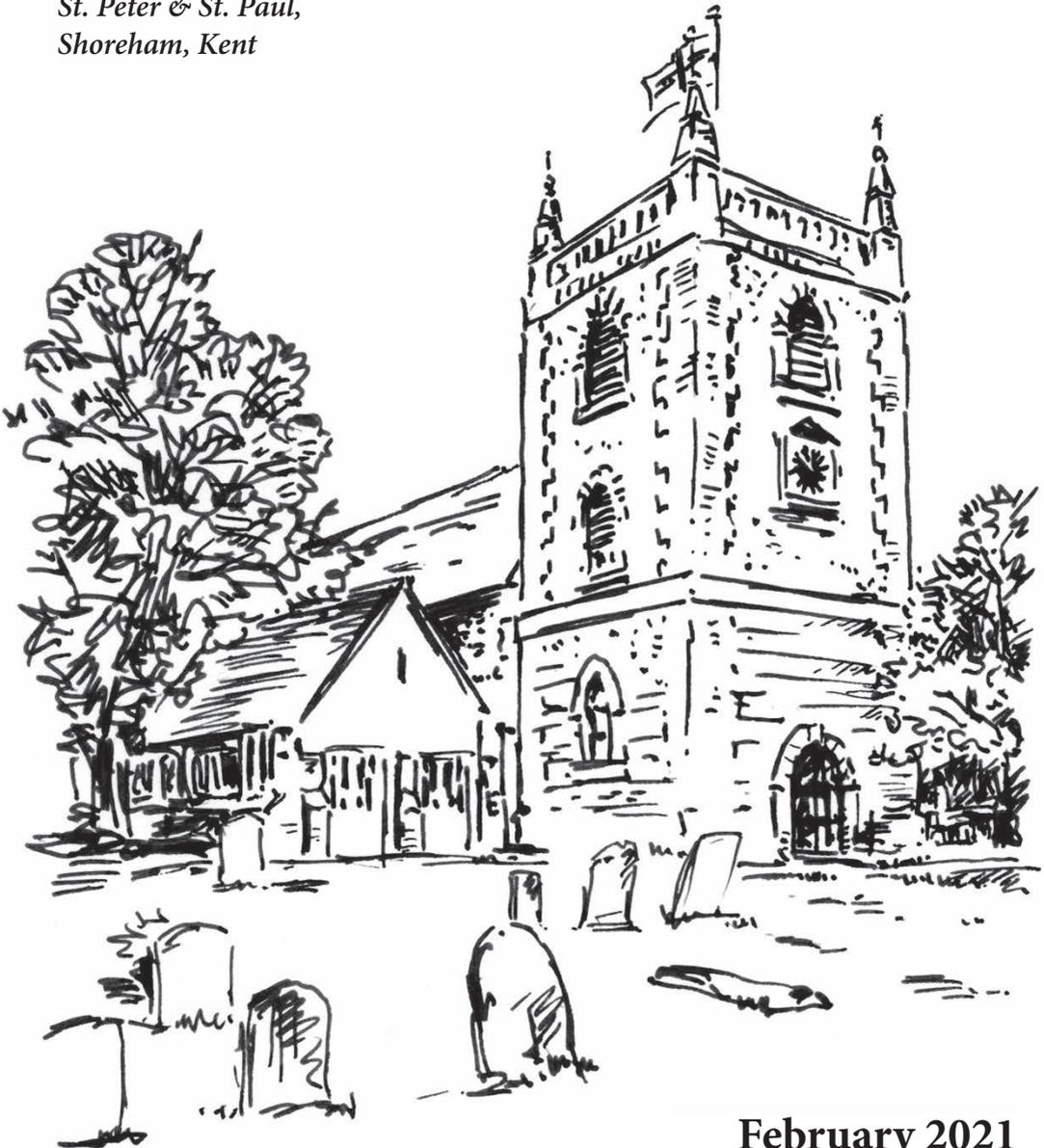


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If you'd like to be on the list either permanently or temporarily, or you know someone who would, then please contact Sarah Moon, the Parish Clerk on 0791 2611048 or via email at clerk2012@shorehamparishcouncil.gov.uk. If you are giving the details of another person please ensure you have their permission and agreement.

