, is weather boarded painted white and with a tiled roof and has a small extension at the back, probably of later date. When the Trust was wound up it was sold for £40 on 10 November 1877 to John Brissenden of Ticehurst, farmer, who also owned the adjoining land. One of the most attractive of Sussex tollhouses and typical in construction and size to many others that were built in the County.

#### Ticehurst – Vineyard

A side gate about 100 yards to the west of the Burnt Lodge Gate. Not shown on the tithe award map or schedules Operated in conjunction with Burnt Lodge Gate and probably had no permanent structure for the toll collector. The possible location is TQ 683304.

#### Ticehurst Upper Gate TQ 687303

Just before the western extremity of the village and on the north side of the Turnpike. Not shown on the tithe map or schedules but shown on the 1873 25" OS map. It was sold in 1877 to John Noakes, described as a gentleman, for £50. The land to the north and west was also owned by Noakes.

#### Ticehurst – Lower Gate TQ 695301

At the eastern end of the village at the point where the B2087 for Flimwell makes a junction with the B2099 Sleaford to Swiftsden Turnpike. The substantial two storey brick cottage with a hipped tiled roof is situated in the fork of the two roads

facing towards the village with gates across both roads. A photograph taken c1870 shows the three bay frontage with both gates in position and the toll board above the central door at first floor level. The house was on a plot of 4 perches. This front has subsequently had a central window inserted at first floor level where the board was and the first floor has also been file hung. It has also been extended at the back, where it was originally only one bay deep in English bond. It now incorporates two cottages facing the Swiftsden road both in Flemish bond<sup>38</sup>.

The Ticehurst gates were let as a group, described as "Ticehurst Upper & Lower Gates and toll bars at Burnt Lodge Lane and the Vineyard". In 1843 the asking price was £300. The same grouping was offered in 1852, 1853 and 1856.

An incident occurred at one of the Ticehurst gates in October 1824 when John Baker, the keeper demanded toll from William Friend of Ticehurst who attempted to pass through as a pedestrian with a wheelbarrow containing bricks, The gate keeper was accused of abusive language.



Fig. 9 Ticehurst—Lower tollhouse photographed c.1870

#### Milestones

At the time of the 1971 SIAS survey three milestones of similar pattern were located at TQ 608338, 636321 and 646309, all in Wadhurst parish. Of these three only TQ 646309 had an inscription that was readable. This read "7/MILES/TO WELLS". Of these three stones only TQ636321 remains. This is opposite the lodge to Wadhurst Castle on the north side of the road, close to the site of the Wadhurst Upper tollhouse. The original inscription would have been "6/MILES/TO WELLS". Unfortunately the well-meaning restorers have added an inscription giving a distance to London, clearly unaware that stones on more minor local roads did not give distances to the Capital<sup>39</sup>.





Fig. 10 Wadhurst milestone restored with altered description

## Sleeches Cross to Cross in Hand

### Tollhouses

This branch was stated to have 7 gates in a Parliamentary return in 1829

Mark Cross TQ 582312

At the crossroads where the B2100 Wadhurst to Crowborough road crosses the A267 Sleeches to Cross in Hand Turnpike. The tollhouse was on the east side of the road. In May 1801 it was proposed that the toll gate be removed and set up at the east end of Mayfield, but at the following meeting of the trustees in July this was postponed but a side gate across the road to Wadhurst was agreed as was the building of a house for the Keeper. When the Trust was wound up the tollhouse was demolished to improve road access, the remainder of the site was sold for £10 in December 1877 to Henry Hayne Esq., of 11 London S., Fenchurch St., London who was the owner of the adjoining land. Traffic through this gate, and along the branch generally must have been low for in 1843 the farming of the tolls was advertised for only £91<sup>40</sup>

Mayfield – Fletching Street TQ 591271

On the line of the old road from Mayfield to Argos Hill via Coggins Mill, but retained as a side bar after the route was diverted to the present one in 1833. A cottage named as the tollhouse exists in Fletching Street and appears to date to this period of the Trust's history. It may have been an earlier house

purchased by the Trust or even the dwelling house of the person who acted as gate keeper. It is not recorded in the list of tollhouses sold on the ending of the Trust. Toll revenue at this gate was small and in 1843 the lease of tolls was offered for £50<sup>41</sup>.



Fig. 11 Mayfield – Fletching Street tollhouse

Butchers Cross TQ 559256

The tollhouse was on the south side of the road at the point that the A267 makes a sharp turn, with roads to Stonehurst and Argos Hill on the north side of the junction. A two storey cottage stands on the north side of the junction with a three bay front named 'Toll Cottage'. It looks c1870 and is on the wrong side of the road. Improvements have been made to the A267 at this point with the new line to the south of the original. It is likely that the tollhouse was demolished at the closure of the Trust as only £29 was paid by Samuel Hughes of Skippers Hall, Mayfield on 11 November 1877 for the site and "that small piece of Garden ground".

