



‘ILL MET BY MOONLIGHT’ – THE CAPTURE OF GENERAL KREIPE ON CRETE BY THE S.O.E.

H. C. G. Willing

19 September 2013

The title of this talk was taken from the book written by William “Billy” Stanley Moss, published in 1950, which described the events of his SOE years, including one of the most spectacular and daring feats of the Second World War: the abduction of General Kreipe, the Commander of the German Garrison on Crete in April 1944.

The German airborne invasion of the island, and the Allied withdrawal back to North Africa had taken place in May 1941. But after the Allies left Greece – and especially Crete – to their fate, they were also the theatres of many daring partisan or *andarte* (resistance) operations against the occupying Germans and Italians – armed, trained and organised by members of the British Special Operations Executive or SOE. They were able to resist effectively the might of the German garrison on Crete thereby helping the allied cause after the invasion. But this came at great cost to themselves and the people of Crete. To this day, the Cretans are very proud of their hard-earned reputation in WW2 for fearlessness in the face of overwhelming odds, as well as their independence as a Greek Island. The Germans had a policy that, for every German soldier killed by the partisans, ten civilians would be shot or hanged. All over the island today can be found monuments to the thousands of islanders who suffered this fate. However even this did not deter the Cretans’ indomitable spirit. The scale of this resistance caused the Germans to garrison more troops on the island than they would have wished, making them unavailable elsewhere.

In the autumn of 1941, British SOE agents arrived on the island bringing wireless sets and explosives. These agents were continually on the move to avoid detection using hideouts such as caves and shepherd huts high up in the mountains. Into this environment on Crete in December 1941 arrived one of the most flamboyant British SOE agents, Patrick (or Paddy) Leigh Fermor. For a year and a half, Leigh Fermor, disguised as a Cretan shepherd, endured a perilous existence, living in freezing mountain caves while harassing German troops. His occasional bouts of leave were spent in Cairo, at Tara, the rowdy household presided over by a Polish countess, Sophie Tarnowska. It was on a steamy bathroom window in the house that Leigh Fermor and another of Tara’s residents, “Billy” Stanley Moss, conceived the abduction operation of the German commander on Crete.

General Muller, who commanded the German forces on Crete, had a reputation for extreme brutality towards the islanders. His official residence was at Knossos near Heraklion, the main town on Crete. One of the partisan agents was on good terms with his chauffeur, and it was thought that they might be able to abduct the General from his car when out on the road. But whilst planning the operations in March 1944, General Muller was succeeded by Major General Major Karl-Henrich Kreipe as commander of 22 Panzer Grenadier Division which provided the German garrison on the island. SOE elected to continue with the kidnap mission regardless, although Kreipe was an altogether more pleasant individual than his predecessor. Joining with Cretan partisans, the SOE agents studied Kreipe’s daily work habits and his travel route from his quarters at Knossos to the divisional headquarters at Ano Arkhanais.

In April 1944, Paddy Leigh Fermor and Billy Stanley Moss together with a selected band of the Cretan resistance were ready to kidnap the German General. The plan was to stop him on the road at night, and



abduct him and his car. They knew that General Kreipe travelled twice daily from the Villa Ariadne at Knossos to his headquarters at Ano Arkhanais. Occasionally he remained at his headquarters until late at night, but this was accounted for by his penchant for playing bridge rather than for reasons of work. The best opportunity to attempt an abduction was during his last journey home, because by that time it was fairly dark – sunset was at 7:45 – and, in addition, the guard at the Villa Ariadne, imagining that the General had stayed at his headquarters for dinner or a game of cards, would not become immediately suspicious of his absence.

During their reconnaissance Paddy Leigh Fermor and Billy Stanley Moss had discovered an ideal spot for the ambush. This was a T-junction where any car travelling towards Knossos would inevitably have to slow down almost to a standstill. The plan was for Paddy Leigh Fermor and Billy Stanley Moss to be dressed as German Police Corporals equipped with red signal lamps. They would stand in the middle of the road as the car approached and signal it to stop. They would then walk towards it, and make certain that the General was inside; then, on a given word, they would pull open the doors, haul out the General and deal with the chauffeur. They would then drive off along the main road, past the Villa Ariadne, and on to the market square in the centre of Heraklion. Once there, they would drive westward along the coastal road as far as a point due north of the mountain village of Anoyia, where the General would be taken from the car and made to march southward towards the foothills of Mount Ida. Meanwhile the car would be driven a few miles further and ditched. This, they hoped, would give the Germans the impression that they had gone straight from the car to a waiting submarine. And to make this more believable they would leave a letter stating that the kidnap had been conducted by British Commandos and no reprisals should be taken against the local population. The next day the two groups would join forces again outside Anoyia and from there they would continue together to the rendezvous on Mount Ida. They knew there was a fellow SOE agent with a wireless set somewhere on the mountain, and once they had contacted him, they hoped that there would be nothing more left to do than to send a message to Cairo, march over Mount Ida to the coast, and there await a Royal Navy motor-launch.



*Stratis
Grigori*

*Manoli "Wallace Beery"
P.M.L.-F.*

*George "Nikko"
W.S.M.*

The abduction gang

*Moss**Kreipe**Leigh Fermor*

Such was the plan, but sure enough things did not go as expected. The ambush took place on the night of 26th April. There were a number of false alarms while they waited for the General's car, which arrived about an hour late. The two German Corporals duly waived it down on the deserted bend, and the General was bundled into the back, just as planned. They knew that the biggest risk to their plan was the need to drive through Heraklion and that it could quickly unravel if the General were to utter a cry from the back seat should they be stopped at a checkpoint. However, instead of encountering just one checkpoint, they had to go through a total of twenty-two separate checkpoints, because they had forgotten it was a Saturday night when the German soldiers were allowed to take leave in town which meant there was a heavy presence of Military Police. So the kidnappers had to rely heavily on the sentries recognizing the General's pennant on the front of the car, as their ability to speak German was limited. They finally reached the drop-off and the General was then marched off into the night up the slopes of Mount Ida. The hardest part was not so much the capture but the getaway. The wireless broke down, German troops flooded the south coast, from where the SOE and Andarte had planned to rendezvous with a Royal Navy launch, and the General hurt his shoulder in a fall.

The abductors spent two weeks in caves and sheepfolds, making their way over the snowy ridges of Mount Ida to a more secluded evacuation point. German patrols kept up the pressure and leaflets were dropped warning that anyone who gave aid or refuge to the kidnappers could expect the most severe punishment. No one gave them away. Two weeks after the ambush they managed to get a message out on a wireless to arrange a pick up with the Royal Navy. Eventually, on the night of the 14th May they got away on their motor-launch, arriving at Mersa Matruh the following day.

General Kreipe was treated well by the British and was eventually transferred to a camp in Canada and repatriated back to Germany after the war in 1947. In 1975 one year before his death he was reunited on Greek TV with Paddy Leigh Fermor, Billy Stanley Moss and some of the Cretan Partisans. He bore no animosity towards them, rather he thanked them for kidnapping him as he doubted he would have survived the war otherwise.



But in Crete it was a different story. Despite leaving the message in the car that the General would be leaving the island, the Germans did not believe it was possible to get him away. As a result, the centre of the island was overrun with soldiers searching for their leader. Worst of all was the return of General Muller to the Island. The Germans burned eleven villages as reprisals and here they stayed until October 1944 when the Allies retook the Island. The Germans insisted on surrendering only to the British, rightly fearful of what would happen to them if taken by the Cretans. General Muller was put on trial in Athens and tried by a Greek Military court which sentenced him to death in December 1946. The sentence was carried out by a Greek firing squad in May 1947.

For their part in the successful kidnapping Major Paddy Leigh Fermor was awarded the DSO and Captain Billy Stanley Moss the Military Cross for their “outstanding display of courage and audacity”. Following the 1955 Film version of their escapades, *Ill Met by Moonlight*, both Paddy Leigh Fermor and Billy Stanley Moss became household names in Britain. However all the survivors have now died of old age; Paddy Leigh Fermor was the last to go in June 2011.

Hugh Willing



STORMY SEAS: THE HISTORY OF GRACE DARLING 1838, AND OF THE RYE LIFEBOAT, 1928

Commemoration Lecture

Laton Frewen

17 October 1913

Grace Darling, a modest, reclusive Northumbrian lass became a 'media celebrity' a century before the phrase was in popular use. In her case, the description was well-deserved but unsought. Grace gained fame through a single act of heroism that remains as memorable today as it was in the nineteenth century.