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Hope in the midst of Lament

I wanted to write this Gazette article about Hope.

Isn't Hope something we all need as we begin this new year in lockdown?

We have probably all had our share of hope filled messages over this Christmas period - hope you have a Happy New Year, hope you get better soon, hope you sort things out - and even when things don't go well - every cloud has a silver lining, everything happens for a reason, things will get better soon. But somehow it all feels a bit nebulous, a bit superficial, a bit glib.

As a Christian, I know that faith, 'is the substance of things hoped for' and I have experienced the truth of that in many different ways over my life BUT there are also times and situations where knowing that in my head and even in my heart, just don't seem enough, times when it doesn't seem to get to the bottom of the pain, fear or loss. Times when God feels strangely absent or doesn't sort things out in the way we had expected; times when it seems impossible to hope.

Recently, I started reading a book by Aubrey Sampson, called *the louder song* and I rediscovered the idea of Lament, which I think is a helpful one for our current context. I offer it to you in the hope that you may find it so too. Lament is something that had been really important to me in my early 20's, when although I'd had a mostly happy childhood, I had experienced the impact of death, divorce, alcoholism and suicide with members of my immediate family. I decided early on in my faith journey that if God was real and always with me, God must be big enough to cope with all the honesty I could muster and with everything I could throw God's way.

In many ways, suffering is an invitation (and sometimes the only way) to stop pretending, to stop avoiding, to let go of control, to pour out our hearts - to lament to God. Lament is perhaps an overlooked genre of prayer, found throughout the Bible. There are actually more lament songs than praise songs in the Bible. The Psalms alone contain more than 56 laments.

The Jewish faith has a tradition of lament known as Tisha B'Av. It is the saddest day of the year, a day to remember the atrocities born by the Jewish people, including the Holocaust. It's a day set aside to fast, to grieve and to chant words from the book of Lamentations. (Yes, there's a whole book of the Bible with laments).

Lament is raw, messy and honest, where nothing is denied, repressed or hidden. The questions and anger are laid before God, often in protest, weeping and complaint. 'To discover the language of lament is to learn to pray as if there is no God anywhere, who can or will do anything about our situation, except possibly to make it worse - and at the same time to pray as if God is always listening and can be trusted to help'.

The title of the book, "The Louder Song" reminds me of a song by Simon and Garfunkel called *Silent Night/ 7 O'Clock News* from the album Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and

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Thyme. The song starts with the carol, *Silent Night, Holy Night* being sung. Then slowly you become aware of the 7 o'clock news being read in the background. The carol keeps playing but the news gradually becomes louder and louder, until the news threatens to drown *Silent Night*, which is where the song ends. It is a powerful song.

Lament declares that we have a God who hears, a God who calls us by name, a God who reveals his 'witness' in darkest times and deepest despair. Lament allows the unanswerable to remain unanswered while still declaring that suffering will not have the final say.

Lament can lead us back to a place of hope – not because lamenting does anything magical but because God sings a louder song than suffering ever could; a song of resurrection, renewal, restoration, and re-creation. God doesn't avoid or ignore pain. God sings the loudest song of love over it and invites his hurting people to sing with him. We don't lament into a void. We lament to a God who wants our honesty and *is with us* in our pain and sorrow. That is real hope.

Rev Diane

SERVICES

St Peter and St Paul, Shoreham

The church continues to remain open for private prayer on

Wednesday between 10am and 12noon and Saturday between 10am and 2pm.

Sadly, we aren't currently able to have worship services in the church building but our main

Sunday service continues on Zoom at 10am each week.

There are also **Prayers on Zoom each Friday at 10am.** Please contact Revd Diane for Zoom details. All are WELCOME.