Meers Lane Side Bar TQ 566256

About a half mile to the east of Butchers Cross where a side gate was fitted across the road leading south and paralleling the turnpike. This was let in association with Butchers Cross gate and in 1834 the two gates were offered for £134. There is no evidence that there was a tollhouse at this point but in the purchase document for Butcher Cross it was stipulated that the price included "the Collecting Box, Posts, Bar and Fences belonging to us at Meers Lane"<sup>42</sup>

Dudsland (or Colleshall) Gate TQ 559229

At the junction of the A267 with a minor road leading north-east to Isenhurst. The tollhouse is



Fig. 12 Dudsland tollhouse

between the two roads on the north side of the fork. The tithe award map shows a bar across the side road only but there was also one across the turnpike. The lease was offered in 1824 for £94 and in 1843 for £90. The house was on a garden plot extending to 20 perches. In 1844 the gate keeper was named as James Hallett. The large garden plot helped to secure a relatively high purchase price in 1877 when it was sold for £75 to Sir George Rendlesham Prescott of Isenhurst, who owned the adjoining land. The tollhouse survives. The original structure was typically a three bay single storey dwelling but to this has been added at the front a later verandah supported by pillars. The fancy patterned tiling on



Fig. 13 Milestone to the south of Mark Cross on A267

the roofs may well be later than Trust ownership. There are later extensions to the rear. The building is used in connection with a business called "Paygate Kennels".<sup>43</sup>

### Milestones

Only one survives on this section of the Trust. This is to the south of Mark Cross at TQ 579296. It is of local sandstone nine inches square and a foot above the ground on the east side of the road just south of the entrance to Little Abbots. It displays on both the east and west faces the inscription "TO/WELLS/6/MILES" and on the north "TO/LEWES/19/MILES". An OS map published as late as 1974 shows two additional stones to the north of Mark Cross but these were no longer in place in 1971 when the SIAS survey of East Sussex milestones was carried out.

### **Bromley & Hartfield Trust 1767**

Set up under the Act 7 Geo III c86 and commenced at Bromley Common, just to the south of Bromley town, and then passed through Keston, and Cudham to reach Westerham and Edenbridge. It continued its course south through Cowden, entering Sussex just north of Hartfield. It continued as the B2026 road until it formed a junction with the B2188 at Kings Standing (The Tunbridge Wells & Maresfield Trust of 1766). It was stated in 1840 to be 27 miles 1 rod and 5 perches in length with six gates and two side bars. A plan stated to be c1770 shows projected improvements from one mile south of Edenbridge to the junction of the Tunbridge Wells & Maresfield Trust, which was referred to as Beggars Bush. The map shows a new line of road to the east of Cowden church which follows the line of the present B 2026, which suggests that these improvements were carried out at the time of the opening of the Trust. The estimate of the cost was £3,010. The toll gates in Kent were just south of Keston, just north of Westerham, south of Edenbridge and close to Cowden. The two remaining gates were in Sussex at Colstock and Cotchford, both in Hartfield parish. In 1840 a parliamentary report stated that "the road is in good condition except a small part of Ashdown Forest which is very sandy". The Trust serviced a largely rural area with sparse traffic and income was insufficient to pay the 4% interest due on the monies originally raised to put the line in good condition, and subsequently to keep in road in repair. The Trust income was reduced by the removal in 1835 of the requirement of the parishes to pay the Trust in

lieu of the former obligation of the parish to maintain the roads. Although no arrears of interest payments were reported in 1840, this was because the Trust, for some time, had passed resolutions converting interest arrears into mortgage stock. It was reported that by this date no interest had been paid for forty years. Over this period the debts of the Trust had thus risen from £5,820 by 1792 to £11,000 by 1840<sup>44</sup>. The Trust's powers expired on 1 November 1866.

### Sussex Tollhouses

Colstock TQ 477390

On the north west side of the junction of the B2026 with the A 264 north of Hartfield and near the county border with Kent. The road junction has in recent years been considerably realigned and the site of the tollhouse is probably under the present road surface. The tollhouse was on a plot of 13 perches.

