

SACKVILLE COLLEGE



Friends' Newsletter Autumn 2019

News from the Warden

Dear Friends of Sackville College

Following a successful but often rather wet summer which thankfully did not deter our visitors, the College is now closed to the general public. Private tours are still available by arrangement. Our volunteer guides love the College and are extremely knowledgeable on its history. I cannot praise their efforts too highly and many visitors comment on their professionalism.

The roof repairs have now been completed and the next stage of internal decoration will start in the New Year. My sincere thanks to all those concerned for their support with our fundraising events this year.

Our newly designed website will be going live shortly and will include a Virgin Money Giving donation link for the College. My grateful thanks to Jim Bolt and Steve Metcalfe for their time, artistry and IT skills.

We have received a grant from The Sussex Lund Trust, to purchase bee hives and to create a wildflower grassland with lavender paths for a bee-friendly environment. The honey will be sold to raise funds. If any Friends have beekeeping skills and would like to offer their expertise or equipment they no longer need, please contact the office.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year

Rosalind Crowther

Events at Sackville College

In May the tea party for Friends of Sackville College was a delightful event. Hilary and Ivor, 'The Grenestede Duo', gave us an exquisite recital of piano and flute music. They took us on a musical journey from Sweden to Norway (Morning from Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite) to Germany (Bach), to England (Edward German) France (Debussy-Tamburin) and Naples. Loud applause showed how much everyone enjoyed their performance.



In August, Cantu Amici performed in the Chapel in aid of three charities. The choice of songs ranged from composers Thomas Tallis to Kurt Weill. George Clifford played the theme from Schindler's List, tugging at the heartstrings of all present. Refreshments in the Vicarage garden were kindly provided by The Rev'd Andrew Hawken and his wife.

Work Parties



Work parties continue to meet on the 'last Friday of the month' to tackle a variety of jobs which help to keep the College looking so pretty. If you would like to join us, we meet at 9:30, and finish around 12:30, with a break for coffee and cake.

In Memoriam

Michael J. Leppard, MA, 1937-2019.

Although many of the Friends attended his funeral in St Swithun's church, this Newsletter would be incomplete without mention of the passing of Michael, the town's historian. Michael was East Grinstead born and bred. From the Grammar School, this scholar was able to go up to University College, Oxford, and read Theology. A distinguished career as a schoolmaster followed. His last teaching post was at Sackville School. He often recognized former pupils in the town and could remember the dates when they and their contemporaries were at the School. He was also the lynch pin of the East Grinstead Society, and wrote most of the articles for its twice yearly *Bulletin*.

He became involved at Sackville College again in recent years and wrote a marvellous *Brief History of Sackville College* (Only £5, if you do not already have a copy).

The books in the Study had fallen into disarray. Armed with his own exercise book, dated 1968, which listed the books as they were then, Michael helped the Warden and Caroline to restore them to a logical order. His knowledge of Neale's writings was encyclopaedic and I loved listening to him explaining 'Ah, Dr Littledale was a friend of Neale's'.

Michael's other contribution to Sackville College was to collect up coins on the pavements of the town, 'the streets paved with gold', as his friend said in the eulogy, and donate them to the College.

Michael enjoyed preparing talks for East Grinstead Society and other groups. His research was meticulous, then he 'interrogated the sources'. After the talk, he could field a battery of questions, both on and off the subject.

When St Swithun's church required a historical report about the fixtures and furnishings, I asked him for advice. He lent me a precious only copy of a document, returned my papers, which were over 50 pages long, within a week, and put pencil notes in to say 'More on this in *Bulletin* 1985, No 2' etc. My conclusion was a plea for necessary change but with due respect for the generosity and intentions of past parishioners. A pencil note read 'Hear hear!'

Michael had a gentle sense of humour. A talk he gave about the Second World War included a wry smile when he remembered that on VE Day, his mother had put him to bed at the usual time.

I am glad to have known him and most grateful for all his help, for his friendship in recent years, and for all he did for Sackville College, recently and in the past. Michael will be sorely missed for his amazing knowledge of East Grinstead and his devotion to the town, as one of the Friends put it. (by Caroline)

From the Archives:

Glimpses of the Sackvilles in Tudor and Early Jacobean Times

The **London Drapers' Company** held a grand dinner in **1563-64**. **Sir Richard Sackville**, grandfather of the Founder of Sackville College, was present, at High Table, with the Lord Mayor, Sir Hugh and Lady Pawlett, Sir John Ratclyff, The Lieutenant of the Tower, Sir William & Lady Harper, Sir Thomas Offeley, Lady Granado Magdalene, and some aldermen.