The Revd Dr Diane E. Rees

The Vicarage, Station Road, Shoreham TN14 7SA

revdrdi@outlook.com 01959 522363

OUR HUGE THANKS TO TERRY CLARK

After over seven years, and a couple of previous attempts, Terry Clark is finally retiring as our Church Treasurer. The congregation - and indeed all those within the parish and beyond who have had occasion to use our "services" - have hugely benefited from his calm approach in keeping everything in order and ticking over. Two things in particular stand out during that period: firstly, managing the finances and the accounting for the fundraising and building of the extension was a significant additional task; secondly, he and Pauline have not always been in the best of health. The fact that Terry has continued uncomplainingly throughout those periods is a great testament to his dedication and for which we are all extremely grateful. It's no surprise that he's continuing to support the churchwardens whilst a replacement treasurer is being sought, but (on the basis that this time it won't once again be Terry!) we're very pleased to wish him all the best for a happy retirement.

Johnny Aisher Churchwarden

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Shoreham Open Gardens Safari 2021

The Shoreham Open Gardens Safari committee very optimistically hopes that the Shoreham Village Garden Safari will burst back onto the garden scene this year. We are, therefore, looking for gardens, large or small, wild or cultivated, to include in this biennial event.

We understand that residents may be concerned about inviting visitors into the village and we will only continue with the event if government guidance at the time allows and all participants and residents feel safe. But now we need to know if, on this basis, we have enough gardens to run the event.

We hope that June 2021 may be a good time for our village to reaffirm its community spirit. We need your thoughts, suggestions, and most of all, we need your participation. Jeremy Tooley, Jenna Leight & Peter Kasch. Contact: kaschpeter@gmail.com, or ring 524998 Jeremy Tooley, Jenna Leight & Peter Kasch

Contact: kaschpeter@gmail.com, or ring 524 998

BORED IN LOCKDOWN?

Would you like to be a key part of the fabric of our village? Do you have basic bookkeeping skills and an ability to communicate well with others? If so the churchwardens would be delighted to hear from you as we look for an Honorary Church Treasurer. This role includes membership of the Parochial Church Council and there is the possibility of dividing the role between two people (accounting/admin and budget/strategy) and of paying a small fee. Support will be available from a number of sources and, we hope, the satisfaction of this worthwhile role would extend well beyond lockdown! All enquiries welcome! (Johnny@aisher.com or 07764 674339)

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GREAT NEWS - SHOREHAM ULTRA FAST BROADBAND IS COMING!

We are really pleased to confirm that enough people have obtained and pledged their vouchers so that the installation of FTTP (Fibre To The Premises) broadband can go ahead. In fact, the project was so heavily over-subscribed that not all of the vouchers will be needed - so if you haven't heard back from DCMS (Department of Culture, Media & Sport) it's likely to be because the target has already been met. However, if you do receive an email from the DCMS please follow the instructions given to ensure no funding is missed.

Cables will be laid throughout the whole village, and surrounding roads, so all residents will have the same access to the broadband whether they pledged vouchers or not. The project has been passed to BT Openreach's delivery department; however they are not yet able to give timescales. They still have to draw up detailed plans so we are unlikely to see anything happening for a few months. We will keep everyone informed as more progress is made through the Gazette, Parish Council website and the Village Facebook group.

Shoreham Parish Council Broadband Working Group

THE SHOREHAM SOCIETY

In the late spring of last year the Shoreham Society was planning a Rainbow Picnic on the Rec to celebrate the end of lockdown, when our community could come together and have some fun. How little did we realise what a long lockdown it would be! So plans have evolved and been adapted to our continuing restrictions – not to mention our new-found Zoom expertise. There are two events for your diaries.

Shoreham in Pictures

A photograph exhibition to celebrate Shoreham will be held on Friday, 26th February at 7.30pm via Zoom (801 454 4629). Just send in your photos to: shorehamsociety@gmail.com by 17th February and we will do the rest.

The categories are: Skies; Landscapes; People; Christmas; Shoreham Past and Humour! Up to three pictures can be submitted, let us know if you would like to send in more. If you are under 18 put your age as we are sure there are talented young photographers. This is not exclusive to Shoreham Society members so it would be great if you would like to join us.

