

SACKVILLE COLLEGE



Friends' Newsletter Autumn 2020



News from the Warden

Dear Friends of Sackville College,

I hope this message finds you and your families well at this strange and anxious time. Life at Sackville College has changed out of all recognition with the measures that have ensured the safety and wellbeing of our residents; who have adapted to these constraints with stoicism and good humour. Their determination to beat this dreadful virus is second to none and their attitude has been admirable, individually and collectively. We have remained free of Covid-19 and are optimistic regarding the second lockdown. Linda and Marcus have risen to the challenge wonderfully well and have been a great support to all.

Regrettably, all our events, fundraising and public tours this year have been cancelled; including our much anticipated Christmas Carol Concerts. Sackville College has faced many vicissitudes in its

400-year history (though few as insidious as this invisible enemy); we have overcome them all and I am confident that we will defeat this one too.

Finally, a big thank you to Caroline Metcalfe for the feast of historical information she has gathered for this newsletter.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a happier New Year.

Best wishes.

Rosalind Crowther

Events at Sackville College

Cantu Amici

Our grateful thanks to Cantu Amici for their online fundraising concert. They raised £361 and are hoping to produce a similar online Christmas concert. For those of you who have not viewed their wonderful production, it is still available on Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eulMI9fBhoQ>



We also have a few DVDs available in the office for anyone without internet access.

Work parties

Unfortunately, we have not been able to have any work parties in the last few months.

News from the Garden

As winter turned into spring, thoughts in the Sackville College potting shed turned to what I was going to grow this summer. Unbeknown to anyone at Sackville College, a world-wide pandemic was about to change everything.

Normally, I grow a few extra veg plants and some flowers to sell on May Day. I did not know then that this would never take place in 2020, and that the country would go into lockdown, closing Sackville College to the summer public and cancelling many summer fund-raising events. With the greenhouses brimming with saleable plants, I took to the rear gates on Church Lane with my trusty table, and set up a stall selling plants to the Friends of Sackville College, then to the public.

When a good friend of mine, who works in a major London park, heard of the charity plant sale at Sackville College, he arrived with van loads of surplus plants from the parks, helping us to raise the grand total of £1,900.00. We have purchased a much-needed tool shed.



Many thanks from the Potting Shed to all the Friends of Sackville College for all their support in 2020.

Marcus

Exhibition at East Grinstead Town Museum

An exhibition about the Sisters of the Society of St Margaret, is planned, using the research of Dr Kathryn Ferry for her forthcoming book about the history of the Society of St Margaret. Look out for the exhibition when the Museum can open, and for the book when Bookshops can be open again.

From the Archives

Church Lane

To the west of Sackville College, the large house, and the cottages in Church Lane have been converted into luxury homes. One now has the corrugated iron building as an annexe in its garden. There is a connection to Sackville College and John Mason Neale. Here is a very brief outline of their history in Neale's day: He founded the Sisterhood of the Society of St Margaret in 1854. The first home for the Sisters was rented property in Rotherfield, because the first Mother Superior, Ann Gream, needed to care for her elderly clergyman father, who lived there. Neale used to ride or walk- some 14 miles each way- to see them. One day his horse fell and he could have been killed. He wrote on April 28th 1856 to his friend Benjamin Webb:

'We have long seen that the two cottages at Rotherfield would not do much longer. Now we have taken a house here- close to the College- between it and the Church. A red-brick building of 1753, ugly enough, but not offensive. It will hold twelve Sisters well; what is the present house at Rotherfield we turn into a Cottage Hospital. The house here is taken from Midsummer...The Oratory will be made out of a little building, gabled east and west, that was used to hold a pony-chaise. Bodley, who is really doing very well, is the architect. It is at present detached but will be joined to the house by a short passage.'

Mary Lawson, *The Letters of John Mason Neale DD, edited by his daughter* (London: Longmans, 1910), p. 271.

The Sisters were given notice to leave this house in 1857, by the landlord, a Dissenter, in the aftermath

of the death of Sister Amy and the riot at Lewes. Whether the Rotherfield cottage, or cottages, became a 'cottage hospital' is not known, but this is an interesting and early use of that phrase.

The Sisters moved further along Church Lane. By 1858, they had 13 orphans with them (from the orphanage previously run by Neale's sister, Elizabeth Neale) and moved to 77, High Street. Sister Miriam wrote:

'At Midsummer 1858, the Sisters took up their abode in one house connected with another (henceforth known as the Orphanage) by a long shed, previously used for drying skins but now turned into a very pretty Oratory, whose doors opened both into the Sisters' house and the Orphanage, with both of which also a cloister beneath communicated. It was quite the most convenient situation the Sisters could have had, being close to the College and adjoining two other houses which eventually they acquired as their numbers increased.'