Sir Richard married Winifred Brydges (or Brugges), whose own father Sir Thomas Brydges, was a

former Master of the Drapers' Company and Lord Mayor of London 1520-21.

At another **Drapers' Company dinner in 1566-67**, the food included two bucks from the Lord Buckhurst. Thomas Sackville was Baron Buckhurst and became 1st Earl of Dorset.

Thomas was the father of Robert, 2nd Earl of Dorset who founded Sackville College.

Information from *The Dinner Book of the London Drapers' Company 1564-1602*, ed. by Sarah A. Milne (London: London Record Society, 2019) pp. 23; 79.



NPG 665 *The Somerset House Conference, 1604*
© National Portrait Gallery, London

Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset, is depicted in the painting '**The Somerset House Conference, 1604**' at the National Portrait Gallery. King James I made peace with Spain, after Queen Elizabeth I and Spain had been enemies for twenty years. The high status of Thomas Sackville is shown by his position in the painting, at the highest point, on the right hand side. Next to him are Charles Howard, 1st Earl of Nottingham and Lord High Admiral, Charles Blount, Earl of Devonshire, Henry Howard, 1st Earl of Northampton and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury. The six figures on the opposite side are the Hispanic-Flemish delegation. The painting apparently bears the name of the Spanish painter Juan Pantoja de la Cruz, but an erroneous date of 1594. The work may be associated with John Critz the elder, but may be by an unidentified Flemish artist. Between May and

July 1604 there were eighteen meetings of the conference, but not all members were present each time.

Other Almshouses

The only sister of Thomas, 1st Earl of Dorset, was Lady Anne (née Sackville), who became Lady Dacre, and founded **Emmanuel Hospital, Westminster**. By 1558 she was married to Gregory Fiennes, 10th Baron Dacre (1539-94). Their only recorded daughter died young. The couple attended court and had a house at Westminster. Lady Dacre died in 1595. In her will, she gave detailed instructions for the founding of an almshouse for twenty paupers and twenty poor children, at Tothill Field, adjacent to her Westminster house. Her school aimed to bring up children '*in virtue and good and laudable arts so that they might better live in time to come by their honest labour*'. The children, all boys, wore long brown tunics. A charter was established due to the interest of Queen Elizabeth I. Lady Dacre and Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset, were cousins to the Queen through the marriage of their grandfather, Sir John Sackville (1489-1556) to Lady Margaret Boleyn (1484-1557), aunt of the more famous Anne, the Queen's mother. Lady Dacre left the Westminster house and a manor and house in Sussex to her nephew, Robert Sackville, 2nd Earl of Dorset. He is more familiar to us as the founder of his own almshouse, Sackville College.

Whittington's Almshouse

An almshouse was founded after the death in 1423 of the famous Dick Whittington. He was Mayor of



London three times. In one surviving picture of him a skull image was replaced by a cat image. Beyond this, however, the legends are not right. He was a younger son, but not the poor boy of legend. His father was Sir William Whittington, a knight from Pauntley in

Gloucestershire. Richard's later coat of arms of the Whittingtons included an amulet or ring to show

that he was a fourth son. Richard was apprenticed to a mercer, a merchant who traded in luxury materials imported from Italy. In 1392, Whittington sold mercery worth £3,000 to the wardrobe of King Richard II (ruled 1377-99). Whittington also lent money to the crown, which was repaid with interest, and he became very wealthy. Whittington married but there were no children. His executors endowed a **College of Priests**, and an **Almshouse**, completed in 1424, next to Whittington's parish church of St Michael Paternoster. The Mercers were one of the first five London companies known to have founded an almshouse. The Tailors, Skinners, Cutlers and Brewers also founded almshouses from 1413-24. Like Sackville College, most almshouses had rules for the residents. Whittington's executors drew up Ordinances for the Inmates of his almshouse.

The almsfolk were to eat together, having good conversation. Their food was to be paid for from their pensions. They were to pray several times daily for the souls of Whittington and his wife, and their respective parents, and to gather at Whittington's tomb in the church, with a priest to say De Profundis, if possible. Otherwise they were to say the Lord's Prayer. Their uniform was not to be 'staring or blazing' and to be made from easy priced [cheap] cloth. They were to look after sick inmates. They were to be 'destitute of all temporal goods', but if they had goods at the time of their

death, these would be sold in aid of the almshouse.