Dark Skies Initiative

One of the things that we have been considering with regard to planning issues around the Village is the level of light pollution. The loss of our dark skies has been found to be both detrimental to humans and to wildlife. So it's worth checking if you have lights which stay on all night, but don't need to, or consider changing to security lighting which is event activated. If we all make efforts with these seemingly small things, we could begin to enjoy our starlit nights again.

Friday March 26th Quiz Night 7.30pm

Again, this will be held via Zoom and will be a light-hearted quiz based on and around Shoreham.

As always, if you would like to be more involved in Shoreham life, then do join us by contacting: shorehamsociety@gmail.com

Christine Euman Co-chair



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SHOREHAM VILLAGE STORES

We're keeping our fingers crossed that life gets back to greater normality in the coming weeks, but in the meantime we're doing our best to keep everyone safe. Please remember to wear a mask and use the sanitiser on entering the shop. We have cut the number of customers inside the shop to two and are applying that to family groups in almost all cases.

Lorna had a great send-off on her final day just before Christmas, with a group of customers clapping and cheering her in the street outside. Peter Kasch of the Shoreham Shop Partnership presented her with a cheque reflecting the goodwill of the village, and there were literally hundreds of thanks to her on Facebook. Her shifts have been taken over by Desh, who looks forward to welcoming you all.

Raj, Desh, Prasanth and the Shoreham Shop Partners

NEW YEAR'S HONOURS LIST

I am honoured to have been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours list and am touched by the number of kind messages I have received. I was given the award for my work spanning a number of years with the Arts Council Collection (ACC) before becoming Director in 2014.

The Arts Council funds arts organisations across the UK and perhaps surprisingly it owns an art collection. The collection was established in 1946 with the aim of supporting British artists by purchase of their work at an early but critical stage in their careers. Some might consider this a risky strategy but over the years the Collection has acquired over 8,000 works and includes many of the best known artists of post war Britain. A few examples are David Hockney, Grayson Perry, Bridget Riley, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Antony Gormley. The Collection is based at the Hayward Gallery, London and at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield.

Unlike other collections the ACC doesn't have a gallery space so works are seen in touring exhibitions, loans to galleries here and abroad and uniquely amongst other national collections in hospitals, schools and public buildings in this country. Every year over 2,500,000 visitors will see work from the ACC in a UK gallery making it the most widely seen of all national collections

Managing an art collection is complex and one is always conscious that you are caring for often extremely valuable and fragile items which also belong to the nation. My role as Director was to increase the visibility of the ACC and develop partnerships with a number of UK galleries. I oversaw the education, lending, digital and conservation programmes as well as taking overall responsibility for security, storage, publishing, marketing and fundraising. The art of post-war Britain is highly regarded internationally so my team and I were afforded some wonderful opportunities to travel. However, when I became Director I was able to lead on acquisitions and that was the part I enjoyed the most. We have a wealth of artistic talent in this country and I was very proud to have nurtured a small part of it.

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I decided to step down from my role in May last year although I am still working in an advisory capacity to art organisations in the UK, I am really looking forward to seeing galleries reopen this year. However, there have been some compensations, to be able to see more of my husband, Barry and spend more time in our lovely village.

Jill Constantine MBE

SHOREHAM PARISH COUNCIL

As we find ourselves in our third national lockdown, I would like to remind anyone who is shielding or isolating that our volunteer group is still up and running. If you need any help with shopping or prescription collections or even if you just fancy a friendly chat, then please do not hesitate to call your local volunteer.

