

# THE SUSS-EX CLUB

## NEWSLETTER No. 44, late summer 2018

Edited by Adrian Peasgood

### Future events

#### **1. Friday 21 September, Boundary walk. 10 a.m. - lunchtime**

This was announced in Newsletter 43; a slightly extended version follows.

For a description - and aerial view - of the campus Boundary walk, please see [www.sussex.ac.uk/about/documents/boundary-walk-leaflet.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/documents/boundary-walk-leaflet.pdf). Martyn Stenning will lead a party of Suss-Ex members round the walk on Friday 21 September. He obtained a Sussex D.Phil in 1995, and for the next 15 years held a variety of teaching and other posts in the University; he is now 'a semi-retired associate of Life Sciences'.

The walk starts near the roundabout at the beginning of Knight's Gate Road, and will end at the Swan Inn in time for lunch. Numbers will be capped, so early booking is advisable! Please send a note of your interest to Adrian Peasgood ([adrian@peasgood.plus.com](mailto:adrian@peasgood.plus.com), or 01273 508620, or 14 Harrington Villas, Brighton, BN1 6RG).

The starting point is well signposted. The route is reasonably sheltered, and wet weather gear should be sufficient protection in the event of poor weather.

The nearest university car park is Knight's Gate. Coming from Brighton the nearest bus stop is the oddly named 'Falmer station' stop on the slip road leaving the A27 for the main university entrance, but it is served only by buses for Lewes and beyond. For services entering campus, the best stop is the one outside Sussex House. The stop for services from Lewes is the one for Falmer village: cross by the footbridge to the village, and turn left.

*As the event is now less than a month away it would be good to have bookings soon from those intending to come, please. As noted above, numbers will be capped if necessary, so don't leave contacting me till too late!*

*Adrian Peasgood*

#### **2. Thursday 13 December, lunch time. Christmas party. Details will be announced later.**

## Recent event

### Visit to Plumpton College July 24<sup>th</sup> 2018

On one of the hottest days of the year our group arrived at the Visitor Identification Centre of Plumpton College where we were offered drinks and biscuits and introduced to our guide for the day, Reg Lanaway. Reg entered the college as a student in 1954 and has been a member of staff for most of his professional life. Now retired, he imparts a wealth of knowledge to groups such as ours. After a short introduction, Reg was keen to get started.

Our tour started at the Equestrian Centre which consists of modern stable blocks with rows of stalls, areas where the horses can exercise unattended, large inside exercise areas with viewing platforms and even a robotic exercise horse which looks as if it should belong to a fairground. The Equestrian Centre runs courses at all levels from basic level vocational courses to degree level courses.

Our tour continued to the workshop area. Most of the workshops were closed due to the holidays but it was possible to see what a large and impressive area it is, with a great deal of modern equipment. We saw inside the blacksmith teaching area where there were about twenty separate gas-fired forges. Apart from the heavy-duty metal work they also have classes in jewellery making. As we walked further round the college we were to see a splendid example of the metal work in the form of a pair of wrought iron gates decorated with plaques displaying many aspects of college history. Heading through the gates into the main building we visited the library, a serene space with work stations hand made by local craftsmen. The range of subjects on the shelves reflects the vast variety of courses offered at the college. One area that seemed to draw interest from our group was the wine section.

We left the coolness of the air-conditioned library to visit the front of the main building, with wonderful views of the South Downs. From here we could see the memorial cross of the Battle of Lewes. We learnt about the cooperation between the National Trust and the college in returning the hillside to its natural grassland and flora and discovered that the college had its own water supply from the natural springs along the edge of the Downs. Our tour through the grounds took us past the work of horticultural students, with flower beds designed to attract different insects and on to the animal husbandry department. Here the students are able to practise their skills on a large variety of animals from mammals such as rabbits and wallabies to fish, amphibians (including brightly coloured frogs) and reptiles such as snakes, lizards and tortoises.

After lunch we concentrated on the practical farming side of the college's activities. Within the substantial milking herd, we visited young calves, cows in calf nearly ready to give birth as well as the milking cows. The highlight of the afternoon was the visit to the herringbone milking parlour which we were able to see in action. This was a very modern, slick operation and quite fascinating for us viewing from the gallery. The farm also has pigs and sheep as well as the agricultural side of the business, but one day is insufficient time to explore all the workings of such an eclectic establishment.

We would like to thank Plumpton College for allowing us to see their amazing campus and especial thanks go to Reg for the fascinating account of the workings of the college along with his personal account of its history. Thanks are also due to David Smith for organising such an interesting day.

*Angela Pike*

## Possible future events, to be confirmed

- British Airways i360
- Evening meal, with speaker

Other suggestions are under investigation.

## Obituary

P R Lewis, 1926 – 2018; Librarian, University of Sussex, 1972- 1980

PRL's career started in Brighton public library and took a most circuitous route to Falmer and the University of Sussex. Spells in other public libraries were followed by work in the library of the Board of Trade in London, and then at the Queen's University School of Library Studies in Belfast. Returning to London, PRL became Librarian of City University. By 1972, when he was appointed Librarian at Sussex, his c.v. gave little indication of any particular interests which we might expect him to bring to the post.