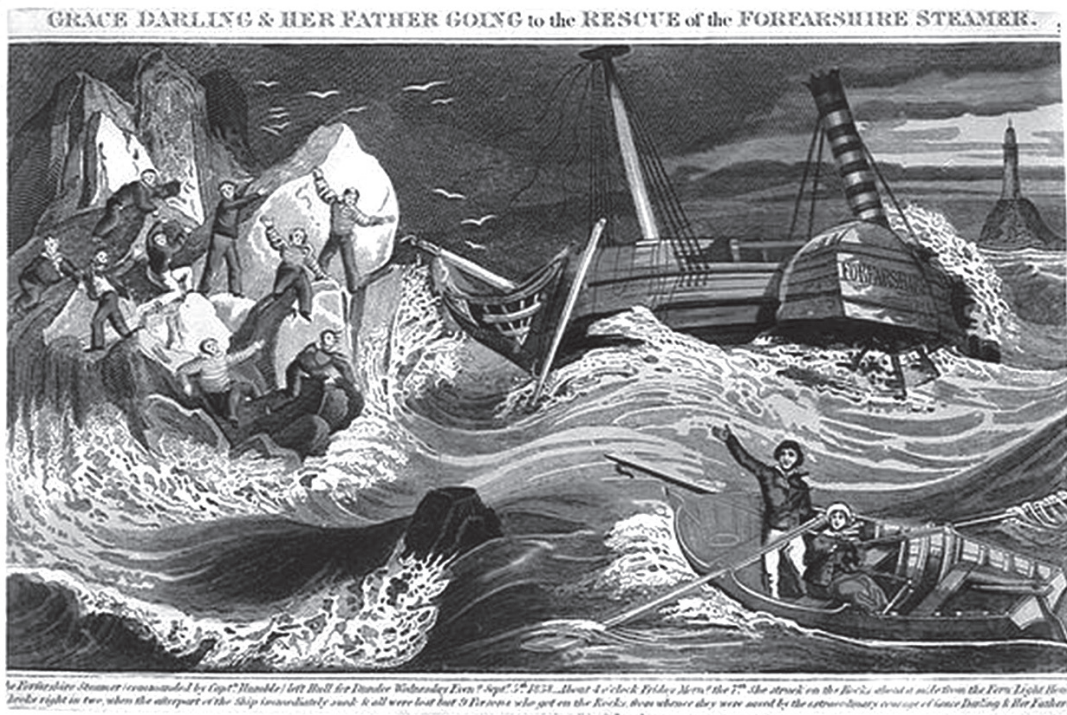
Grace was born in Bamburgh in 1815, the seventh child of the eleven born to William and his formidable wife who was eleven years his senior. William was a lighthouse keeper, following in the footsteps of his father, and had been appointed by Trinity House to the Brownsman Island light, situated on the Farne Islands off the north-east coast. The islands were uninhabited: volcanic outcrops barely a few feet about sea level and a paradise for birds, particularly cormorants, and colonies of seals. William lived in the lighthouse with his wife and Grace and maintained a small holding from which he scratched a subsistence existence.

The Brownsman lighthouse, built around 1800, was by the early 1820s considered to have been built in the wrong place, so a new light was erected further east on the Longship Rock. This move was key to the ensuing disaster.

In 1834, a passenger vessel, the *Forfarshire* operated a regular service from Dundee to Hull. The ship was engine-powered with supplementary sails. On the night of the disaster, it was sailing in the vicinity of the Farne Islands when the engines failed and the Captain decided to seek protection between the islands and the mainland. Unfortunately, he was using a chart that showed the 1800 lighthouse and not its 1834 replacement, so that instead of missing the rocks, he drifted onto them.

In the Longship Light, William Darling had retired to bed at 5am, so it was not until two hours later that Grace, tending to the kerosene light, saw the wreck and alerted her father. It was William who made the instant decision to launch not a lifeboat, but a small 22ft by 5ft 6in three-oared provisioning rowboat. With Grace's help, the two rowed through mountainous seas and reached the wreck where they found nine people clinging to the rocks, including a woman with two dead children and an injured sailor. These two, plus two able-bodied sailors were taken on board and rowed back to the Longship light, where Grace and the two most vulnerable survivors were taken ashore. The boat then returned to the wreck and recovered the remaining victims, all of whom were safely sheltered for a number of days in the cramped lighthouse living accommodation.

This action of Grace's earned her immediate immortality and, together with her father, the rarely awarded Gold Medal from the Royal Humane Society. Public reaction was instant and frenzied. Nearly £1,000 was raised by subscription (Queen Victoria gave £50) from which £750 was given to Grace who personally



wrote to each subscriber. Grace only ever drew £5 from the fund and retired to live modestly with her sister on the mainland.

Her life was short: she succumbed to tuberculosis at the age of 26 and is buried in a lavish tomb. There are suspicions that the tomb may have been financed from the residue of the fund. Today, there is a museum in her honour, filled with commemorative memorabilia and personal items belonging to Grace. Her dress shows that she was slight and barely 5ft 2in tall.



The Mary Stanford Lifeboat Disaster

The tragedy that befell the *Mary Stanford* lifeboat remains the worst disaster in the history of the RNLI. On the night of 15th November 1928, seventeen men – the entire crew – of the Rye Harbour lifeboat were drowned during what proved to be an avoidable attempt to go to the aid of a merchant vessel.

The facts are well known: the SS *Alice* of Riga, sailing along the English Channel in the face of a storm, suffered a loss of engine power and a shifting of cargo. She contacted the Folkestone lifeboat who, in turn, contacted Rye Harbour by telegraph. A flare was set off at about 3am when the crew, accompanied by men and women from the village, trudged across the shingle to reach the isolated lifeboat house – this still stands today, as remote as ever.



The Crew of the Mary Standford in front of the lifeboat house.

The lifeboat was basically nothing more than a 35ft wooden, open hull rowing boat, propelled solely by oars and two sails. It has been built in Cowes in 1916 at a cost of £2,000 and was reputed to be self-righting. It had to be launched from the beach and manhandled into the sea.

In the event, the boat never reach the *Alice* as it turned back and was seen heading towards Rye when it rolled over, finally beaching at Camber. The seventeen crew all perished. Three families lost three men each, all the of them fishermen used to the sea and its perils. Two bodies were never recovered.

The greater tragedy was that the *Alice* had been assisted by a German freighter and had telegraphed to Folkestone to disregard the emergency. The message was not deemed to be urgent and not forwarded to Rye until after the lifeboat had been launched.

Fifteen bodies were buried in the small graveyard at Rye Harbour where a splendid memorial was erected. A commemorative service is still held annually. A sum of money was raised and distributed among the dependents, although, sadly, this caused disagreement between legal spouses and common-law wives. Apparently this bitterness continued among the descendants.



An enquiry was held which established that the kapok life jackets were wholly inadequate for the purpose. They were sufficient for a few minutes, but soon absorbed water and drowned their wearers. The telegraph system was grossly deficient and was subsequently overhauled and, finally, the design of the lifeboat was castigated. The current lifeboat house is situated on the river within the village.

What has to be asked is what practical assistance the lifeboat could have rendered had it reached the *Alice*. It was already full of crew, the seas were wild and it had no power to tow a cargo ship. Perhaps also an explanation is needed as to why the lifeboat house was built in such an inaccessible place.

The pain never passed. On the grave of Charlotte Cushing (who died in 1948), mother of three of the victims is the following inscription:

Oh. How patient in her suffering
When no hand could give her ease.
God. The helper of the helpless
Saw her grief and sent her peace.

David Sawyer



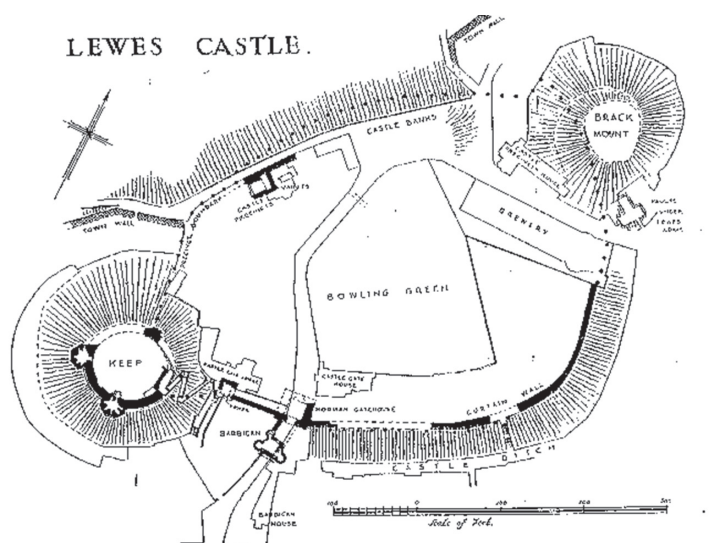
LEWES CASTLE

Sally White

21 November 2013

Our speaker's renown had preceded her, as despite following our Annual General Meeting, a packed room welcomed Sally White enthusiastically.