- Sarah Moon (High Street) – 0787 9655459
clerk2012@shorehamparishcouncil.gov.uk
- Jo Winsor (High Street) - 07730 676808 joannawinsor@gmail.com
- Louise Norris (Church Street & Bowers Road / Mesne Way) - 07736 684343
loubyn2@yahoo.co.uk
- Jennie Adams (Bowers Road) - 07513 706897 - jenniadams81@gmail.com
- Liz Stopford (Church Street/ Darenth Way) - 07808 172223
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- Luke Magnuson (Church Street) - luke.magnuson@gmail.com
- Olivier Pilon (Church Street/Darenth Way) – 07496 761529 –
olivierpilon@hotmail.co.uk
- Katie Horsley (Boakes Meadow) – thekatiehorsley@gmail.com
- Karen Morash (Forge Way & Palmer's Orchard) - 01959 523289/07880 541743
thebluenoser@gmail.com
- Clare Carpenter (Forge Way) – clare.carpenter@btinternet.com
- Kara Dellow (Crown Road) - 07947 319493 karadellow24@gmail.com
- Ann Palmer (Mill Lane) – 07855 948815 – annpalmer5@icloud.com
- Jane and Paul Hudson - (Mill Lane) 07850 620454 - pandjhud@gmail.com
- Amanda Summers - (Shoreham Place) - 01959 523563
asummers1970@outlook.com
- Katie Hirst - (Shoreham Place) - 07946 620880 (telephone support only)
- Lucy Holland (Shoreham Place) – hollandlucyl@gmail.com
- Jenny and Rob Lynch - (Hamlet/Quadrangle) – 07884 497855
Robertalynch@icloud.com

On a separate matter, the Parish Council was very pleased to award the annual Kent Association of Local Councils Community Award for 2020 to Sarah Parkes. Most of you will know Sarah as she has worked tirelessly for the village for many years and has served both on the Parish Council and Planning and Amenities Committees. Sarah helped create the Centenary Woodland and more recently has been instrumental in ensuring the regeneration of Preston Hill Country Park, which will hopefully be open to visitors in March and will include a new circular way-marked route. If you see Sarah about the village, please stop and congratulate her – these awards are usually presented

at a public meeting in the Village Hall but due to current restrictions we were unable to do this so she unfortunately missed her moment of glory! Well done Sarah.

Stay safe Sarah Moon, Parish Clerk

07912 611048, clerk2012@shorehamparishcouncil.gov.uk

SHOREHAM VILLAGE SCHOOL

January brought good news amongst the last-minute lockdown organisation when we heard that villager and good friend of the school (and indeed Granny of one of our pupils) Ann Ball had been awarded the MBE by the Queen. We all send Ann our congratulations and hope she might visit the school to tell us all about her experience when she receives her medal.

Home learning has commenced once more with a few Critical Workers' children in school being supervised by our amazing, dedicated team of staff. We have managed to lend out more school laptops this time so that many families can join in our thrice daily live zoom learning session with class teachers. The Department for Education have placed much more stringent guidance around how educational settings must make provision during this lockdown and we are pleased to note that it is exactly in line with what we offered from the very start of the first lockdown - we were clearly on the ball from the outset and, as a result, pupils who have taken advantage of the work provided will not be at such a disadvantage as others.

We were contacted recently by a company called Rotosound who generously offered us free strings for any stringed instruments that we have in school; we are being sent ten sets of ukulele strings which we will use to restring some of the well-used 'shredded' strings on the ukuleles used by all of our Year 3 and 4 pupils who have a weekly lesson with the class teacher. This is a really important aspect of our music learning as it is a well-known fact that pupils who learn to play an instrument are more likely to be more creative, confident, and patient, have better memories and be successful in academic life.

I have no doubt that the village will be much quieter without the usual school traffic but we are also aware of an abundance of visitors who use (and abuse) the village for their daily exercise during lockdown. The children participated in a poster competition and we have distributed posters around the village, encouraging visitors to leave the village as they find it and to treat it with respect. We hope it has a positive impact

Thank you very much to everyone who kindly donated unwanted board games that were in good condition. They are already being used and enjoyed by pupils who are in school. If you have any nice but unwanted Christmas gifts (we promise we won't tell!) please do consider donating them to the school for our next raffle or silent auction. We hope you are all staying safe and well.

Gillian Lovatt-Young Headteacher

TIMBERDEN FARM

In the 1930s agriculture was in a very depressed state and many farms were hardly farmed at all. Timberden was one such farm. The tenants were two brothers, both crippled by polio, who were cared for by their sister. The farm was in a poor condition and the fields were covered in weeds like ragwort, docks and thistles. The farm was overrun with rabbits and they were sold to people with guns, ferrets and so on. The fields were only really used for camping.