The College of Priests was swept away in the Reformation. Mercers' Hall, with most of the Whittington estate, was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Mercers' Hall was again destroyed in the Blitz. Whittington's almshouse moved

eventually to Felbridge where it stands today.

Glimpses of Wardens

John Mason Neale

John Mason Neale, Warden of Sackville College from 1846-66, lived there with his wife and their 5 children.

Music was part of their life. In the early days when the Neales were not popular, their daughter Mary wrote:

'When abusive language was shouted at her, my Mother would pull down the blinds and send one of us to practise the piano.'

In 1851, Neale turned down the offer of a Deanery at Perth in Scotland, for several reasons: the Scottish climate, and because he thought that *'your Dean should be a man thoroughly acquainted with music'*. He said that he himself *'had a zeal for music but not according to knowledge'*. Letters, p. 151.

However, he wrote many hymns and carols, his prose and poetry are lyrical, rhythmical and beautiful, so he obviously had music in his soul.

He led carol singing parties, at both Christmas and Easter, going out into the town performing carols that he had written, with the choir rehearsed by Mrs Neale. The singers came back to food and drink at Sackville College.

Sir Harry Sinderson, Warden of Sackville College 1952-68



Following the article in the previous newsletter, Caroline visited the Museum of the Order of St John, Clerkenwell, London and found the plaque to him in the Crypt.



Whittington and his almsmen by William Abel, limner (illuminator) - an imagined death bed scene with his almsmen.

Veronica Edney has very kindly written a piece about **Peter Williams**, Warden of Sackville College from 1969-1981. (Photograph kindly supplied by Bob Marchant).

Lieutenant-Commander Peter Williams DSC 1912-2004

Warden of Sackville College 1969-1981



Peter Alexander Williams was born on March 1912, the son of a captain for the Union Castle Line. He was educated at Malvern and Worcester College, Oxford, and then qualified as a solicitor. He became the

youngest member of the Chelsea Borough Council and joined the Royal Navy Volunteers Special Reserve in 1936 but, not expecting to be called up so soon, he paid for a private course in coastal navigation at Captain O M Watt's chandlery in Bond Street.

This would stand him in good stead during the Second World War as commanding officer of Motor Boat 502 and senior officer of the 15th MGB flotilla at Dartmouth, when running agents, stores and stolen German plans between France and Britain in scores of operations in 1943 and 1944. He led a select band which included David Birkin, husband of Judy Campbell (the singer of 'A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square'), and father of the actress Jane Birkin; Guy Hamilton, who directed four of the early James Bond films, and Mike Marshall, the England rugby player.

In one typical operation, Williams sailed at dusk from Dartmouth in February 1944 heading towards Weymouth, then, once out of sight, he turned south. On reaching the Brittany coast he cut his speed to reduce noise, wash and phosphorescence, and crept through rocks and swirling tides to anchor within a few hundred yards of the beach. A sailor was placed on standby to cut the grass rope in an emergency. Williams then sent his surfboat inshore with muffled oars, on a rising tide to avoid footprints, in order to land a party which included Francois Mitterand, future President of France. As

the boat returned, laden with five agents and a downed Allied pilot, it was able to find the MGB in the dark with a device invented by Williams, which honed in on its Asdic transmissions. By breakfast time, Williams was back in Dartmouth.

Among Williams' other passengers was Suzanne Warengem, the agent "Charise", whose shapely figure provoked a sailor to mutter gallantly "Ici, mademoiselle" as he helped her aboard. "It's OK Jack" she replied, "I've been on one of these boats before".

One of the beaches which Williams favoured was Beg-an-Fry, know to his sailors as "egg and fries", which now has a memorial to MGB 502.

He was awarded the DSC for his series of textbook operations in difficult pilotage waters. Men of his flotilla were awarded a total of 14 DSCs and 27 DSMs between them. On the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994, he was made a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur for his wartime action.

He was also involved in the evacuation of Dunkirk. When ferrying a Rear-Admiral to Dunkirk, he found himself in German occupied Gravelines. Luckily noticing the wrong uniforms in time, he turned around rapidly before his boat could be shot at. Even more fortuitously, the admiral was asleep below at the time, so never knew of the mistake! On another occasion, when in a force 9 gale in the Skagerrak, he was sustained by his coxswain with rum from a cask that had cracked open during the storm.

His wife, Joy, was the daughter of the aviation pioneer, Sir Alliott Verdon Roe (OBE). He met her when he saw a good pair of legs sticking out from under a car which she was repairing. She predeceased him. They had a son and a daughter: Christopher and Julia.