Sister Miriam, *Doing the Impossible*, p. 19.

The Sisters eventually occupied the three houses at the end of the High Street. The corrugated iron building was probably the schoolroom for the children. (Just to confuse things, a second oratory had been created when the Sisters moved further down Church Lane and this was demolished in 1972.)¹

Behind these newly converted houses, and their outbuildings, past and present, lies a complex story of individual lives and the charisma of Warden John Mason Neale, a man with huge compassion for his fellow men and women.

By 1865, G.E Street (1824–1881) was building the Convent for the Sisters. Neale arranged a procession through the town, and a ceremony at which he laid the foundation stone. This building has now



been divided into private houses and is called The Old Convent.

Sackville College in 1855.

Temptation A report of 1855 noted that at Sackville College, men lived on the ground floor, with the women upstairs. 'The sharing of doors and staircases was considered a source of temptation. Hence the inspector suggested that it might be better to have one side of the quadrangle for men and the other for women.'

Letter from A.G. Lough, who wrote 2 books on John Mason Neale, to Michael Leppard, 16 August 1968.

John Mason Neale's Travels

Rose Macaulay, *They Went to Portugal* (Penguin Travel Library, first published 1946).

In a splendid chapter called The Tractarians, Rose Macaulay described the visits of John Mason Neale to Portugal in 1853 and 1854.

John Mason Neale, Warden of Sackville College 1846–66, travelled to Portugal in May 1853, to 'practise ecclesiology' or look at churches, and to write *A Handbook for Travellers to Portugal* for John Murray publishers. He went with Bishop Forbes of Brechin, Canon H.L. Jenner and Dr J.H. Rogers. Their society was congenial, but Neale and Rogers later fell out. As Neale's daughter Mary recorded, all 4 men were tall, and Neale, at just under 6 feet, was the shortest.

Travel was difficult, as railways were still being designed, and roads were just tracks. Horses and mules were used. Accommodation was grim. On Neale's second trip with the Rev'd Joseph Oldknow, Neale recorded that Oldknow 'minds roughing it a good deal more than a traveller to Portugal ought.' On this visit, Oldknow and Neale defied the quarantine laws forbidding entry into Spain from Portugal during a cholera epidemic, enlisted the help of a local smuggler, were taken across the river in a boat, bribed the guards, then rode 25 miles from the frontier to Viana, in a storm.

¹ Dr Kathryn Ferry, Statement of Significance for Corrugated Iron Building, 3-7 and 8 Church Lane.

The early editions of the *Handbook* include Neale's selection of handy phrases, such as: 'wash the linen carefully'; 'I shall take a bath, 90 degrees'; 'he is faint, bring the salts'. Neale learned many languages. His love of animals is reflected in the phrases: 'Does the horse kick/shy/ rear?'; 'put the horse under shelter'; 'give him a feed of maize'; 'wash his hoofs'; 'they are still dirty'; 'give him fresh straw'; and 'you have not cleaned the horse/stable'.

Neale wrote in praise of Penha, a neo-Gothic castle, described by Rose Macaulay as 'the Portuguese Balmoral', built on a mountain top by Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, consort of Queen Maria da Gloria and cousin of Queen Victoria, 'it was restored with much taste and has assumed the appearance of a feudal castle'. Rose Macaulay, writing in 1946, declared that 'Modern guide-books do not encourage readers to admire Penha except as an oddity'.

She wrote that Neale had the poet's eye, and that sights such as (descending from Miranda) 'the black foaming river, dashing from a ravine...the confusion in which the peaks are tossed together, the abrupt rocks towering up all round' enabled him to endure sleepless nights, dirt and uneatable food.

This book was amongst the collection of the late Michael Leppard. In the front of the book, Michael noted all the pages relevant to Sackville College and wrote:

'The reader is made to work hard. Knowledge of the history and geography of Portugal is assumed, and the ability to understand phrases in French, German, Portuguese and Latin. The style grows on one: concise, ironic, wry, elegant, drily humorous, detached. Much learning and research lies behind the book, and much attention to literary craftsmanship. I doubt if any publisher today would take it on.'

The Sackvilles

Plague and pestilence

These were a feature of Tudor England. Thomas Sackville, Baron Buckhurst and 1st Duke of Dorset (1536-1608) wrote that he longed to leave 'the infected city' of London in 1583.