My father was the local milkman in the village and he provided the campers with milk and eggs since they didn't have enough milk at Timberden to supply the campers. I remember being four or five years old and driving around delivering milk in Dad's big old Austin heavy 12, which was as big as a Land Rover. All I could see when we made our deliveries at Timberden were the high weeds.

When the war started, farming became important and farmers were expected to grow as much food as possible. Agriculture War Executive Committees were formed in each area comprising mainly good farmers from the local villages. They had some strong powers and people like the tenants of Timberden were expected to start growing crops of wheat and so on. They were, however, unable to do this because they didn't have the machinery or the physical ability. In Timberden's case the 'War Ag', as it soon became known, farmed it with the machinery from their depot at Otford Castle. They had a selection of the sort of machines that the local grass farmers would need and would have been unable to purchase because most of the machinery factories had switched to making war machines. It was possible to hire farm machinery from the Otford depot (from tractors down to small tools) and it was staffed full time by mechanics and engineers. My father, who farmed the adjoining land, was offered the tenancy at Timberden after the second year. As part of the deal he was allocated a crawler tractor, the farm is quite steep in places, but it was delayed until the third year so the only tractor he had was a small Allis B.

He managed it with the help of good neighbours. Slowly the farm began to improve with the better cultivations and fertilisers and the livestock with dung and the grazing. The hedges had not been cut wide they were cut by hand -no chainsaws in those days - and a wide hedge was a waste of good soil. The hedges were cut off at ground level and then allowed to grow to about waist high which makes a good stock proof hedge. That is how Timberden was tamed and the steep hills by the cross were cleared in the 50s.

Frank Hitchcock

TWENTY FOUR YEARS AT SHOREHAM VILLAGE STORES

I started work in Shoreham Village stores twenty four years ago and worked two evening shifts for Di and Brian McIntier and that snowballed to work during the day. I worked with some amazing people including Rosemary, Barbara, Sue, Mike, Amanda, Lucy and Louise to name a few. There was a deli counter which was where the Cooks freezer and Wine Section is now. The Post Office, which was run full time, was situated where the

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grocery section is and there was access to the flat upstairs from there. There was a cash till beside the front door and paraffin was sold from a little outbuilding at the back of the shop. When Di and Brian retired Colin Dawes took on the lease.

It was a sad day for the whole village when the shop closed, a part of the village died with it. However, luckily, for everyone including myself because I got my job back! The Shoreham Shop Partnership bought the premises and leased the shop to Kumar and Kokila. There followed a ten year period when I worked a lot more hours! Kumar and Koki had two children Keertikka and Ashwikka who I watched grow up. We lost the full time Post Office and now have an outreach one from Hartley. Kumar had an amazing sense of humour and there were lots of laughs over those ten years! They moved to Wales and the shop was taken on by Kannon and Chitra and their two children Dhia and Ragavi. It was at this point, I cut back my hours and settled into just three mornings a week. They did an amazing job during the first half of 2020 when the country went into lockdown....I don't think there was a single day during those three months that Kannon didn't go out to Cash and Carries all over the south east to keep the shop fully supplied. The final 'boss' when Kannon left was Raj who arrived last July. Twenty four years and five employers, not forgetting Dhana, Ramesh and Prasanth, whom I worked closely with. I thoroughly enjoyed my years there and .I have so many lovely memories.

THANK YOU. FROM LORNA

I would like to thank everyone for their cards, gifts and money that I received when I retired from the shop on Christmas Eve. I was truly overwhelmed by everything.....not least by all the people waiting for me outside the shop when I left who then clapped! I would like to thank everyone, personally.....but that would be impossible. However, I can thank Peter Kasch for organising everything! I will miss working there.....you don't work somewhere for 24 years and not miss it. There were highs and lows, but the highs far outweighed the lows! It's been a pleasure serving the village over the years and I wish everyone a much happier and healthier and safer 2021.

Lorna Robinson.

A HISTORY MYSTERY: DID SHOREHAM HAVE A ROMAN VILLA?

