

The Friends of Henfield Museum, Winter 2020-21



The Adventures of Dawson Borrer (1817—1895)

by Rose Sharp & Alan Barwick



'I turned my donkey's head, and urged him back to the hotel with the greatest speed he was capable of exerting; but trains of camels, some laden with mill-stones, and some with huge panniers full of mud, continually bore down upon us in the narrow streets, delaying our progress.

Not heeding the fearful blows they bestowed upon us with their weighty burdens, onward they swung, with their heads high in air, and that peculiarly affected gait, which makes the camel one of the most ludicrous animals under the sun. Then would follow donkey after donkey, laden with broad hampers full of vegetables, or perhaps stones for building, which bang in the most unmerciful manner against the legs of the passenger. However, my little steed showed his wisdom whenever he met any of these his brethren laden with greenmeats; for, much to my amusement, he would dash his nose into the passing pannier, and seizing a fine carrot, or other delicate morsel, trot off. At last he carried this too far, for selecting a fine large bunch of vegetables from the back of a passing friend, he took to his heels with an air of peculiar satisfaction not at all reciprocated by the owner of his prize, who infuriated gave chase, and with the most discordant yells, caught the robber vainly endeavouring to pass a train of hateful camels; showering bitter curses on my head, as if I was the thief, he seized his property and marched off.'

Cairo, a far cry from Sussex, but this was written in 1843 by a Henfieldian, Dawson Borrer, son of William Borrer the famous botanist who

lived in Barrow Hill House. Dawson was William and Elizabeth's fifth child, and was born in Henfield in 1817. He is remembered locally as being the man who brought back from Mount Lebanon the seeds of the Lebanon Cedar trees which were planted at Springhills in 1843. He travelled widely in Europe and the Middle East, and the above quotation is from a book describing his adventures 'A journey from Naples to Jerusalem, by way of Athens, Egypt and the Peninsula of Sinai'. He was interested in botany and ornithology, and based much of his writing on his knowledge of history and the scriptures. He was a typical Victorian traveller, his gun slung around his shoulders; much of his appreciation of the plumage of birds and the beauty of wildlife he encounters is followed by the description of the delicious meals they provided.

He and his party dressed for travelling; 'we had partly adopted the Oriental costume; a white muslin turban graced my head, folded around the red cloth cap called "tarbouch", beneath which I wore the usual skull-cap of white cotton: all this heaped upon the head might be imagined oppressive, but it is no more than is necessary to shield it from the excessive power of the sun; neither is it of the weight that might be supposed from its appearance, for the turban, though many yards in length, is of so light a substance, that you hardly feel the numerous folds that you are crowned with; indeed from the softness of its texture, and its fitting itself so well to the head, it is, when properly put on, far pleasanter than the English hat. In the streets of Cairo one may see turbans of all shades of colouring from black to white, and of almost as many forms as colours; for sects and tribes are distinguished by this part of the costume; and woe betide the son of Israel that places on his head the Moslem turban!

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From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Well, that was quite a year! I hope you've all had as a decent a Christmas and New Year as possible under the circumstances. I'm writing this newsletter to update you on some of the main achievements of the year in lockdown so far as the museum and Friends have been concerned.

The Friends have been happy to acquire several new objects for the museum collection this year. A first that had been sorely lacking for one of Henfield's more famous sons - a fine example of a Bishopmark, on an envelope with fine wax seal dated 1680-90, so posted within Henry Bishopp's own lifetime. It had been hoped to present this at the AGM last year - instead please see the picture of it here, also on Henry's page on our website.

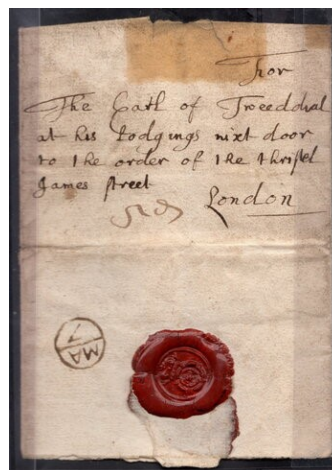
More recently, we funded the curator's acquisition of some similarly dated Henfield trade tokens. Coins produced for spending only with specific merchants, they were somewhat akin to modern vouchers. Both are pictured at right.

One recent acquisition which should ultimately have a big impact is a new museum tablet computer & contactless payment reader. Once the museum is open again, we will be able to take contactless/cashless payments and in the longer term use the same integrated system to generate income via an online giftshop on the website. The tablet will also be available for the display of multimedia content to museum visitors and to record or live stream content for schools or other organisations.