C.J. Phillips, *A History of the Sackville Family* (London: Cassell, 1930), p. 193.

Gunpowder:



Both Thomas and Robert Sackville, 1st and 2nd Dukes of Dorset, bought gunpowder. This was not for November 5th, although the plans of Guy Fawkes to blow up the Houses of Parliament were discovered on November 5th 1605, during

the lifetimes of both the Founder of Sackville College and his father.

In 1587, Baron Buckhurst chose Lewes borough as a fit place to be the military headquarters of the county and the place to store the county's arsenal of guns and ammunition. Vigilance slackened after peace with Spain from 1604. Ten years later, musters were resumed. For his store at Lewes, Robert Sackville, 2nd Earl of Dorset, bought 6 cwt of gunpowder made at Battle.

Colin Brent, *Pre-Georgian Lewes c. 890-1714: The Emergence of a County Town* (Colin Brent Books, 2004), p. 238.

Robert Sackville, 2nd Earl of Dorset (1561-1609)



He bequeathed £80 for the poor of Lewes in 1609, in addition to founding Sackville College. He forbade excessive solemnity at his funeral, which would merely enrich heralds and drapers.

Richard Sackville, 3rd Earl of Dorset (1589-1624)

He served as Lord Lieutenant of Sussex from 1612. In May 1616, he and his wife, **Lady Anne Clifford** (1590-1670), visited Lord's Place at Southover (formerly the Abbot's Lodging at Lewes Priory). There was much bull-baiting, bowling, cards and dice. The Earl's 'crew' assembled there again in 1617



and were very gallant, brave and merry. In 1619, he inspected a muster of the militia. Lady Anne Clifford recorded how warmly the county showed their affection to him, with fireworks put on by the town, and 'great play between my lord of Hunsdon, my lord of Effingham and my lord, who lost £200.'

The Earls of Dorset owned the Priory House at Lewes. The earls paid alms of 13s. 4d. a year each to certain poor almsfolk. In 1628.

Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset (1590-1652)

He paid 13s. 4d. annually for 26 poor almsfolk.

Colin Brent, *Pre-Georgian Lewes c. 890-1714: The Emergence of a County Town* (Colin Brent Books, 2004), p. 209.



Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset (1643-1706)



was a generous host. In 6 months, the household accounts included: 85 gallons of sherry, 72 gallons of Canary, 63 gallons of white Port and 425 gallons of red Port. On one day in 1696, household accounts include 40

stones of beef, 1 mutton, 1 goose, 30 chickens, 2 pigs, 2 pheasants, 1 tongue, 1 partridge, 1 calf's head, 105 fresh herring, oysters. His protégé, **Matthew Prior**, who became a poet and MP for East Grinstead, commented: 'His table was one of the last that gave us an example of the old house-keeping of an English nobleman.'

The funeral hatchment of Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset, and his second wife, Lady Mary Compton, hangs on the south wall of St Swithun's church, East Grinstead.

From St Swithun's Parish Magazine, 1873.

We often read about Sackville College in John Mason Neale's time, but this is slightly later, when the Patron of the College was the son of George

West, Earl De la Warr, the Patron who appointed Neale

'On 15th April (Easter Tuesday), at three pm there was a Choral Service at Sackville College, and the Warden, after welcoming his numerous guests in the Hall, where Dame Knight, aged 91, and Dame Payne, aged 85, strewed bay leaves, bade them partake of the beverage of tea in the west room, which he had lately fitted up. The old character of the decoration was in keeping with the date of the College. There was a buttery fitted up, whence cake and ale were dispensed, reminding one of the cheer of ancient days. Among the company was the late Charles, Earl De La Warr'.

The Warden at the time was **Dr John Henry Rogers Warden 1872-79**. He was Assistant Warden during the time when John Mason Neale was Warden (1846-66) and had several serious arguments with Neale. Dr Rogers bequeathed the Neale Memorial Library to the College, kept up the Christmas festivities, and gathered supporters of the Sackville Coal and Sustenance Fund in the Hall. Most of this money was spent on a weekly allowance for meat. Dr Rogers was the founder of the first Cottage Hospital in East Grinstead. He died suddenly in 1879. He was reputedly buried the same night in his own garden because it was believed that he had contracted smallpox. No known picture of him survives.