Shoreham has often prided itself on having its very own Roman villa – albeit one that no one has ever really seen. It's long been thought that there was a Roman settlement in the fields to the north of Mill House, and a recent survey organised by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme (DVLPS) has tried to shed some light on this.

It was Colonel G.W. Meates, the archaeologist who uncovered the villa at Lullingstone, who confidently placed one in Shoreham too. In 1948, by probing in the soil close to the river, Meates hit stone deposits he said were probably the frontage of a Lullingstone-sized villa that might have been 120 feet long. He found pieces of *pilae* – supports for a hypocaust that provided the Romans' famous underfloor heating.

By the 1970s, historians were saying that evidence for the villa was “well established” (*Otford in Kent: A History*). But a new generation of archaeologists sounded a more sceptical note. A dig in 1982 involving thirty seven test holes found no evidence for

Meates's large building. Shoreham's own history, *Shoreham: A Village in Kent*, reported on the Meates findings without entirely endorsing them.

But the 1982 excavation did offer something tantalising. It uncovered a small, three-room Roman building a short distance east of the river. It might (or might not) have been a bath house, with Roman pottery, glass and mosaic elements found inside.

Then last year the DVLPS hired Darnley Archaeological Services to walk the area with a device that seeks magnetic anomalies beneath the soil. Near bends in the river, areas of possible stonework were indeed found nestling underground. The experts said they could have been part of a Romano-British villa – but could equally be bits of rubble washed down the river from elsewhere.

The flood plain has long made archaeology in this area tricky, with little prospect at the moment of a new full-scale dig to try to put the matter to rest. So the villa hypothesis just about lives on, and Shoreham is still entitled to claim that the Romans may have been taking hot baths, eating snails and laying mosaics on our doorstep.

James Saynor

TALES FROM THE HILL

Our editor Ann Ball BEM asked if I would write something about Magpie Bottom, past and present for those newer residents who were asking about the history of the name.

Why Magpie Bottom well Bottom is obvious. In the past we have had large visiting flocks of 50 or more Magpies, and I can only guess that our ancestors might have named Magpie because of these large gatherings. The collective name for Magpies include a parliament a mischief or my favourite a conventicle. The earliest reference I have to the name was in the deeds of our house dated 1752. I also have a Survey Map by J.N. Codd of Magpie Bottom and the farm dated 1790, the area farmed was 19 acres.

My wife Annette and I moved to Magpie in 1964, Rose Cottage was semi- derelict, no mains water or electric. But we were young and survived, two of our three children were born in Rose Cottage. In 1970 we purchased 75 acres of land belonging to the Dunsany estate, as we were concerned that the chalk loving flora were likely to go under the plough. Later we purchased more land from the Highfield Estate. We were not born farmers but learnt as we went along. We built up s small herd of Sussex and later British White Cattle I worked in Gravesend so during the week Annette had to juggle with 3 human kids a number of goat kids and up to 30 cattle and calves.

Back then the fields were overgrown with hawthorn and brambles and dogwood, it took many years to clear, but as we did so the chalk loving plants thrived including ten varieties of orchids. The land was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Seven years ago we decided to lessen the load and we sold 80 acres to Kent Wildlife Trust.

Many of you will have heard about The Smuggling connection with Magpie Bottom, I have told the story many times. The other connection with the past that has become a bit of an obsession, is the landscape and Samuel Palmer. In 1828 Palmer painted a picture he called The Valley Farm it shows Rose Cottage and a field being ploughed. There are I am sure many other Palmer landscapes where his genius was inspired by the rounded hills of Magpie Bottom. In the picture of 'The Valley Farm' it shows a section of the lane

and if you look carefully you can see a figure in a long coat.

I walk past this spot every day and often wonder whether one day I will meet this lonely figure and will it be Palmer?
John Bovington

DONATION

The Shoreham Gazette thanks The Shoreham Society for their generous donation of £25 towards the cost of our printing and circulating

A STREAM WHERE THE OAK TREES GROW

I think I was probably about fifteen summers at the time. I'd been up by the Cross with Harry looking for bits of shrapnel that had fallen from the sky. This was the summer of 1947, and the sky had started to get blue again. The world had started to smile, once more.