Robert Gordon

One of the major pieces of progress from 2020 has been the launch of the new Friends funded and developed museum website in August. In addition to social media, this portal opens the museum collections, exhibitions and projects to a far wider UK and worldwide audience. Until early January, we have had 833 unique visitors and 1945 website page views. Hopefully some of you saw the launch articles in BN5 and the Parish Magazine where the plan is to feature further sections in future. Visit: www.henfieldmuseum.org.

While some projects and planned group visits have had to be postponed the last year, several digital and individual have been progressing well. *Continued on page 4...*



Envelope (1680-90) with Bishop mark to left of wax seal; Henfield trade tokens, Thomas Tilford ha'penny (1668), Elizabeth Trunnell farthing (1657)



From the Curator

It has obviously been a very difficult year for everyone. With Covid safety procedures put in place to make the museum a safe place to enter for both visitors and volunteers we opened up whenever it was possible to do so during the restrictions. The total number of visitors for the year was about 535 about a quarter of our usual number. It is understandable that the general public were reluctant to make unnecessary journeys to visit places like museums during the year, but disappointing in a way having made the effort to open, when other museums stayed closed, and having so few visitors coming through the doors.

We are very grateful for the help given by all our volunteers. Due to age and health problems however three of our regular volunteers have retired. So a big thankyou to Mary Holder, George Swalwell and Lisa Janman for you help at the museum. Two of the duties have been covered by other people but

Alan Barwick

we still require one new volunteer to take on a fourth Thursday morning duty.

We had a visit from St. Peter's school in the early part of the year to learn about the history of Henfield, and Stephanie also had a small group come to look at the costume collection. There were a number of acquisitions to the museum collection during the year including two 17th century tokens (above) from Henfield which were purchased at auction by The Friends. Museum committee meetings continued to take place on Zoom, and Stephanie and I have a Zoom meeting coming up in February. Stephanie is showing the costume collection to a group in North Carolina, America and I will be giving a slide show to St. Peter's School on the history of Henfield.

AB

From the Costume Curator

After a year of Called Off, Closed and Cancelled, I present what I have been able to fabricate and fashion with the costume collection in 2020. Henfield Costumes have gone online. Every week of this strange time I have posted on Facebook a few words and photos showing costume from our collection. 46 weeks later I have been delighted by just how popular this weekly post has become. Some clothes are more popular than others. Two have been outstandingly popular, each receiving over 200 likes. They were a mauve cotton skirt c1855 and a mans silk waistcoat c 1770/1780. Many of the interested folk live a long way away. To date my post about a corset has had likes from Estonia, New York and Portugal. There has also been interest in visiting the museum from people in Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Kent.

Stephanie Richards

I submitted an online article to 'Museum Crush' in September; 'Unpicking the story behind an unused Victorian trousseau'. Museum Crush is supported by Arts Council England and it is good to have Henfield included. Go to Museum Crush.org and look under 'women's history'.

Sadly my talks were an early casualty of the lockdown. I am delighted to have been rebooked by Woodmancote and Henfield WI for 2021 and look forward to restarting my in house talks as soon as it is possible.

Zoom has provided an online option and thanks to this I was able to give a talk to Maidenbower WI last August. As I write I am working on a Zoom talk for a historic costume group in North Carolina USA, who approached me after seeing the Facebook posts.

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Picture Gallery



Stationed for a while in Henfield, part of the Cyclist Corps leaves the High Street in 1915. The Corps were primarily used for coastal defence, although some saw active service abroad.



Two colourised photos of Henfield's fleeced flocks: left, from Clifton Cottage on the Common, late C19; right, outside the soon to be demolished Hewitts, c. 1905, what would soon become Baigent's at back.



What's coming up?

New Year Temp Display

The mudlarking display remains in the museum at present.

Roving Display

The stage coaching display is static in the museum at present until roving returns.

The Friends AGM, 27th April 2021, 19:30

We will be holding the AGM via Zoom and hope many will be able to attend. If not, please pre-submit any comments or thoughts to us. Official business, election of

officers and an update on the year will be followed by a talk by Group Captain David Baker MBE on *Lawrence's War in the Desert in WW1*. The Chairman will in addition show some family photos of the air war in WW1.

From the Chairman (*continued*)

Robert Gordon

Announced in the last newsletter, the Arborea community project (Trees of Henfield & Guests from Afar) has now begun with the first submissions live on the website prior to further publicity. So if a tree - local or further afield - has inspired you, please do submit it to us in words or image.

