

Open Spaces

AS I was doing the research for the 2019 Heritage Weekend exhibition 'Shoreham's Open Spaces' I rediscovered the Meads, a small park hidden behind Swiss Gardens school and adjacent to the Shoreham Burial Ground and allotments.

This public area was formerly water meadows and I assume that the stream that runs through it fed the Swiss Gardens lakes. The park can be very boggy at times!

With the growth of Shoreham the water meadows were built on, used for other local amenity use such as the afore mentioned burial ground and allotments. Shoreham is now in another period of growth and there is a huge demand for school spaces which means that schools like Swiss Gardens are oversubscribed and have built extra classrooms.

Extra classrooms mean more children in less space so the Meads is used as a sports field and play area. That in itself is not a problem. But when a public space is altered specifically for the needs of the school, the public space becomes less public and more of a land grab by a local authority, even if it is to be used for the health and well-being of the younger generation. It will still remain as a public space but as time goes on, the school may need to increase its classrooms again.

Overleaf, Kirsten Wild explains why the Meads should remain as it is.

Jenny Towler, *Vice-Chair*

● *P.S. One solution to boggy ground of course is to plant more trees (Adur Arbour!) – ed.*

SMALL ADS

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF OUR LAST STATIONERY SALE...

we're doing it again! Don't buy another pen, notebook or plastic folder if you are coming to the Talk on February 21st, because we'll be having a stationery 'give-away', donations allowed with proceeds to the Society.

Talks & events

All in St Peter's Hall, West Street, Shoreham BN43 5WG at 7.30pm. Members £2, guests £3 (except AGM)



Friday 17th January at 7.30pm

CHARLES WHEATSTONE

Unusual! This man was one of the most creative inventors of the Victorian era. Among a host of scientific inventions (microphone, telegraph etc) which are still of great importance today, Sir Charles Wheatstone also created a unique musical instrument. So this illustrated talk by **Ray Chandler** about Wheatstone's genius will be accompanied by some relevant musical entertainment.

Friday 21st February at 7.30pm

WHERE HAS OUR BEACH GONE?

On November 21st the front page of the *Shoreham Herald* announced "Shoreham is one of the top-ten areas most at risk of coastal erosion" according to insurance firm confused.com. Are they really 'confused' – we thought the beach was building up not eroding? We have asked **Dr. Uwe Dornbusch**, FRGS, Senior Specialist, Coast, at the Environment Agency to visit us and provide a wider perspective of coastal issues in Sussex before focussing on the open coast around Shoreham.

Friday 20th March at 7.30pm

EARTH NEEDING MORE FRIENDS

Originally from Yorkshire, **Tom Wright** now lives in Brighton where he helps run the local Friends of the Earth group. Passionate about tackling climate change, reducing plastic consumption and empowering people to make a change, he says, "I'm excited to join the Shoreham Society to talk about how we can take action together to tackle the climate crisis. The challenges are many – from air pollution & transport to biodiversity & planning."

Friday 17th April at 7.30pm

BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS

Mark Perry Nash returns to tell us about British High Society and the wild side of the 1920s. This year, of course, is the centenary of the start of an era!

Friday 15th May at 7.30pm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Free, to Members only (guests may come and 'observe'). Come and hear how the year has gone, what's coming up and maybe how you could make a difference to life in the town. Nibbles provided; bar open.

Friday 19th June at 7.30pm

SUSSEX CHAIRS and the William Morris connection

Have you heard of the Sussex chair? Or even a Sussex chair? And what is the difference? You will probably have heard of the Arts & Crafts movement but it was in fact comprised of a number of different artistic societies, many of which were influenced by the internationally renowned William Morris, and what's his connection with chairs? **Janet Pennington** will give you the answers tonight in this illustrated talk.

Friday 17th July: to be announced or keep an eye on the website.

August – no event.

We're sure you are dying to know the result of our last Members' Survey about Beach Green Cafe. Well, 3.2% of the membership responded (that's 16 people). 14 said 'yes', that is, in favour of the café, and two said no.

REPLY COUPON - Members' Survey

Was the £12 Christmas Buffet a success and worth repeating next December?

Yes – Don't mind – No (delete as applicable)

(The alternative might be a set meal in a restaurant, or just a get-together for the Committee.)

● **Send** a blank e-mail to jaapple59@icloud.com and in the 'Subject' line, just put three things: BUFFET, your surname, and response (*yes / don't mind / no*).

● **Phone** 07837 658552 with (as above) BUFFET, name and your response. If there's no answer, leave a voice message. ● **Text** the same three things to the same number.

● **Post** this coupon, or a bit of your own paper, to 59 Connaught Ave, Shoreham BN43 5WL

Joint Members just vote twice, such as "YES & DON'T MIND" or "YES & NO" etc.

SHOREHAM'S "GRASSYMEADS" IS UNDER THREAT



writes Kirsten Wild

NEVER HEARD of The Meads? You're not alone. It's one of Shoreham's best kept secrets, tucked down an inconspicuous path off Victoria Road and home to a popular allotment site, trees, a playground and a big grassy field.