We were informed the lecture would be in three parts: the origins, military and modern day. The first slide showed us the mound where the original small castle had been built in Lewes. We were reminded that following the Battle of Hastings, William I had divided the South Coast into Rapes running North to South, which would always give him easy access of retreat. The Rape of Hastings had been given to William de la Varenne who had established a motte and bailey in the small town of Lewes. It was generally agreed that the two mounds for the original and present day castles were the site of ancient burial grounds. The original "castle" looked north, was not very strong, being made of wood and would have been susceptible to both fire and attack.



The Gun Garden of the present day Castle is a dry motte 65ft above Lewes High Street. The Bowling Green would have housed ancillary buildings, stables, etc. The Lord lived on the top of the Keep which housed a Great Hall, kitchen and Chapel. The twelfth-century turrets had angled towers instead of the usual round ones which provided a wider firing range and more cover for the archers. The Lord's rooms had glazed floor tiles and there was also possibly a well. A slide showed that the walls of the turrets stuck out from the curtain wall.

Most of the time there was only a skeleton staff housed in the Castle. It was customary for the Lords at that time to spend time in all their properties and, of course, much time was spent at Court. William de la Varenne had land in twelve counties stretching from Yorkshire to the South Coast.

We were told William and his wife went on a pilgrimage to Rome, stopping at the Abbey in Cluny on the way. They greatly admired the building and as a result, in 1077 started building Lewes Priory which had a nave longer than that in Chichester. Many workers were involved – some foreign – which meant a huge



amount of food was necessary to feed them all. On its completion William had developed a very imposing situation with the Castle on the top of the hill, the Priory on flat land at the bottom and with the small town of Lewes in the middle. William's wife died in childbirth and was brought back to Lewes for burial, probably in the Priory. William died following injuries in battle shortly after. Henry VIII destroyed the priory during his destruction of the monasteries.

Sally White reminded us of the date of the Battle of Lewes in 1264, the importance of which, she said, most people in England were not aware. The battle was between Henry III and Simon de Montfort, Henry having reneged on promises previously made, and it is estimated that 2,700 men died. The King lost the battle and as a result it could be said the first English Parliament was established.

The Castle passed to the Dukes of Norfolk and was allowed to become in a bad state of repair. In 1377 the French invaded and coming up the River Ouse captured the Friar of the Priory. He was subsequently ransomed. In 1381 at the time of the Peasants Revolt, all records were destroyed and the Rent Roll was burnt. At the time of the Spanish Armada in 1588, gunpowder came to the fore. Guns were fired from the Castle but they were eventually taken to Newhaven and Brighton where they would be of more use. By 1639 the Castle was in ruins. By the eighteenth century it had become a "fashionable" ruin with many small houses within the remaining walls and Tom Paine gave a talk on the Bowling Green.



In 1840 a solicitor began buying back all the small houses within the Castle which he allowed the Sussex Archaeological Society, which was founded in 1846, to rent for £30 a year to set up a Museum. During the Crimean War many Russian and Finnish prisoners were boarded at the Castle and became tourist attractions. In 1904 the Castle Lodge, where the Society's Library was housed, came up for sale and was promptly bought by Charles Dawson for himself and he then gave the Society notice to quit. However, the Castle was bought in 1920 and given to the Society. In 1970, because of the cost of repairs it was offered to English Heritage, who declined the offer.

Since that time the Society has rented out the Castle for weddings, concerts, festivals etc. and acquired a one million pound donation from the National Lottery Fund.

Sally White's enthusiasm for Lewes Castle was evident throughout her fascinating lecture and she encouraged her audience to visit it, not once but several times. This, I would personally endorse, the views from the top are fantastic.



THE JUTE AND SAXON SETTLEMENT OF KENT AND SUSSEX

Simon Mansfield

16 January 2014

Mr Mansfield runs VillageNet which is a gazetteer of villages from Seaford to Hythe and north as far as Sevenoaks. He explained that his interest in the subject of the lecture had started when he tried to find out the meaning of village names and realised that these place names seemed to reflect the progress of the Saxon and Jute expansion into Kent and Sussex.

The Sussex coastline has been eroding for 1600 years so the sea will have destroyed many historic sites along the coast and 1600 years ago the River Rother flowed into the sea at Port Lympne. So the topography then was different from today's.

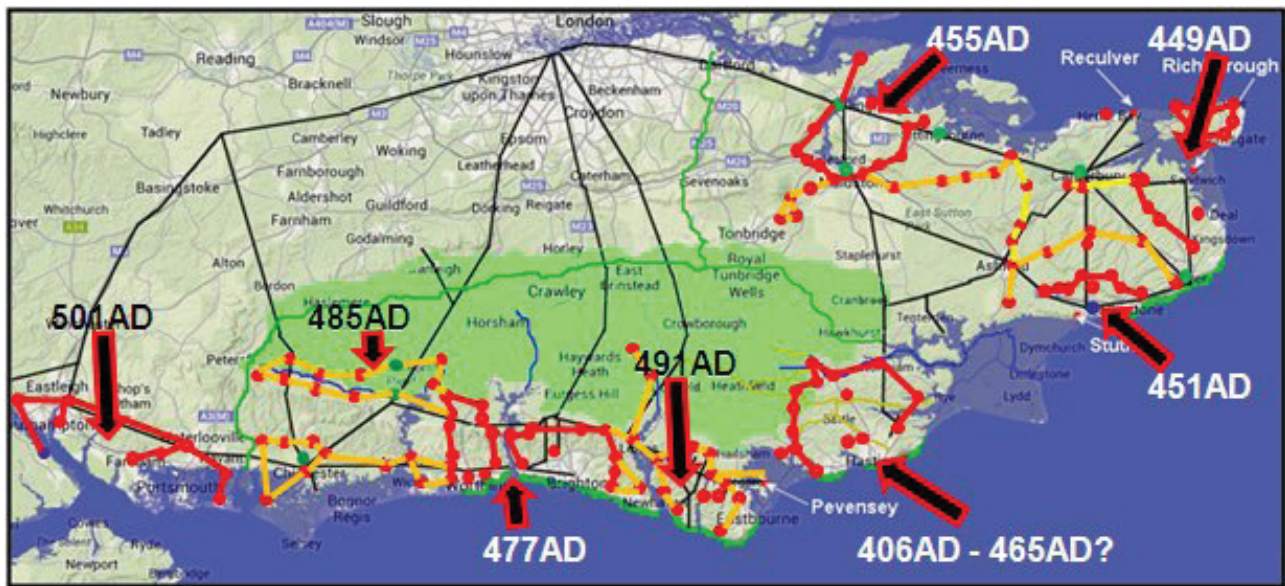
During their occupation of Britain, the Romans built a network of roads in order to extract the raw materials, the iron and the wood, which brought them here in the first place. The roads led to ports along the Sussex and Kent coasts. The area was covered in forest and the valleys were rich in Sussex clay which made them unusable for roads. The Romans either transported the wood and iron along the rivers or built roads along the ancient ridgeways which run from south-east to north-west. There were Roman iron workings at Beauport Park and Stonegate and Mr Mansfield suggested that Etchingham was a distribution point for the iron from Stonegate to the port at Bodiam. All this activity ended, however, with the departure of the Romans from Britain in the early fifth century.

Much of our evidence for the next period comes from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, started in Alfred the Great's time and added to until the middle of the twelfth century. Once the Romans had left, Jutes and Saxons started to invade Britain as they were pushed westwards by Visigoths, themselves under pressure from Huns from further east and moving into Saxon territory as a result. The map opposite shows where the Jutes and Saxons came from and where they finished up in Britain. Among the earliest arrivals were Hengist and Horsa, mercenaries hired by the British King Vortigern who had taken over from the Romans in Kent to help him maintain and strengthen his hold on the region.