Harry had been called from the bottom of his hill by his grandfather (who had been a Sergeant-Major in the War) to tell him his meal was on the table, and if he didn't hurry their dog, Winston would get it all

You didn't have to ask Harry twice when it came to food. No sir, he was tumbling and rolling, and laughing all the way to the bottom of the grassy slide.

I knew my father would be expecting me around 5 pm. That was when he got back from the garage in Sevenoaks and started the cooking. My mother had left me, my brother and my dad in the War and had never come back. She didn't die if that's what you're thinking. She ran away with a soldier from Philadelphia, and that was that.

I saw the stranger coming out of the sun as it was finally dipping behind the woods above the Cross. In the light, he looked like Father Christmas – if Father Christmas had been on holiday in Shoreham. I mean it was still only the first few days of August.

“Do you mind if I sit here?” He asked, and I nodded because I was too busy trying to capture a butterfly with my hands. These were the days, long ago, when you spoke to strangers – before people grew afraid of others. Perhaps they are right to be scared. I honestly couldn't tell you one way or another.

The man with the beard sat next to me and smiled. He looked out over the valley and the river and said, “Well, aren't you the lucky one?”

To be honest, I wasn't sure what he meant – but thinking back now over the years, I guess he was right; those beautiful hills, and the river Darent – we were lucky and should never, ever take them for granted.

“You know what they call that river?” He asked, and I did. “The river Darent, sir.” I said as he smiled at my use of the word ‘sir’. “Well done, lad, well done. The Celts called it after the ‘stream where the oak trees grow’, and even the Anglo-Saxons called it Diorente. It is a special place. Magical.”

“What do you mean ‘magical’?” I asked. Well, I had to, I was fifteen for goodness sake. “This river, this valley, this village below, all of them make up a healing place.” “They



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do? ”They do.” “Folks never find Shoreham.” Then he laughed until I thought his head was going to fall off (or explode). “Shoreham finds them,” he said when he’d quietened down. “It does?”

“Yep.”

“This little village has taken people in since the dawn of time. It used to take in plague victims, lepers, the poor, and the sick. And it always took care of them until they left, one way or another. You ask your mum or dad about how they or their family found Shoreham, and you’ll find there’s always for a reason, usually a strange reason.” He said, delighted with himself.

“You see, Shoreham hears people’s hearts. It knows if they want for something or are sad, and it takes them in. These folks think they came here accidentally – but that’s not true. The truth is, the village knows you’re hurting, or something bad will one day happen to you and it makes sure you are within its care when it does.” He looked at me to see if I was taking all this in and I was.

“One day, when you are ready, you’ll go out into the world and be happy. Some people find this village late in life, but that doesn’t mean they don’t need it just as much as anyone else. It heals them, listens to them, finds companions for folks, and when their heart is ready, it sends them on their way.”

It was then that I knew, from the tickling in my palms, that I had caught the butterfly and decided perhaps I should let the little thing go. As it flew up into the darkening blue sky, I turned to tell the old man – but there was no one there.

And you know what? It did heal my family. My father married again and moved to Hasting where my father’s newly found happiness spread to us, and we kept together as a loving group, and maybe it was all thanks to that little village. Shoreham.

You never, ever find Shoreham. It finds you.

Bobby Stevenson 2021

SHOREHAM CHURCH IN THE MEDIA

www.shorehamchurchkent.org/

Here you can find copies of the Sunday service sheets and video recordings. Contact details, Information regarding the opening of the Church and two years of Gazettes

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ShorehamChurchSt Peter and St Paul Shoreham>

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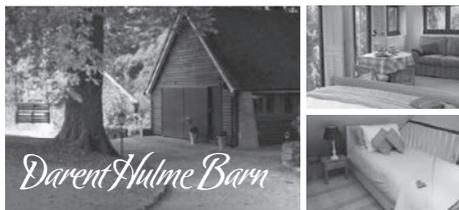
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