After the War he practised as a solicitor, becoming a partner of Messrs Whitley Hughes & Luscombe, Solicitors in East Grinstead.

He became chairman of the East Grinstead Conservative Party, Clerk to the Magistrates, Clerk to the Conservators of Ashdown Forest and

President of the Sussex Law Society. He also farmed, delivering cream and milk from his Jerseys before going into the office.

He was also supportive of the Queen Victoria Hospital. In 1955 he was appointed onto the House Committee, having been an honorary solicitor to the Hospital for many years. In 1959 he was appointed onto the Management Committee chairing the Planning Sub-Committee. In 1961 he was appointed Vice Chairman of the House Committee and in 1966 Chairman of the House Committee until he retired in 1971. He was also Chairman of the Children's Ward Peanut Club Trust.

In 1969 Williams took over as Warden at Sackville College. During his wardenship, the gardener's cottage was built in 1975. The ballroom, above the Common Room was used as a storage area and Williams arranged for this to be cleared and re-decorated. The gardener was just about to light a bonfire to dispose of some of the old items, when Williams noticed a rolled-up canvas and just rescued it before the fire was lit. It was a picture of a young man holding a conch shell, which was very dirty. He took it up to London to have it cleaned and framed and then hung it on the wall at the College. When he retired in 1981, Earl De La Warr asked him if he would like to keep it, which he did.



His grandchildren were all christened in the Chapel at Sackville College.

Whilst he was Warden of College he arranged for the doctors and nursing sisters from the hospital to hold their annual party in the grounds. He also used to

join the surgeons in the Mess at QVH for a drink and a chat at various times and joined them at some of their social functions. (by Veronica)

Wardens

Sackville College now has a video recording of an interview with Peter Williams and a recording of the Channel 4 TV programme from 1994 of 'Why East Grinstead?', featuring the present Warden's Father when he was Warden.

(Both recordings available upon request from Steve Metcalfe webmaster@sackvillecollege.org.uk).

Does anyone have any other footage of Wardens of Sackville College?

General Matters

Publicity Officer appeal

Sackville College is seeking a volunteer, with experience, to help increase the profile of the College. Please contact the Office if you can help.

Accommodation Availability

There are flats available at the College. If you know of anyone who may be eligible, please contact the College Office for more details.

Visits

Although the College is closed for the winter months, booked Groups can still visit, by prior arrangement. If you know of people who would like to visit, please contact the Office to arrange this.

Welcome to new Friends and Thank you to all Friends.

We hope that new Friends will enjoy being Friends and supporting Sackville College.

Thank you to the growing number of Friends. Your continuing support is very much appreciated and brings funds, practical help and additional support to the life of the community at Sackville College.

Sackville College

Patron	The Earl De La Warr	
Warden	Mrs Rosalind Crowther	Office 01342 323414 warden@sackvillecollege.org.uk
Trustees	The Countess De La Warr	
	Mr Christopher J Rolley	
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Chaplain	The Rev'd. Andrew Hawken	St Swithun's Church
Head Guides	Mr & Mrs G. Edwards Contact the Office- Mrs Linda Bryant	01342 323414
Friends' Secretaries & Newsletter Editors	Steve and Caroline Metcalfe	friends@sackvillecollege.org.uk
Maintenance	Mr Marcus Bryant	

Important Dates for Your Diary 2019 (Friends' Events)

Tuesday 19 th Nov	CJ's Charity Evening in aid of Sackville College Repair Fund 7pm for 7:30. This year's theme is Great Builders & Buildings, to mark 400 years since the completion of the building of Sackville College.	Tickets £18 from Office
Monday 2 nd Dec	Public Carols in the Chapel 7.30pm	Tickets (£6.50) from Office
Tuesday 3 rd Dec	Public Carols in the Chapel 7.30pm	Tickets (£6.50) from Office
Wednesday 4 th Dec	Christmas Music by Cantu Amici in the Chapel 7.30pm	Tickets £10 from Office
Monday 9 th December	The Carol Service for Friends, Guides and Helpers will be held in the afternoon at 4pm	No Tickets, but please let the Office know if you are attending, for catering purposes.
Spring 2020	Talk by Caroline Metcalfe on 'Lady Anne Clifford: The Knole Diaries' (Sackville College Common Room)	Afternoon, TBA
Sunday 3 rd May 2020	East Grinstead Lions May fair. College will open 11am-4pm	

We have used email addresses where possible to save printing and postage costs, but if you would like a printed copy as well, please collect one from the College Office (open on weekday mornings, 9am- 1 pm).