The languages spoken by the invaders were similar to each other and this emerges clearly from the similarity between place names, not only in the Sussex/Kent area but also in Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk although Mr Mansfield had not yet investigated this part of the country. During his research, Mr Mansfield said he had noticed a number of settlements with "ING" in their names which were found predominantly on main roads, hilltops or river crossing points; and that, if you drew a line joining them up, that line seemed to enclose particular areas, perhaps meaning they were fortified positions defending those areas. For example, in 451, Hengist and Horsa appeared to have turned against Vortigern and were marching north towards him from the Hythe area. During the campaign, Hengist



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sailed up the Thames estuary, landed at Gillingham, cut off Vortigern and defeated and killed him at the battle of Aylesford.

But Hengist continued to pursue Vortigern's forces southwards up the Medway and on the map south of Maidstone, there are a number of "INGs" in the Medway valley, places like Wateringbury, Yalding, Beltring and Laddingford, representing a ring of forts defending the area Hengist had taken from Vortigern's forces. The Kentish border too has "INGs" running down to the Weald; could this be merely coincidence?

Mr Mansfield next turned his attention further west and referred to the landing of the Saxon King Aella and his three sons Cymen, Wlenca and Cissa at what is thought to be Shoreham. Here again, we find Shoreham surrounded by "INGs", suggesting that after Aella had landed and won territory, he set up a ring of forts to defend it. Similarly, there are "INGs" running up the (West Sussex river) Rother valley to Petersfield, a second line near Chichester and another towards Southampton. Mr Mansfield suggested that this showed that Aelle was fixing his western boundaries which, he noted, were close to the western boundary of modern Sussex. Aelle then turned towards Anderida or Pevensy as it is known to-day.

Mr Mansfield turned similarly to the east to discuss the Hastings area. He noted that although Hastings was ringed by "INGs", there was no evidence that Saxons landed in the area. Nevertheless, the existence of the defensive "INGs" suggested that it was an important area for the Saxons because of the iron industry there, and remained so at least up to the time of Alfred the Great.

Finally, Mr Mansfield discussed the origins of other place names, particularly those with "ham" or "ton" in them. They seemed to mark a second phase of settlement with the following pattern of suffixes:



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ings, ing or inges – forts or strongholds
ingtons - fortified hill settlements
ingham – fortified valley settlements
ton – hill settlements
ham – valley settlements
ye, ey, sea, ney – probably islands
hythe – significant landing places
el – means people of.

Mr Mansfield did not claim to be a professional historian or geographer. His theories are however very convincing to another non-expert and I look forward to learning in due course how they are evaluated in the academic world. In the meantime, I suggest readers take this summary of Mr Mansfield's interesting talk with them when they travel in Sussex and Kent and test out his conclusions for themselves.

Hugh Arbuthnott



TO THE MANOR BORN: MANORS IN THE BATTLE AREA 1066–1925

Christopher Whittick

20 February 2014

A packed audience enjoyed a fascinating insight into the working of the medieval manor. Manors are often thought of as just being large houses with grounds but this is not always the case. Medieval manors were often not very large and could hold lands across a county or indeed the country. Wealden manors in particular were not compact and tended to own lands scattered over a wide area – even individual farms could be compartmentalised and owned by different manors. A ‘manor’ would also include a bundle of rights over the land and also over people: it was a legal and administrative structure which was an intrinsic part of the feudal system. It would have a manorial court; could run market fairs; and had instruments of government, for example, stocks and a ducking stool.

The Manor of Battle had a very unusual status within the feudal system. When William the Conqueror established the Abbey, he granted it a ‘leuga’, three miles across, which accorded the Abbot, and subsequent owners of the manor, almost regalian rights over the area: the Bishop of Chichester and the Sheriff had no jurisdiction in the manor’s domain, which later led to disputes. The Abbey was also given pieces of land across Sussex and other parts of the country, including Norfolk, Devon and Essex, as well as property in London: in these holdings, the Abbot held the same rights as at Battle.

The manor and its holdings were governed by two courts: the baronial/manorial court which ran by customary law, dealing with the sale, purchase and inheritance of land and entertaining pleas (outside the manor, pleas would go to the King’s Court); and the Leet Court (known as View of Frankpledge after 1600) which dealt with criminal matters. The courts were administered by a steward, a qualified lawyer – the office in the Battle manor would be a very senior appointment, and the symbol of office, usually a rod. The Court House was originally at the junction of Mount Street and the High Street until it was moved to the south side of the Abbey Gatehouse at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Abbey also had its own gaol and gallows and the manor also had its own coroner until as late as the early twentieth century. A Manorial Court covered a range of different transactions, particularly relating to copyhold land, acting as an early Land Registry. If someone was personally unfree or held land that was unfree, the details would be held in the Court Roll; from towards the end of fourteenth century, on payment of a fee to the Steward, a tenant could obtain a copy of the relevant Court Roll entry, hence the term ‘copyhold’. The dense pattern of transactions, giving an insight into medieval life, included:

- ‘surrender and admission’ – unfree land was transferred from one person to another via the Lord of the Manor and his Steward (fees would be payable to both the Steward and the Lord);
- ‘surrender to will’ – for payment of a fee, land could then be bequeathed as the tenant wished;
- ‘death and inheritance’ – decision on what should happen on the death of free and copyhold tenants (who had not paid the fee);
- ‘additional surrender’ – dealing with mortgages;
- licences;
- ‘grants from waste’ – income from lands by the side of roads (at one point, the Pelham family owned 1/3 of ‘waste’ in the East Hastings rape; and



- ‘enfranchisement’ – in the 19th and 20th centuries, by paying one lump sum or by smaller regular payments, a tenant could buy himself out of the obligations to the Manor and by doing so gain the freehold.

Not the least of the manorial rights was that of “heriot”: the right to a tenant’s best animal.

Extensive records of the Battle manor survive which give detailed accounts of life within a manor. Apart from 1653–1660 during the Protectorate, legal records were written in Latin until 1733; they were recorded on Court Rolls until the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century when books started to be used. The Battle Abbey Archive was bought by Henry Huntingdon in the early 1920s and taken to California where it still remains in the Huntingdon Library in Pasadena. However, other records remain in the UK, for example, the Court Roll for Alciston (part of the Battle manor), provides details of the tenants’ fees and fines. That roll covers a period from before the Black Death to 1498 and also gives information on yield of wheat, the annual and average yield of different types of seed, the different types and number of each animal and what happened to them : how many were born, slaughtered or sold.

The earliest surviving detailed survey of the manor dates from 1252. It sets out the services that the tenants are required to perform in return for holding land, including finding a man at reaping, a man for scattering hay and also for carrying loads from Bodiam meadow in a cart with two oxen. The survey also detailed the rights of the tenant for example, ‘he will have a meal in the Hall with soup and cheese’. From early days, it was clear that, as with military service, such services might not be feasible as tenements could be held by minors, widows or the elderly, so the system grew up of the Lord taking money in lieu of these services, known as ‘quit rents’. The rates are also included in these records.



At one point, Battle manor held 400 tenements including those outside the town. In 1500, John Bookland, the Steward, had all the manorial records in his custody. For ease of reference, he wrote synopses for the records dating from the thirteenth century onwards and this was continued until the 1580s, which became known as the ‘Numbers Book’ – a very rare resource. Marginal notes for a number of entries relate to particular tenements, for example, the tenement now occupied by Battle Memorial Hall was owned in 1433 by Richard Sackville (cousin to the Queen and ancestor to the Dukes of Dorset) and in 1569, it was owned by a Richard Wikes.

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Manor of Battle was broken up: the Abbey was granted to Sir Anthony Browne but not the whole estate: for example, Alciston was acquired by Sir John Gage. The new owners of course required records of their lands and clerks were also employed to copy sections of the 1433 Battle rental records. Sir John Gage, although no richer than Sir Anthony Browne, commissioned a very ornate record for his new manor; those for the Abbey were much more modest.



It was not until 1925 that manorial tenure was abolished but even then, certain rights remained for example, the right to mineral rights in some circumstances, which was only finally abolished in 2013. After 1925, Manorial documents came under the jurisdiction of the Master of the Rolls (unfortunately, the Battle Abbey Rolls had been sold only a few years previously!).

Sarah Hall



Charter by Henry VIII to Battle Abbey, 1536



THE ROYAL SUSSEX REGIMENT IN WORLD WAR I

Matthew Jones

20 March 2014

This lecture was originally scheduled for 20 February 2014. However Mr Jones kindly agreed to swap dates due to the speaker for 'To The Manor Born ...' becoming unavailable..