The space was bequeathed to the people of Shoreham at the turn of the 20th century by local philanthropist Harry Bridger. You can see boated Harry in the photo here (*will reproduce better next time – ed.*) having tea with friends on the lawns of what was then called Victoria Gardens.

Today, local residents still regularly use the space for community events such as park parties and film evenings, children and teens play there in all seasons, allotment owners trundle wheelbarrows through, dogs and foxes play, seagulls wheel above and at night pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats swoop across the open space while newts come out to feed.

But the grassy nature of the space is under threat. Park signs have vanished and plans are being quietly discussed for a large area of the field to be covered over, so the space slowly becomes 'brown field' and easier to build on. The problem? Poor school provisioning and planning.

Swiss Gardens Primary School has leased a big area of this community land for the last 10 years to provide a much needed grassy play space for the school. The school has swollen in remit and pupil numbers over the last decade going from a First School to full Primary with a three-form bulge in one recent year. Accommodating this bulge saw two big 'temporary' classrooms being erected without prior planning permission which cannibalised the already limited grassy play space that the school had within its actual perimeter.

Trouble is that in wet winter months, the Meads becomes naturally boggy – after all, it's in a designated flood zone with an ancient brook running underneath it. Now, the swollen pupil intake no longer has enough space to play within the school perimeter as it always used to in the wet season when the field would be allowed to rest.

Seriously exacerbating the issue? The council's apparently near-sighted decision to grant permission to a private football coaching business to use this precious fenced-off space over weekends and holidays. Football studs now churn up the grass over hours and hours of intensive skills training, making it even more muddy and less useable for the children that need it in school hours. Signs designed to keep dogs out of the space have also been neglected to the point of being illegible. Breaches by dog owners aren't enforced with dogs free to dig holes in the school field's surface which then become problematic for the school.

The school and council's preferred solution? To lay a vast rubberised surface over the leased-out bit using money provided by local developers. Goodbye grass, hello artificial surface, there to serve the needs of the school.

As we know only too well from experience, allotments and green spaces are always at risk from development. Local Action Group '**Keep The Meads Grass**' agrees and believes that this is taking a planning sledgehammer to crack a precious nut. In the words of one member: "This is the last mini-park left in the whole of central Shoreham and local families need easy access to grassy spaces. Turning a vast area of these grassy meads into a brownfield site is clearly one step towards the loss of this natural space."

The group understandably can't understand why this valuable natural space has been so neglected and mis-managed for so long. They go on, "The council should spend the developer's money on getting the broken drains underneath the grass repaired instead, send the football coaching business somewhere more suitable and actually enforce dog restrictions. This is likely to give the school children grass to play on for much, much more of the year. Drains would need laying under an artificial surface anyway, so why not try and preserve the grass? Seems to us like a much more proportional and far-sighted way to serve Shoreham's growing population."

Far-sighted, indeed. With more and more flats being built in Shoreham, grassy open space like this becomes an increasingly rare and precious resource.

If you're interested in the campaign, you can contact the group on Instagram @KeepTheMeadsGrass. They also ask that you contact neil.parkin@adur.gov.uk and the headteacher Mr Caughlin at Swiss Gardens Primary School to make your views known.

● *And why not take a look for yourself? Access is from Victoria Road, along a track just north of the school fence – ed.*



SAVE OUR STREET NAMEPLATES

I DON'T KNOW if this would be of sufficient interest, but I am hoping that the old street nameplates originally provided by Shoreham-by-Sea Urban District Council will be protected in as many cases as possible. Many have been lost over the last 50 years (and)...new nameplates were of plastic construction.

Some of these (less durable) examples still survive...see THE KESTRELS and THE MARTLETS for example. This style was abandoned, I would imagine, in 1974 with the creation of Adur District Council, with pressed metal plates becoming the standard fitting.

I feel that the original ceramic tablet style (also used by Hove) is a feature of Shoreham-by-Sea and should be retained, and...especially in conservation areas, be reproduced using modern materials.

To this end I have now photographed samples of lettering and have a full alphabet in the form of a computer font. Modern street nameplates can be printed, on aluminium or polycarbonate, so any style or colour can be produced.

Please see attached images



of re-creations of some plates. These are merely images, of course, but are derived from vector artwork suitable for current nameplate manufacturers.



If you too feel that this is something worthwhile to pursue, perhaps suggestion could be made to Adur District Council for their adoption within Old Shoreham, New Shoreham and Kingstons*.

Chris Fippard, Hammy Way

*Shoreham Beach is another issue... wartime clearance would have removed most, and the provision in the post-war period fell to West Sussex with their distinctive style bearing the arms of WSCC.

The Secret Subway

WE have put some signs up at the suggestion of the Committee. They are on the fence at each side of the station level crossing. They say, "Crossing on foot? You don't need to wait for the crossing to open - rail staff will let you go through the underpass." It's a long way round of course and some people have said that by the time they get to the middle, they hear the barriers opening again. But it's a start!

Adrian Towler