Major General Charles Sackville-West, 6th Earl De La Warr, KCB (13 November 1815- 23 April 1873) was the second son of George West, 5th Earl De La Warr and Lady Elizabeth Sackville (daughter of John Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset). He had a sister and 4 brothers. He was educated at Harrow, then served in the British

Army, acting as aide-de-camp and military secretary to Sir Hugh Gough in India in 1845. He fought at the Battle of Sobraon in 1846 during the first Anglo-Sikh War. Following the death of his elder brother, Lord

Cantelupe, in 1850, Charles Sackville-West was known as Lord West. He was promoted to the rank of Major in 1852, to Lieutenant Colonel in 1855, and served in the Crimean War. He was appointed a companion of the Order of the Bath in 1855 and an Officer of the Legion of Honour in 1856 and awarded the order of the Medjidie in 1858. He was promoted to the rank of Major-General in 1864. He succeeded his father to the earldom in 1869. He was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath (KCB). Lord De La Warr died on 23 April 1873. He was unmarried. He was succeeded in the earldom by his younger brother Reginald, Lord Buckhurst.

The Queen at Sackville College, East Grinstead Observer 2 August 1946

On 25 July 1946, the Queen went to a luncheon with Lord and Lady Kindersley at Plaw Hatch Hall before the opening of the American Surgical Centre. Guests included Lady Louis Mountbatten, Lady Katherine Seymour, Mr & Mrs Edward Blount, Mr Alfred Wagg and Mr A. McIndoe.

After visiting the Queen Victoria Hospital and the College of St Barnabas, the Queen came to Sackville College.

‘The Queen had a great reception from the crowd when she arrived at the historic Sackville College. Here she was met by the Warden, Lieutenant-General Sir George MacMunn. Presentations to Her Majesty included Lady MacMunn and the two Assistant Wardens, Lady De La Warr and Mr A.H. Hastie. The Queen inspected the common room, chapel and banqueting hall, and spoke to the oldest resident, 89 year old Mrs Card of East Grinstead, and to Miss Page, who is blind and has lived for 33 years at the College, longer than any other resident.

Her Majesty took sherry with Sir George and Lady MacMunn and signed the visitor’s book before leaving.

She received another big ovation when she left the College to drive back to London’

The last paragraph is a reminder that wartime shortages were still having an effect:

‘The ‘Observer’ regrets it was not possible to supply extra copies of last week’s souvenir issue. The maximum number of copies authorized by the Paper Control are already being printed each week’.

Typed copy of a letter from Buckingham Palace 26 July 1946 to Sir George MacMunn:

My dear General,

The Queen commands me to write and say how greatly Her Majesty enjoyed her visit to Sackville College yesterday afternoon.

The Queen is so happy to think that Sackville College provides such a happy home for so many old people and Her Majesty was, of course, deeply impressed by the beauty of the College and of its surroundings.

I am also to extend to you and to Lady MacMunn Her Majesty’s warmest thanks for your delightful hospitality and to say how much Her Majesty enjoyed her brief rest in your charming old room.

The Queen will always carry away such a very happy memory of Sackville College.

Yours sincerely, Katherine Seymour

From the Friends’ Newsletter for 1993, compiled by the present Warden’s Father, Derek Chislett

Glimpses of Bygone Days

‘Our oldest resident is Mrs Grace Bingham. She is 89 and has been at the College for 23 years. Mrs Bingham lived on a smallholding at Furnace Wood, 3 miles from East Grinstead, keeping goats, pigs and hens for 40 years. When her husband died, she found work as a housekeeper to a doctor in Hastings, but after several years returned to East Grinstead and became a member of the College.

She was given an upstairs room, with a gas cooker under the stairs: a bathroom and 2 lavatories were shared between every 4 Residents. Bed-sitting rooms were the only accommodation and there were more residents than now. [1993] There was some central heating. Mrs Bingham remembers paying £2 a week for her heating and light. The then Matron was a Miss Brearley who had been at the College some years. All the Residents had to attend

St Swithun's church every Sunday morning. They filled a whole pew. They were not permitted to take rubbish to the dustbins on a Sunday. There was a curfew and lights had to be out by 10pm and the Matron checked that this was so. In the mornings all the beds had to be made by 10am. There were no facilities for washing clothes: residents had to use a laundry or laundrette. No washing was allowed on the lines after 2 o'clock when the College was open to the public. Residents were not permitted to use Christian names to each other.'

Heraldry at Sackville College.



The arms of West quartered with Sackville, 1843, for George John West, 5th Earl De La Warr and his wife, Lady Elizabeth Sackville. Her brother, the 4th Earl of Dorset (1793-1815) was killed in a hunting accident in Ireland. Following the death of the 5th Duke of Dorset (her father's

cousin) without heirs, Earl De La Warr was permitted to take on the surname of Sackville-West. Earl De La Warr became the patron of Sackville College. The Countess De La Warr and her sister, Lady Mary Sackville, who married the 1st Earl Amherst, and



became Countess Amherst, became joint patronesses of Sackville College.