How might he have assessed the state of the library he was now to direct? In the early and mid 1960s it had, like its parent university, innovated on many fronts, but towards the end of the decade funding began to fall, and procedures and practices local to Sussex began to appear expensive compared to compliance with national and international standards. We began to reclassify, to the standard Library of Congress scheme, stock already processed by internally written schedules, a labour intensive process; we were becoming aware that the cataloguing rules we had developed to take account of latest thinking (the 'Paris Principles') were not always in line with emerging international practice as represented by the publication in 1967 of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR)*; the local circulation

(lending) system was not coping adequately with the scale of the expansion of student numbers and resulting high levels of library use. Finally, the structure of professional posts, while akin to that in other libraries in the 'new' universities, seemed not to be providing an adequate base for career progress and promotion elsewhere.

Under PRL, reclassification continued, but no-one involved displayed much enthusiasm for the task, and he eventually accepted the implications of calculations which showed that we were acquiring stock, and processing it by the old local schemes, at a greater rate than we were changing to the standard schemes targeted by the reclassification programme. The programme was abandoned, to be reactivated decades later, when technical developments both made implementation simpler, and the subsequent benefits greater.

On the cataloguing front things were quite different. The 60s had been years of intensive discussion, nationally and internationally, of how to improve the service which library (card) catalogues provided to users, but the intended conclusion of the debate, *AACR*, had quickly proved unsatisfactory, and a major revision was soon under way. In 1974 PRL became chairman of the (international) Joint steering committee

for revision of AACR. It was clear that this challenge really fired PRL's interest, and his contribution to the resulting debates, and his leadership which brought those debates to an acceptable conclusion, was substantial. (Perhaps it was in part the visibility this role gave him which led to the career move which eventually took him away from Sussex.)

It seemed clear that the problems with managing the levels of library use, particularly book lending – then often the highest per student head of any UK academic library – were in due course going to be solved by technology, the only question being 'when'. PRL gave steady support to the talented team of 'systems' staff who monitored developments and ensured we would not miss any appropriate to the Sussex situation; his interest was more than formal. I remember one sales representative being taken meet 'the librarian' and coming away saying 'that's not just a figure head chief, he was asking some very pertinent questions.' And, when convinced of the suitability of a new product from Canada, he committed Sussex to being one of the two first adopters in the UK.

PRL's own professional mobility had been exceptional, and I suspect he was surprised by the length of stay of most of his professional staff. Whether this was because of a lack of career ambition, or the fact that the Sussex library was a congenial/lively/ interesting place to be, or - a more formal diagnosis - their responsibilities here had not been a sufficiently attractive element in c.v.s, it is impossible to say, and I know only that anyone who did show interest in moving elsewhere, was given plenty of encouragement and support by PRL.

As the 70s progressed, however, it was none of these issues which came to dominate the development of the Sussex library, but its role as repository of nationally and internationally significant archival and other special collections. This began with the deposit of the 'Monks

House' papers of Virginia Woolf and her circle, later augmented by related collections. This put us on a level with the British Library and the New York Public Library in respect of 'Bloomsbury' materials, then a fashionable field of study, particularly in the US. PRL had not, I think, been involved in the negotiations for the Woolf material, but he was central to those with the National Trust which resulted in our being trusted with its Kipling papers. The deposit of the Mass Observation archive meant that a third major collection came to enrich the library and increased its appeal to researchers from around the world. Nothing in his previous career had prepared PRL (or any of the staff!) for such responsibilities, but he made certain that services were in place to ensure that the reputation of the university could only be enhanced by the experience of researchers attracted here by these collections.

With such a varied c.v., and success in many aspects of library management, it is not surprising that PRL's next move would be to a senior role in the British Library, that of Director of Bibliographic Services, still the most distinguished position yet to be filled by anyone from the University of Sussex library. Yet few of his colleagues here have many memories of him. He was not gregarious, and there would always be some staff who did not recognise him when he made a rare visit to the staff room for a cup of tea. Occasional anecdotes were passed around: his difficulties in giving up smoking, his delight in a first pair of walking boots. But he was a distant figure, even to senior staff. So it was a surprise to read, in the *Guardian* obituary by his son, of a retirement with a full and varied social life in a Suffolk village, active on the amateur stage, in a choir, and editing a village history. Was he, I wonder, looking forward to some such involvement throughout the years of dedicated professional activity here at Sussex and elsewhere?

*Adrian Peasgood*

## Publications, etc.

*The Suss-Ex Newsletter publishes information about retired members' research and related activities. 'Activities' is widely defined, an earlier Newsletter noting the following examples: publications, conference papers and invited talks given, fellowships, prizes and honours, new grants, research students completing, officerships in learned societies, refereeing, doctoral examining, etc. Such information helps to confirm the continuing importance to the university of its retired members. Please send items for inclusion to Suss-Ex.*

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### *The Suss-Ex website*

More information about Suss-Ex is available on its webpage at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/suss-ex/>. 'Suss-Ex Club' in Google will get you there, as will <http://tiny.cc/sussex>, or you can find us in the A-Z on the University's homepage. The website has copies of past Newsletters.

### *The steering committee*

Suss-Ex activities are organised by a steering committee, which currently comprises:

Sir Gordon Conway, Chair [G.Conway@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:G.Conway@imperial.ac.uk)

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### *Ideas for the future*

We are always seeking ideas for social occasions when we can meet former colleagues. Please let us have your suggestions, or volunteer to join the committee. We meet once a term, when practicable immediately before a Suss-Ex event.