'Lowther's Own Marching Song'¹

1. *Refrain*
Oh the Sussex boys are stirring
In the wood-land and the Down;
We are moving in the hamlet,
We are rising in the town;
For the call in King and Country
Since the foe has asked for war,
And when danger calls or duty
We are always to the fore.
For the Sussex stock is staunch
And the Sussex blood is true,
And the Sussex lads are keen
When there's soldier's work to do.
Hear us tramp, tramp, tramp
'til the county is a camp,
And we start the little business
We have sworn to carry through.

2.
We have come from shop and sheepfold,
We have come from desk and store,
We have left our peaceful callings
To be taught the trade of war;
For our hearths, and homes, and honour
As a bulwark we will stand,
Fighting hard for England's glory
And the pleasant Sussex land. *repeat refrain*

3.
Oh we know that we are wanted,
And we know the risk we run,
But we wouldn't think of shrinking
When there's duty to be done.
We would go if others shirked it
And we had to go alone
For the honour of our country
And our pride in "Lowther's Own." *repeat refrain*

Mr Jones is Assistant County Archivist at the West Sussex Record Office, which houses the regimental archive of our county regiment and we were delighted to welcome him for an interesting and at times deeply moving insight into the regiment and lives of some of its men.



Occupying a senior place in the British Army, the Royal Sussex Regiment has a long and distinguished service record. In July 1914 the regiment consisted of two Regular Infantry battalions (i.e. full-time soldiers). The army also contained Territorial units (similar to today's Territorials) which together with ex-servicemen were formed into Reserve battalions in August 1914. Later, following successive waves of recruitment many more Regular and Service battalions were formed and by 1918 there were twenty-three battalions. However, of those men who were serving at the outbreak of war on 4th August 1914, just two remained with the colours on 11 November 1918.

The Regimental Depot was at Chichester and at the outbreak of war the 1st battalion was serving at Peshawar, India whilst the 2nd battalion was based at Woking. The 'local' battalion was the 5th (Cinque Ports). It was a Territorial battalion previously known as the 'Cinque Ports Volunteers', which in 1914 was stationed as follows:

Headquarters	Hastings
A Company	Hastings
B Company	Battle
C Company	Wadhurst
D Company	Lewes
E Company	Rye
F Company	Uckfield
G Company	Crowborough
H Company	Ore

(Although not mentioned by the speaker, it is a notable example of 'Army Logic', the 5th battalion being attached at this time to the East Lancashire Division.)

In this early mechanical age the army's response to facilitate mobility was to create Cyclist battalions and the 6th battalion was so designated in the Royal Sussex. Of all the battalions of the Royal Sussex the most well known are the 5th (Cinque Ports) and the 11th, 12th & 13th battalions (1st, 2nd & 3rd Southdown) known as 'Lowther's Lambs' from the name of their founder and their choice of mascot.

During one week in September 1914, the Hastings recruiting office received 209 volunteers, 172 of whom specified a wish to join a new Regular battalion, designated as the 7th, posters for which had been placed across the county.

The regiment saw action in many theatres of the war: the Western Front, Egypt & Palestine, Gallipoli, Italy, Russia and its battalions were present at major battles, often performing key roles and suffering high casualty rates:

<i>Action</i>	<i>Casualties</i>		
	<i>Officers</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>All Ranks</i>
Battle of Aubers Ridge, 9 May 1915			
2 nd	14	537	
(the second highest number of battalion casualties in the attack)			
1/5 th (Cinque Ports)		11	191
Battle of Loos, 25 September 1915			
2 nd			481
(again the second highest number of battalion casualties in the attack)			



By 30 June 1916 the 1/5th had been reassigned as pioneer battalion to the 48th (South Midland) Division, now part of the build-up for the Somme offensive. Meanwhile the 11th, 12th & 13th battalions had moved into the line in front of Aubers Ridge, taking their place in the feint attack which was intended to draw the enemy's attention from the Somme offensive that was to start the following day. As they marched their deeds to the words of their marching song, casualties approached 1,000 across the three battalions and the following day the main attack went in, to be remembered simply as the bloodiest day in the history of the British Army. During the Battle of the Somme, a captured German officer (subsequently quoted in the Official History of the War gave witness to "the dash and resolution of the [2nd] Sussex ... who gave his men no time to bring their machine guns into action."

Whilst such casualties speak for themselves in terms of the human tragedy, the speaker quoted extensively from diaries and letters, bringing an intimate glimpse of the personal anguish which extended across families and whole communities. Like so many others, the Royal Sussex recruited 'pals' or 'chums' battalions; these were recruited from groups of men who were already known to each other, whether through community, work or sport and who thus already exuded a team spirit upon which the army could build. But however sound the principle, the consequences were devastating for local communities when casualties of the scale such as those given above were received.

ROLL OF HONOUR

<i>Battalion</i>	<i>Battalion Status</i>	<i>Died¹</i>
1 st	Regular	44
2 nd	Regular	1,723
3 rd	Reserve (home service)	47
1/4 th	1 st -line Territorial	477
2/4 th	2 nd -line Territorial (home service)	0
1/5 th (Cinque Ports)	1 st -line Territorial	304
2/5 th (Cinque Ports)	2 nd -line Territorial (home service)	5
1/6 th (Cyclist)	1 st -line Territorial (home service/Ireland)	20
2/6 th (Cyclist)	2 nd -line Territorial	56
7 th	Service	998
8 th	Service	215
9 th	Service	764
10 th	Reserve (home service/training)	8
11 th (1 st Southdown)	Service	692
12 th (2 nd Southdown)	Service	527
13 th (3 rd Southdown)	Service	729
14 th	Reserve (training)	4
15 th	Territorial (home service)	5
16 th (Sussex Yeomanry) Territorial		163
17 th	Service (home service)	26
51 st	Graduated ³ (training)	7
52 nd	Graduated ³ (training)	3
53 rd	Young Soldier ³ (training)	<u>11</u>
TOTAL		6,828

¹ WSRO RSR MS 11/60.

² 'Sussex in the First World War', Grieves, 2000.

³ 'Young Soldier' battalions were training battalions for recruits aged from 18 years 1 month, who after Basic Training were transferred to a 'Graduated' battalion to complete their training.



Neil Clephane-Cameron

¹ WSRO RSR MS 11/60.

² 'Sussex in the First World War', Grieves, 2000.

³ 'Young Soldier' battalions were training battalions for recruits aged from 18 years 1 month, who after Basic Training were transferred to a 'Graduated' battalion to complete their training.



VOTES FOR WOMEN: TALES FROM THE WOMEN'S LIBRARY

Liz Chapman,

17 April 2014

Liz Chapman, Director of Library Services at the London School of Economics and Political Science, began by describing the principal source for her lecture, the Women's Library which had recently been transferred to the LSE, where it was being integrated into gender-related studies across the academic spectrum. In addition to thousands of documents and photographs, and early books about women, the Women's Library contains over 60,000 books and pamphlets and over 3,500 periodicals and press cuttings. The Library has 5,000 objects including banners and memorabilia such as some clothes of the suffragettes and the robes of the first woman QC and the first woman vicar. In addition there are some 500 institutional and personal archives. The Women's Library@LSE is Europe's major reference point for the history of women.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, several organisations were involved in campaigns to secure votes for women. Among them were: the Tax Resistance League which was active in Hastings; the National Union of Women's Suffragette Societies which focussed on constitutional reform; and the Women's Social and Political Union, whose founding, with the involvement of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, is commemorated in a plaque on one of the LSE buildings. The word "suffragette" had been coined as a term of abuse by the *Daily Mail* but having become so well known, the description had been adopted by womens' campaigning organisations.

Notable in the campaigns in Sussex was Barbara Bodichon, who had a house, Scalands, near Robertsbridge. She came to prominence when helping to organise the petition of just under 1500 signatures which in 1866 called for Parliament to enact limited suffrage for women. Correspondence about tactics was revealed in the letters between Barbara Bodichon and Helen Taylor, stepdaughter of John Stuart Mill, MP. The vote in Parliament was lost, but the creation of an active pressure group for women's votes, the Kensington Society, in which Barbara played a leading role, was a positive result.