The arms of Amherst impaling Sackville, representing the marriage of William Pitt Amherst to Lady Mary Sackville in 1839.

Whilst the College has been closed, the Warden has taken down and cleaned all the heraldic shields. Correspondence with the College of Arms has come to light. We are compiling a folder with photographs of each shield and the relevant information. The late Mr R.H. Wood, a Guide and the compiler of the pamphlet 'A Short Account of Sackville College', drew sketches and did much research himself. A fee of 10 guineas was paid to the College of Arms in 1970, to cover the cost of

the enquiry. By the end of the research, the Windsor Herald of Arms wrote: 'I do not want to be inordinate in this matter, and wonder whether 15 guineas would now be acceptable to you...if you would care to let me have a remittance in this amount.' This demonstrates the rich and complex history of Sackville College- an almshouse, but one with proud connections to some families of high status.

Echoes of the Past

Robert Sackville-West, at the end of his book, *Inheritance*, quoted a passage from *Orlando*, written by Virginia Woolf for her friend, Vita Sackville-West, about Knole:

'Here have lived, for more centuries than I can count, the obscure generations of my own obscure family. Not one of these Richards, Johns, Annes, Elizabeths has left a token of himself behind, yet all, working together with their spades and their needles, their love-making and their child-bearing, have made this'.

At Sackville College, the very stones of this almshouse survive, with fragments of its four hundred years of history in the portraits, furniture, lead water tanks and ancient books. The people connected with the College and those who have lived here can only be glimpsed in documents and photographs, but they have all helped to create and maintain Sackville College and its traditions. People have lived, loved, fallen out with each other and laughed here. One day the walls will again welcome all of us who contribute to the life of Sackville College and its Residents: the Friends, Guides, Helpers and Visitors.

Meanwhile, huge thanks are due to the Warden and her husband, to Linda, the Almoner and to Marcus Bryant, for all that they do to keep Sackville College running and to keep it safe for the Residents.

General Matters

Amazon Smile

We are now a registered charity with Amazon who will make a small donation to Sackville College with each purchase. Please recommend to family, friends

and contacts working for large companies who order from Amazon.

Legacies to Sackville College

Leaving a legacy gift to Sackville College is easily arranged with your solicitor. There are 3 main types: residuary, pecuniary and specific gift (personal possession).

Fundraising with Ebay.

Sackville College is now an Ebay registered charity. Place items for sale in the usual way and follow the link to the donation site and pick us! Please ask family and friends who use Ebay to give a percentage of their sales to a good cause.

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

The College is currently closed to visitors, to protect the Residents.

Book Sale

A number of Books are available for sale

Please see the website

<https://www.sackvillecollege.org.uk/Books/>
or contact Steve or Caroline (01342 312722) for more details or to arrange a purchase

Atlas of Man and Religion	£2.00
Folklore of Sussex	£4.00
Historical Atlas to the Bible	£4.00
London 1000 Years	£5.00
National Portrait Gallery Catalogue	£1.50
Observer's book of British Geology	£2.00
Observer's book of Glass	£2.00
Observer's book of Music	£2.00
Observer's book of Silver	£2.00
Old English Customs and Ceremonies	£5.00
Oxford Advanced Atlas (1936)	£4.00
Oxford Companion to English Literature	£5.00
Peters Atlas of the World (1989)	£4.00
Regional Books Surrey-Sussex	£4.00
Synoptic Gospels	£2.00
The Great Archaeologists	£5.00
Traditional Dialect of Sussex	£5.00
Assorted Pelicans (Historical)	£5.00

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.

As the College cannot be open to visitors for the time being, due to the current pandemic, your support is particularly important this year.

When Sackville College can open again, we will let you know about forthcoming events. Please keep safe and well.

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	
Sackville College Office	Open Weekday mornings 9am-1pm	01342 323414 admin@sackvillecollege.org.uk
Almoner	Mrs Linda Bryant	01342 323414 almoner@sackvillecollege.org.uk
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 2020-21 (**Friends' Events**)

We will let you know when Sackville College can welcome visitors again.

Sadly, Christmas Carol Evenings in the Chapel will not be possible this year.

Dec 2020	Christmas Music by Cantu Amici online - to be confirmed.	
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We have used email addresses where possible to save printing and postage costs.