Cotchford TQ 478343

On the west side of the B2026 road rising on to Ashdown Forest from Hartfield and just south of a bridge over a stream. A generous garden plot was provided, stated to be 22 perches in 1842 and 20 perches when sold in 1866. The purchaser was Henrietta Cooper of 44, Sussex Square, Brighton who paid £60 and was already the owner of the adjoining land. A house on the site, of mid Victorian date, is named "Paygate Cottage" and may have been built when the original tollhouse was demolished<sup>45</sup>

### Milestones

The SIAS survey in 1971 showed a substantial number of distance markers in place. They were cast iron plates attached to wooden posts and showed distances to London. The word "LONDON" was in a double curve to allow larger, bolder lettering to be displayed. The plates measured 21½" tall and in width tapered from 8½" at the base to 7½" at the top. Within Sussex the following mileage markers were found:

31	TQ474399	Cowden
32	TQ481386	Cowden
34	TQ 477353	Hartfield
35	TQ 478338	Hartfield
36	TQ 471324	Hartfield
37	TQ 469310	Hartfield

Fig. 14 Milepost 36  
Bromley &  
Hartfield Trust  
(now missing)



No. 33 was missing but the East Sussex County Council ordered a replacement from Foundry & Engineering Ltd. of Lewes which was installed in May 1974. At the same time they commissioned three further plates for the road which were installed:

38	TQ 474294	Duddleswell
39	TQ 467277	Duddleswell
40	TQ 475264	Fairwarp

This part of the road was a different turnpike (Tunbridge Wells & Maresfield) which appears to have used sandstone blocks with distances to Tunbridge Wells.. Thus the new plates produced and displayed were more a concession to modern road classification rather than to historical accuracy<sup>46</sup>.

Since 1971 a number of these distance markers have disappeared leaving only the following along the Sussex course of the Bromley & Hartfield Trust:

39 and 37 but 37 is located where 38 ought to be

In July 2010 Alan Rosevear of the Milestone Society reported that two milestones were displayed for sale on ebay. These were 33 and 31. The seller was advised that these were the property of the East Sussex County Council and they were subsequently surrendered to the Council. They are now in store awaiting the necessary resources to re-install them. The number 31 is however different to that photographed in 1971 for the original SIAS survey, the number being of a different font.

The firm that cast the original plates is not known, but the Trust made a junction with the Limpsfield

Trust at Crookham Hill, north of Edenbridge. The metal plates that they ordered have the cast mark of "E MORRIS/LEWES/ FOUNDRY". This foundry in the Cliffe, was taken over by Ebenezer Morris in 1823 and continued to trade until the end of the century.

The theft and defacing of milestones and other road markers is nothing new. Under the terms of the General Turnpike Act of 1822 ( 3 Geo IV c126) a person found guilty of such a crime could be punished with a fine of £10.

### The Stonegate Trust 1771

One of the shortest turnpike trusts in Sussex covering the unclassified road from Burwash Common to Shover's Green between Wadhurst and Ticehurst on the Sleaford and Swiftsden line of the Three Districts Trust. There is some evidence to suggest that initially the Ringmer and Hurst Green Trust intended to develop this branch under their control but this had been abandoned by 1771 and only the short distance from Burwash Common to Swing Gate was retained. The rest was formed into a separate trust in 1771 under the Act 11 Geo III c98. In 1840 the length of road controlled was stated to be 4 miles 7 furlongs and 203 yards with one tollgate at Stonegate. This did not include the 100 yards on either side of Witherenden Bridge and the liability or the bridge repair. The Hurst Green Trust probably lacked the funds to maintain the road and realised that it was unlikely to generate sufficient traffic to cover repair costs. The trustees for the Stonegate Trust raised £580 to effect the repairs and offered a 4% return on the money raised. Those who loaned funds were to be disappointed in their investment. In 1829 for instance, toll revenue was a mere £27.10s which with parish composition payments gave a total income of £119 13s 7d. Expenditure in that year was however £235 6s. Accumulated debt had risen to £1117 0s 1d. By 1851 the Trust was 62 years in arrears with interest payments, this being the second worst record for the County of Sussex. By this year the Trust control of road had been reduced to 3 miles and 6 furlongs, the remaining 1 mile and 2 furlongs reverting to parish control and repair. Repair materials were in short supply and in 1840 part of the road was being maintained with "a sandy gravel, the tolls not producing at present sufficient to purchase hard stone or cinders". The opening of Stonegate station by the South Eastern Railway in December 1851 was likely to impact on the toll

income and when the Trust powers expired in the following year they were not renewed<sup>47</sup>.

### Tollhouse

Stonegate TQ 666285

In the centre of Stonegate where the road from the south divides into three lines. The tollhouse was situated in the fork created by the roads leading north and north-east to the Sleaford & Swiftsden Turnpike in the Ticehurst direction. No doubt gates would have been erected across all three roads. The tollhouse was pulled down prior to the sale of the plot of 2 perches on 29 October 1852 to Samuel Smith, Carpenter and Builder of Wadhurst. Prior to its demolition William Wiston was the occupant<sup>48</sup>.

### Acknowledgements

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