Barbara Bodichon

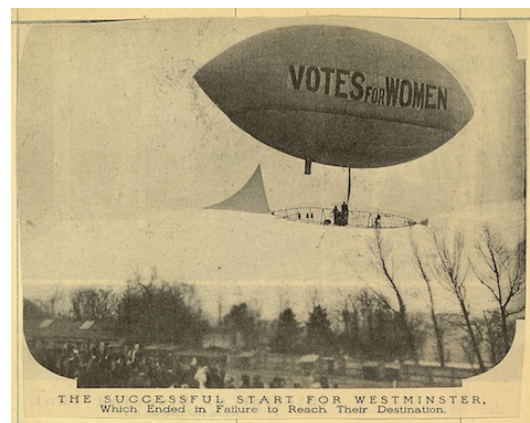


Liz Chapman examined the backgrounds of the seventeen women from Battle whom Barbara had recruited to sign the 1866 petition. They were:

Sarah Avery
Mary Ann Blackman
Ann, Caroline and Ellen Burgess
Leah Chettle
Mary Ann Dench
Delphia and Liz Edwards
Rebecca Fisher
Julia Ronalds
Mary Ann Russell
Jane Slatter
Emily and E. Ticehurst
Caroline and Emily Waller

The range of their family occupations suggested most of them were suppliers of service for Barbara, for example: sawyer, stationer, draper, ironmonger, nursemaid, bookseller, saddler, coal merchant and so on. Barbara also had a sizeable social network, which would have helped. Battle women were also involved in petitions of 1869 and 1872 – doubtless tactics were plotted at Scalands but there was no evidence of public meetings in Battle.

Hastings, however, was more of a hotbed of protest: there were many marches and demonstrations for women's emancipation there, led by Muriel Matters, the women's movement's first paid organiser. Her public protests were not confined to Hastings: she hired a dirigible to promote votes for women – it sailed across London and came down in Coulsdon. More famously she chained herself to the grill in the Ladies Gallery of the House of Commons, through which women were obliged to peer if they wished to view the proceedings. The grill had to be removed with her and she took the opportunity to speak in the House – the first woman to do so. This event was commemorated in subsequent suffragette events by marchers carrying a symbolic grill. Hastings remained a hotbed of protest, for example in 1914, about withholding of taxes if suffrage was not extended. The riots disrupted theatre performances and church services. There are plans to erect a statue of Muriel in Hastings.





Miss Muriel Matters attempts to disrupt the opening of Parliament

Liz Chapman then described the experiences of suffragettes in prison. Most were held in Holloway, but several also served sentences in Lewes. Hunger strikes were concerned with recognition being secured as political prisoners but the results were harrowing. Suffragettes in prison would have heard the screams arising from force feeding and there would have been other noise- from them shouting, to practice how to overcome the systematic barracking at suffragette meetings. Not for nothing did Parry dedicate *Jerusalem* to the suffragette movement as a morale booster. Friends of the suffragette prisoners at Lewes would go on to the Downs and sing *Jerusalem* to cheer up their colleagues. The awful conditions were illustrated in the secret diary of Worthing woman Katie Glidden, jailed for breaking a window in Wimpole Street. Kate wrote her secret diary in the margins of a book of Shelley poetry, with pencils smuggled into prison sewn into her clothes. She did not go on hunger strike, fearing the trauma of force feeding, which often damaged women permanently. Perhaps because she felt she had let her colleagues down in this way, Kate said nothing about her suffragette years until near death many decades later and at that time the secret diary emerged.

The focus then turned to Mary Richardson, who slashed the *Rokeby Venus*; and to Sussex teacher Emily Davison who died in 1913 as a result of impeding the King's horse in the Epsom Derby. The Women's Library contains several artefacts relevant to Emily: her return train ticket, used at the inquest to show she had not intended suicide; the suffragette flag in which she draped herself under her coat; the race programme showing how she had picked out the King's horse; and letters – one of sorrow and support from her mother, and one (of many) expressing disapproval in the most vituperative of terms.

Ultimately the decision of Parliament in 1918 – significantly later than in many other countries – to grant the vote women aged over thirty was the outcome of many factors, not least the fresh perspective about the value of women's role in society, offered by the Great War. But the early protests had played an essential part in women's emancipation.



THE HISTORY OF STRATEGY

Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman

15 May 2014

Sir Lawrence began by reminding the audience that there were various applications of strategy – military, political, revolutionary and business – which had some common features. The word *strategy* had arisen in the late eighteenth century in connection with warfare, especially in considering the activities of Napoleon I. It derived from enlightenment thinking, that reason and science could be applied to all human affairs.

The early concept of strategy was of planned action that led to a decisive battle. Such a battle having taken place, the losing side would be at the mercy of the victors and would swiftly come to terms. This concept was inadequate even during the Napoleonic wars as, for example, at Borodino where the French won the battle but were still forced to retreat, and in the Peninsular War where the role of local guerrilla forces was critical.

After 1815 the concept was examined in various studies, of which the leading authors were the Swiss Baron de Jomini and the Prussian von Clausewitz. Both had considerable experience of warfare; both had served, on opposite sides, in the French invasion of Russia in 1812. As the century wore on it became obvious that matters were ever more complicated. The great German General von Moltke beat the French several times in 1870–71, for example, but the war continued for much longer than the concept suggested; the French continued to resist. Moltke concluded that they did so because the masses were now involved in decision-making, however distantly, and warned against relying on the concept of the decisive battle.

In 1914, however, the Germans sought such an event. They did not find it and the result was attrition. After 1914 warfare changed again and was no longer confined to the battlefield. Air power was introduced and submarines also played a role. The war of 1939–45 demonstrated these changes even more forcefully.

Very few generals, having determined on a strategy, could carry it through: for example, the Germans in 1914 whose strategy lasted a very short time. The point is that other things happen. Moltke said that ‘no plan survives contact with the enemy’, and 1914 neatly proves it, though there have been a few exceptions. This meant a progressive disillusion with the whole idea of strategy. There were too many variables for a ruling grand strategy to succeed – not only the capacity of the enemy but public opinion, the attitudes of other countries and sheer accident. Professor Freedman added that the concept of decisive victory was not yet lost, particularly in the United States.

The military analyses were taken up by nineteenth-century revolutionaries searching for a way in which existing power structures might be replaced by something they preferred. From the 1830s there were debates about how capitalism (or ‘the bourgeoisie’) might be overthrown. Here again the protagonists of revolution tended to believe in a decisive battle but the only thing that happened was the debate. The revolutionaries, having failed to move the masses on whose behalf they professed to work, then concluded that the masses did not understand their true interests, and in turn this belief led to hard work among the working classes to convince them of the necessity of revolution. To do that they needed big ideas and skilled propagandists.



This is a real problem. If you are the underdog, how *can* you succeed? The ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu thought that at least part of the answer lay in deception, always a large part of a clever general's repertory. The problems here, as Professor Freedman pointed out, are that while one side is planning deception so might the other, thereby leading to a changed situation on the ground; and that once a form of deception has been tried, the enemy will be on its guard against repetition.

Part of the answer lies in the creation of alliances. Professor Freedman pointed to Churchill's position in May 1940. There was no point in planning for victory; all he could do was to plan for survival, a necessary and urgent precondition for victory. To survive, Britain needed friends; and Churchill wooed the United States and then in 1941, the Soviet Union. This was geo-political strategy on a grand scale, and it worked. By the end of 1941 all three countries were in alliance, and victory was certain even if still a long way off.

All of these considerations should have characterised business strategy too, a concept only becoming fashionable from the 1960s. The problems there were analogous to those of war-makers: for the strong how to maintain their position, and for the weak how to grow to strength. The strong, of course, tend to complacency, and Professor Freedman gave as an example the American carmaker General Motors, which was unable to fend off the challenge posed by German and Japanese manufacturers. Large companies had large planning departments that failed expensively to provide flexible planning, and sensible chief executives abandoned them. Admittedly, business strategies would always be more complex than military ones because there were even more factors at work, which meant that any traditional strategy adopted was much more likely to fail. Business is now much more pragmatic, adjusting its attitudes and objectives as the market and its competitors adjusted the conditions in which it worked.

In summary, Professor Freedman suggested that strategy reflected an aspiration to control the environment of the army, or business (or other organisation) so that dominance could be assured. But plans adopted were always liable to be derailed by changed conditions, whether by intention or accident. The sensible course of action would be Churchill's: not to start with the final objective but to improve where we are now, to improvise, to get to the next stage while watching carefully for changes in the environment.