Image restoration for art and photographs has been progressing well. Firstly, manual restoration of damage is done as needed, which usually takes 15-60 minutes for most images. 2020 was also a year of the image algorithm. So secondly, utilising this algorithmic machine learning technology, automatic suggestive colourisation and enhancement is done. If necessary, colours are manually tweaked in a third stage. Stunning results can be attained as people and places are restored to life. A small selection of these are included overleaf.

With contributions from the museum, Henfield's first new heritage trails have recently been launched by the community partnership as part of a wider Horsham District project. See www.hiddenhenfield.co.uk for details of the Village & Common Trail & River History & the Rise of Henfield walks and give them a try!

Social media has seen vibrant growth this year, with the museum page now having 640 followers and the Henfield Club page also posting up many museum photos. A mixture of articles, historical/restored photos & paintings and object features are regularly posted up by myself and the Costume Curator, with the Curator joining this year with regular postings. Posts have been

seen by tens of thousands of people across the world, with thousands of 'likes' and hundreds of comments across the year.

For our AGM in April, as we have already postponed once due to CV-19, we intend to proceed this year via Zoom video conference, which will be open to those who can attend in this way (TBC 27th April). We will also invite comment beforehand from any who cannot attend via this medium. As usual, we will be inviting a speaker for the second part of the evening. This year, Group Captain David Baker *MBE* who some of you may remember previously gave us a fine talk, will be presenting the exciting topic of Lawrence's War in the Desert in WW1. As a bonus, I will show some previously unseen photos from a *RNAS* relative who fought in the Royal Naval Air Service on the Austro-Italian River Piave front, proceeding quickly to ace before being shot down and ending the war as last in his squadron taken POW. Our membership numbers remain strong at 80, although we are looking for members willing to consider joining the committee.

This will be my last AGM as Chairman as I hand over to Vice Chair Leo Jago - but I will still be around, taking that role and focusing on specific projects. It has been a pleasure to meet some of you over the years. Fees for the next year remain static, so I hope you will continue to support us!

As we head into spring, let's hope that this year is a little brighter than the last!

RG

From the Costume Curator (*continued*)

Stephanie Richards

Links have been maintained with Cuckfield museum. This year I have been able to help with dating some photographs of 1914/18 life in their village.

A c1860s paisley shawl that went to New Zealand and came back again featured online last year. That produced questions from a lady in New Zealand who saw the post, and also enabled me to find out more about the Henfield family involved, whose descendants still live here today. Additions to the costume collection in 2020; A 1940s wedding dress and a c1950s jacket. Both these have strong Henfield connections and are fine additions to the museum.

It is a bonus to have a Henfield Museum website. Thanks to Rob Gordon. My thanks also to Alan Barwick who has been an enormous help and support in my endeavours.

SCR



Incredibly intricate detailing on the late C18th waistcoat listed as once belonging to the Wilberforce family. Was it once worn by William in his dandy days, perhaps acquired on his Grand Tour in Italy?



The Adventures of Dawson Borrer (*continued*)

The green turbans of the descendants of the Prophet are the most conspicuous. The respect paid to this article of dress is very great. (Later I did prove that a turban is not a proper costume for sporting ; for after with great labour and cunning, getting almost within range of some geese, roll after roll of white muslin came tumbling down over my eyes and round my neck, thus manacled me, and giving the fowl an opportunity to be off, alarmed by my struggles to relieve myself, as, sinking deeply in the mud, I trampled into it one end of my head dress, thus drawing it round my throat almost to suffocation).’ ‘I had purchased in the bazaar a burnoose, a very useful as well as graceful habit, being a long flowing cloak of coarse texture, but light, with an ample hood, which, in case of exposure to sun or wind, often proved most grateful, being of sufficient dimensions to draw over the head, and lap round the face, so as in some measure to protect the eyes of the traveller from that penetrating dust and gravel, which, borne on by the sweeping khamsin or simoom, so often overtakes him in the desert, irritating his face and eyes, to his very great discomfort, and, in many instances, bringing on ophthalmia, a disease productive of the greatest agony’.