Professor Freedman then turned to the current difficulties in Ukraine. No-one outside the Kremlin knew what Putin was planning to do. Was he planning to absorb all Ukraine into the Russian-dominated version of the European Union or just those parts that were clearly pro-Russian? Would he annex any more territory, thereby creating enormous hostility in the rest of Ukraine and around the world generally; or would he simply neuter Ukraine into a sullen friendship?

He had had success with the Crimea, a territory that was undeniably and overwhelmingly pro-Russian in sentiment, but this was far from the case elsewhere in Ukraine, particularly as one moved to the west of the country. His dilemma was whether to carry on destabilising Ukraine generally or to offer more and more support to the pro-Russians of the east. His problem was that each step forward created new conditions, some of them unwelcome or unexpected, and in any case he had to bear in mind the very poor state of the Russian economy. He might now be seen as having the choice of forward movement – aggression – or backward movement – open and obvious failure. We shall see.

Members raised a number of questions, concerning the influence of cultures, the survival of the notion of outright victory and other matters. Professor Freedman emphasised that any strategy was bound to be influenced by cultural issues but the basic problem remained: moving an issue forward tended to narrow the options available to the mover. The problem in Iraq, for example, was what to do after the inevitable military victory; planning a consequent strategy was essential, just as it was for a burglar: the robbery



would not be enough. One of the main concerns must be to convince people that such a victory is in their interests, but their own cultures often differed from those of invaders, and also divisions among the population could be significant. Here he instanced the Sunni/Shia conflict within Islam. Moreover, all tactical questions have strategic implications. Killing some people may be tactically necessary but strategically disastrous because of public reaction.

Last, attention turned to non-violent strategies. Non-violence was not always possible, but Professor Freedman felt that where it succeeded it was more likely to result in a long-lasting solution if only because it engendered fewer hatreds. An underdog wishing for change was likely to lose if it adopted violence: the Palestinian Intifida was working and led to dialogue, but renewed violence led to a return to conflict and an intensification of Israeli intransigence. Nelson Mandela had reluctantly supported violence but during his years in prison he could see how violence might engulf the country. When the time was ripe he decided to offer the government negotiations. This was a discussion he took alone.

George Kiloh



General von Moltke

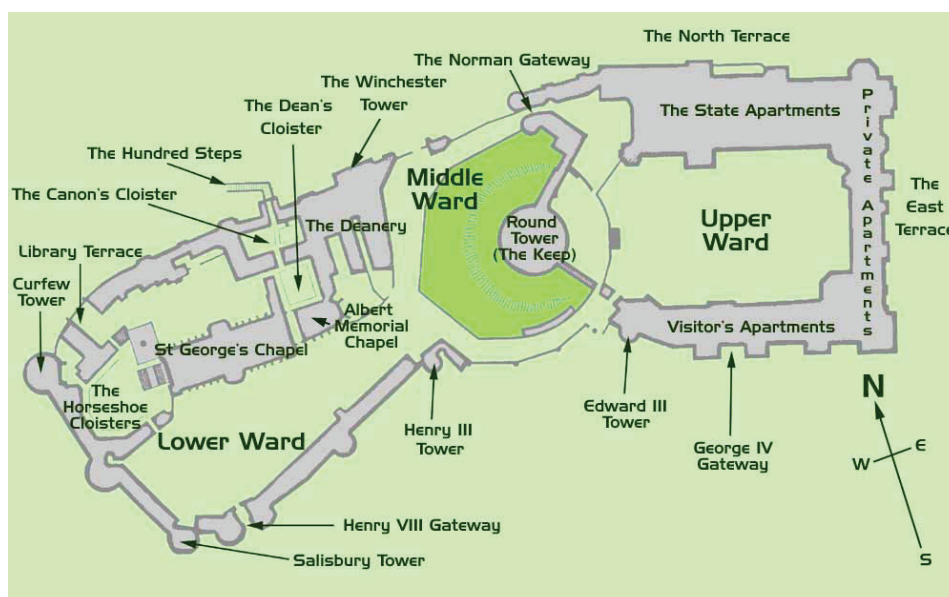


WINDSOR CASTLE

Oliver Everett

19 June 2014

There has been a castle on the site for the last 950 years. The Normans were the first to initiate a serious programme of castle-building. William the Conqueror's first major project was the Tower of London but he soon set about building nine castles around London, with none further than 25 miles from the centre: Berkhamsted, Guildford, Reigate, Rochester, Tonbridge, Rayleigh, Ongar, Hertford and, of course, Windsor. It was Windsor that was to prove the favourite for many monarchs both because of ease of access via the Thames and also because it offered the best hunting!

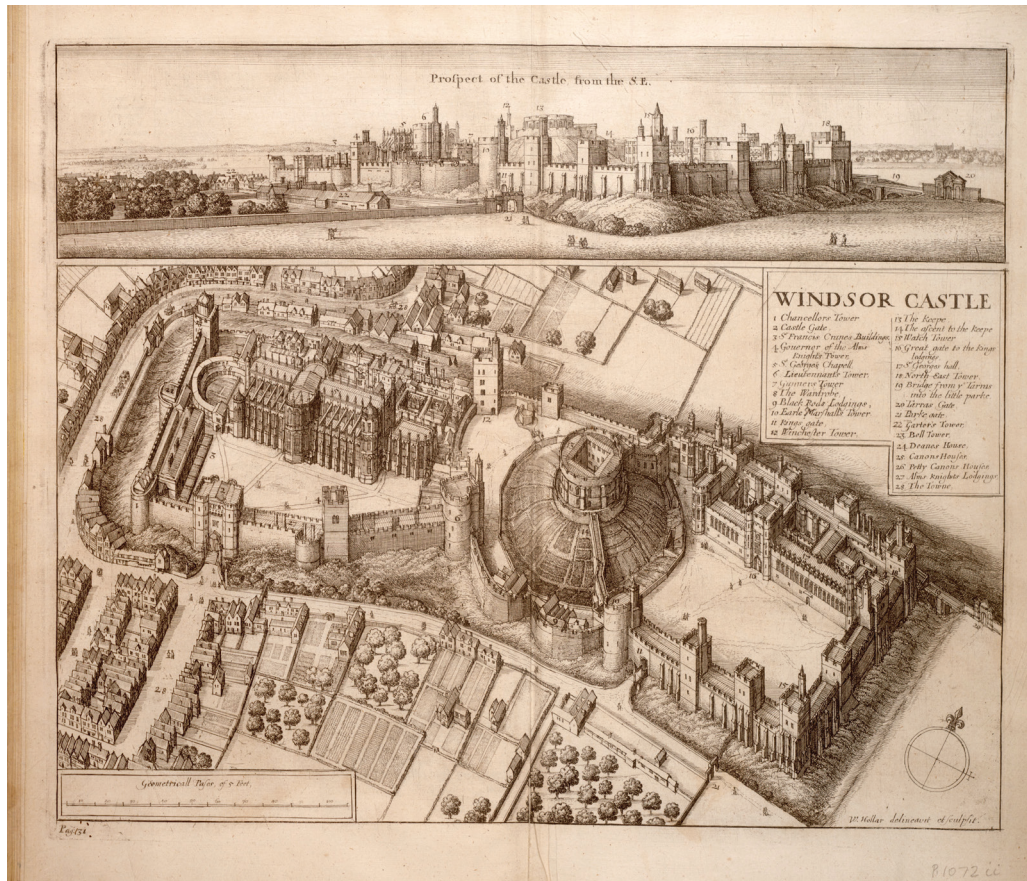


The first castle on the site was built in the French style, with a motte and bailey (in fact, two baileys: the lower for the staff and the upper for the monarch and his family). It had a commanding view over the Thames and a tower was constructed in the middle of the complex to provide a recourse of safety. One of the first improvements was made by Henry II in the 1180s when he replaced the perimeter wooden wall with one of stone. The completion of the Tower took place under Henry III in 1220. Windsor has been besieged on three occasions – all attempts failed. The footprint of this original castle is virtually the same as that of the castle today.

Windsor has been used by most, although not all, of the English monarchs. However, four monarchs in particular have been influential in the development of the castle. The first was Edward III. He was the first King to have been born at Windsor and spent more time there than any previous monarch. He was responsible for a huge building programme (reputedly the largest in the Middle Ages): adding rooms to the south and east walls; in the 1360s, he created St George's Hall, a banqueting hall for the Knights of the Garter, an order which he created; and, subsequent to the 1992 fire, the kitchen was discovered to have beams dating back to the 1360s – it was noted at the time that the kitchen was a favourite room as it was warm, there was plenty to eat and the best gossip was to be had.



However, it was not until Edward IV that a Chapel was thought to be added. Henry VI had established Eton in 1440, with its magnificent chapel, which highlighted the omission at Windsor. It was not until the 1520s that St George's Chapel at the Castle was completed: it is one of the best examples of perpendicular Gothic architecture in Britain.



Wenceslas Hollar's view of Windsor, mid-1600s

Charles II was the second monarch to undertake serious transformation of the castle. During the Civil War, Windsor was held by the Parliamentarians when it fell into some disrepair: horses were even kept in St George's Chapel. Charles II used his transformation of Windsor Castle to make a clear statement that the monarchy was back in charge: he turned what was, in effect, a medieval fortress into a baroque palace. The state rooms were lavishly decorated; St George's Chapel painted with murals by Verrio and his private chapel included wooden carvings by Grinling Gibbons. He also added windows to the outside walls, reducing the security and underlining the fact that he viewed the castle as a home. Another project was a house built for Nell Gwyn which has now been converted into flats for the grooms.

During the eighteenth century, in the reign of George III, there were a series of watercolours made of the castle by Paul and Thomas Sandby. Windsor Castle had fallen into some disrepair as neither George I nor George II ever visited. George III, however, liked the Castle and got Sir William Chambers to build an extension to accommodate his thirteen surviving children. They were very informal and would frequently walk in the public areas around the castle.

It was George IV, however, who was the third monarch to make a particular impression on the castle. Following Wellington's victory at Waterloo in 1815, George was determined to demonstrate Britain's



Joseph Nash's painting of the Lower Bailey, 1848

pre-eminence in Europe and so tried to outdo Versailles: additional private quarters were added; the royal apartments were moved from the north to the sunny east and south sides of the castle, with the north side turned into state apartments; the courtyard was converted into the Waterloo Chamber, which housed 36 portraits of the men who helped defeat Napoleon; St George's Hall was doubled in size; and two additional floors were added to the Round Tower. This was the work of the architect Sir Jeffrey Wyattville, who had won the competition by finding out in advance the amount of money that Parliament had awarded for the work (£150K but the final bill was in excess of £1m!) and also by submitting a set of 'before and after' watercolours. The work was only completed in the 1830s, after George IV's death.

Queen Elizabeth II is the fourth monarch to have undertaken major works on the castle. She lived at Windsor during the war years, from the age of 13 to 19 and, as a result, thinks of it as her home. At Christmastime during the war, it was the tradition for the family to act in a pantomime in the Waterloo Chamber. The portraits had been removed for safekeeping in Wales until 1946 and so a local art student, Claude Whatham, was employed to paint pantomime characters to fill in the gaps. Following the removal of portraits in the 1992 fire, it was discovered that these paintings were still intact and they remain there today under the restored portraits of Wellington and his contemporaries.

The major fire at the castle on 20 November 1992 (the Queen's wedding anniversary). caused terrible damage to nine of the most important rooms: five have been restored exactly but four were changed. A Committee chaired by the Prince of Wales oversaw these changes, which notably saw the kitchen restored to the 1360s structure of ceiling beams. The fire also provided an opportunity for some archaeological research: a well was found, some fourteenth-century windows and a garderobe. A subsequent dig by Time Team in 2006 also claimed to have found the foundations of Edward III's proposed Round Table, in the middle of the castle's Upper Ward.



WRITING LADY THATCHER'S BIOGRAPHY

Robertson Memorial Lecture

Charles Moore

17th July 2014

Charles Moore, former Editor of the *Daily Telegraph* (1995–2003) and still a regular columnist, was chosen by Margaret Thatcher in 1997 to write her authorized biography which, however, it was agreed, would not be published in her lifetime. He is still working on it but has completed the first volume, entitled *Not for Turning* covering her early life and her political career until the end of the Falklands War. The book is dedicated to his parents Richard and Ann Moore, whom he calls his 'first history teachers'. Richard, of course, was the Society's Chairman from 2006 to 2013 and is still an active member.

The arrangement Lady Thatcher offered was that Charles would have full access to herself for interviews and access not only to her extensive papers but, through the Cabinet Secretary, all government papers including those held back from public view under the thirty-year rule. She also assisted all his requests for interviews with others great and small, even American Presidents.

The amount of material, of which Charles said it was impossible to read all, made the task onerous and time-consuming and for a long time he could not dedicate much of his time to it as he was still editing the *Daily Telegraph*. Crucially however, he gave priority to conducting long interviews with Lady Thatcher in the late 1990s – before her powers declined – before tackling her papers, which she gave to Cambridge University rather than her own university, Oxford, who had refused her an honorary degree!

As part of the agreement between Charles and Lady Thatcher, she would not be permitted to read any of the manuscript. The knowledge that this was the case, Charles said, enabled many of those he interviewed to be far more frank than otherwise they would have been. Furthermore, Lady Thatcher never asked Charles to take any particular line on an issue nor even asked him what he would write. Charles puts this down to her lack of self-examination and complete conviction that she had always been right and that this inevitably would be proved by history. Quite a different approach from Winston Churchill, who famously stated "I believe history will be kind to me – because I will write it myself"!

This gave Charles enormous freedom, although, he said, her lack of interest about the project and in the details of her personal life made her often a 'frustrating source'. This applied particularly to her early life as the daughter of a grocer in Grantham called Alfred Roberts. She looked up to her father who was politically active and became an Alderman. Her relationship with her mother, however, was more distant. Charles related an incident where he asked about her mother only to be told that she was 'an excellent seamstress who did wonderful voluntary work ... not like French women!' It was, apparently, typical of Mrs Thatcher to extend her reply to specific personal questions with a combative statement – or monologue – of her general views.

Charles, in fact, found her rather secretive and guarded about the whole of her life outside the political sphere, as she believed that others had no right to delve deeply into it but, on the other hand, made no particular effort to stop Charles trying to find things out. Here he was lucky: the breakthrough being the discovery of more than 150 letters 'Margaret Roberts' had written to her sister Muriel and the latter's



Studying chemistry at Oxford

willingness to be interviewed. These ‘chatty’ letters showed, for instance, Margaret ‘growing up’ as a fairly ordinary – but exceedingly intelligent and ambitious – middle-class young woman whose interests were as much in clothes and men as anything else. Charles read various extracts from the letters to illustrate the point.

The rust-coloured material will fit in with the brown side of my wardrobe. I went for the first time to Bond Street though I didn't tell Mummy. I bought brown court shoes at Marshall and Snelgrove. I had in mind to get a brown fairly plain frock so as to have a completely brown-fawn rig-out.

Charles feels Margaret Thatcher regarded clothes throughout her career as essential body armour.

Then there were boys. Margaret always claimed Denis Thatcher, at the time of her meeting him the General Manager of a ‘small paint company’, was her first boyfriend. However, Charles has unearthed clear evidence that this was not true and of a quite deep complex and passionate relationship which began while she was at Oxford with a young soldier called Tony Bray. Then later there was a longish ‘romance’ with a Scottish Farmer called Willie Cullen which looked as if it might culminate in marriage, but she eventually tired of him and passed him over to her sister Muriel whom he married.



In the 1950s



As a single woman attending parties and dances she was much sought after and ‘played the game’, often having to avoid importunate suitors. At one dance, she wrote Muriel:

To my horror I recognized one of the men – the bald one – as this Flight Lieutenant I had spent time with at the tennis club dance. My heart sank when I saw him walking across the floor to me ... fortunately a friend of his stuck to me like a limpet – he was a lovely dancer so I didn’t mind but he was rather difficult to get rid of. He wanted me to go to the pictures with him ... he eventually departed having given me his telephone no ... but I won’t ring him. He’s too old for me.

And yet in government, Charles commented, she related well with well-educated older men as friends and advisors and less well perhaps with women.

Once in government, and then as Prime Minister, Charles commented, it was not easy to ‘organize the narrative’ of his biography which he has written mostly chronologically, however sometimes a major subject had to be treated in a separate chapter, for example, ‘Northern Ireland’ and the ‘Falklands War’.



This intriguing lecture continued without flagging for almost an hour and then many questions were asked by members. Asked, for instance, about how Lady Thatcher regarded ‘history’ – to which subject Charles himself is dedicated and this authorized biography clearly belongs – he replied that she cared deeply about English history, however her views on it often did not concur with the facts!

No-one could possibly make this criticism of Charles’ scrupulously objective and detailed book whatever they may feel about Margaret Thatcher’s record. The next and final volume will be published next year.

Nick Hollington