He describes a desert dust storm when exploring ruins in Egypt ‘The latter part of this day's route lay over a vast and boundless extent of plain, covered with naked sand and rubble. As we sped on a howling wind arose, and tremendous columns of dust and sand came rushing on, dark as thunder- clouds, bringing to my mind the first of the thousand and one tales of the fair Sharazad, and the mighty form of the horrible Efrete [*a powerful type of demon in Islamic mythology*] which rose before the unfortunate merchant who unwontedly slew with a date-stone the son of the desert Jin, as related in that tale. A lurid glare pervaded the atmosphere as onward drove cloud after cloud of sand, which, driven by adverse blasts in opposite directions, met and burst, then rolled along the surface of the ground like mighty volumes of black smoke belched from artillery. Perhaps, thought I, they are contending hosts of desert Jins — may our destiny forbid that they assume their true forms! As a land-lubber for the first time upon the bosom of the ocean beholds with trembling the wide expanse, ruffled by a cap-full of wind, and deems it a terrific storm, so did our hearts quail within us,



Plaque marking the cedars of Lebanon brought back by Dawson Borrer in 1843. It disappeared along with the cedars it commemorated during the Springhills redevelopment in the 1980s.

and so did we consider this an awful phenomenon ; but the sagacious camel (always aware of and prognosticating danger when at hand), quietly swung on, and the Arab laughing, showed his white teeth, and cried, Tieb ! tieb ! for to them it was a mere nothing, a mere passing freak of the winds of the wilderness. And ere another short hour had passed the atmosphere was clear again, the heavens assumed their wonted aspect, and the army of efreets had disappeared. The driving sand, however, had penetrated the very pores of our skin. Our raiment had afforded little protection. In spite of the capacious hood of my burnoose, drawn closely over my eyes and face, the former were inflamed and filled with dust, whilst my nostrils and throat were choked up; neither for several days, in spite of all our exertions, could we free our apparel from the impalpable dust, which caused us great discomfort’.

He sketched, collected plants and animal skins, and even brought home a live tortoise ‘amongst the ruins at Er-Ruhaibeh and in the wady below were many of the little tortoise common in Italy and the south of France ; one of which I brought away as a memento of Er- Ruhaibeh, and, though exposed to many weeks' rough jolting in saddlebags, and months fraught with the dangers and adversities of travel, "per tot discrimina rerum" it survived, and lives at this hour in an English green-house — a very travelled tortoise !’

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Henfield Museum

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Please note that the museum is *closed until further notice*.
Safety provisions are in place to reopen when possible.



The Story of a Museum Object - Museum Monkey

The Victorian monkey to the right lives in the museum toy cabinet with a selection of dolls and toys from the collection including Bo Peep and the Wooden Tops. Sometimes he emerges to explore the museum, reposing to the one pint milk measure seen here. But Mu-

seum Monkey holds a secret - unscrew his head and within is a bottle of a size perfect for storing spirits of all varieties - the perfect disguise! He can be found from time to time gracing the museum's social media pages... *RG*

The Adventures of Dawson Borrer (*continued*)

His description of the camps made as they progressed are beguiling 'The spot was picturesque; and the Bedouin group sitting around their watch fires at night, their dark countenances lighted up by the flaring blaze, whilst laughing and chattering amongst themselves... presented a study worthy of any artist. Forming the baggage into a barrier on the side the wind may be, and the camels lying in a circle around them, they are snug enough, and one would imagine by their jocularly, extremely witty and facetious amongst themselves. How often have I watched their bronzed faces animated by some soul-stirring legend or wild tale of the desert, related by one of their party; the flashing eye and exposed range of snowy teeth betokening their awakened interest; and deeply regretted that ignorance of their language left it to imagination alone to divine the character of the conversation thus exciting their feelings! What strange traditions, what

wild legends, might doubtless be gathered from these primitive people, dwelling amidst marvellous and unique scenery, the very sight of which gives birth to wild romantic thought!' Dawson Borrer settled in Ireland at "Altamont," a large house situated in parkland, near the village of Kilbride Cross Road in County Carlow. He refurbished the house and garden and added a lake which was dug by local men to provide them with work during the potato famine. Today the house and grounds are a local tourist attraction. He married Georgiana Margaret Braddell at Clonegal Church, County Carlow on the 6th September 1853, and later became a County Magistrate. Dawson and his wife appear in the Henfield census of 1881 when they were staying with his sister Fanny and her husband Charles Dunlop at Red Oaks.

Dawson died at "Altamont" on the 11th October 1895, and his body was brought back to Henfield where he was interred next to his parent's grave in the NE corner of the churchyard. His wife, who was eighteen years his junior, died in Ireland on the 22nd August 1903 and her body was also brought back to Henfield and interred with her husband. There were no children from the marriage and the money from his estate passed to nephews including John Eardley Hall of Barrowhill.

The Borrer plot in St. Peter's churchyard. The railings were most likely removed with others during WW2.

