

Crowhurst News

50p

History Pages



2008/09 Compilation

The building of the Station,

We have recently been presented by Frances Royston with copies of material about the history of Crowhurst which she has collected over the years through examination of old records and personal interviews. We are grateful to her for agreeing that we can reproduce some of these in the History Page of the News.

Here are some extracts from a booklet entitled 'Background to Craig Close' which was written round about 1974 by Ernest Wood, who at the time lived at 4 Station Cottages, which were built for railway workers about seventy years before Craig Close.

The railway from Tonbridge to Hastings was built in 1852 connecting with the S.E.R. main line to London but, although passing through Crowhurst as it still does, no provision was made to deal with passengers here.

Why this should have been so is not clear. It may be that the always hard-up South-Eastern, having been compelled to erect a more than usually expensive Gothic edifice to match the Abbey at Battle did not consider the potential revenue from Crowhurst would justify the expense of building a station.

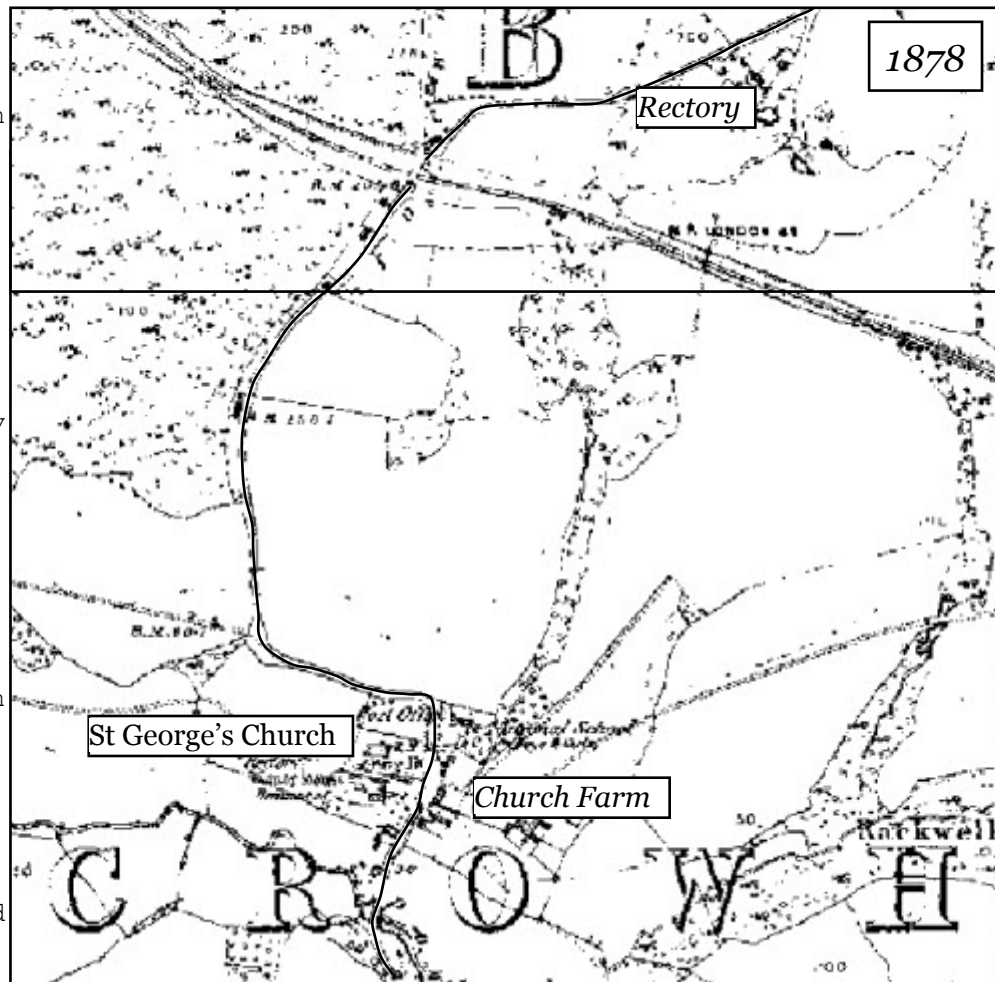
Also, of course, the locomotives of those early days had very slow acceleration and too-frequent stops were to be avoided.

Crowhurst was then a very small village almost entirely engaged in agriculture and largely a part of the Pelham Estate with the 'big house' of the Squire, Crowhurst Park, not a great deal farther from Battle than from Crowhurst. The only railway bridges visible from Crowhurst Park are built of stone instead of the usual brick which rather suggests that the Squire would not have been satisfied with any of the S.E.R.'s low cost type of station.

A short siding for freight traffic, subsequently called the 'old siding', was provided

adjacent to the Estate private road where it passes under the railway by a stone arch and, whatever the reason, for fifty years the railway ran through Crowhurst without any provision for passengers.

A foot-path ran across the fields, crossing the rails on the level as such rural foot-paths still often do. A block of two tiny one-storey cottages for the platelayers gangers stood almost touching the rails a short way up the line. Otherwise there was no building of any sort until one came to the church.



Station Road & Craig Close

Crowhurst News
June - Dec 2009

Toward the end of the century the ancient little town of Bexhill was blossoming into the smart new sea-side resort and beginning to feel the need for a more direct link with London than the rather round-about South Coast line and work began on the first day of 1898. Considering the four miles of line required 16 bridges, including a quarter-of-a-mile-long viaduct, it was not bad going that all was ready by May 1902.

There were originally two signal-boxes. After the early nineteen-twenties one of these could be 'switched out' when it was not specially required and several years later was entirely removed. The other continued fully occupied to outlive the branch line.

My own Dad came here as Signalman in 1912 and many hours I have spent in those signal-cabins. Pulling down the old signal-box removed quite a land-mark. It had no connection with the Development, by coming at the same time it added somewhat to the general air of upheaval. For the four signalmen Station Cottages were built. These with the Stationmaster's house and the 'Railway Hotel', as it was called before it was tartered up, were put up at the same time as the station and together, for years, formed a sort of little railway enclave quite remote from the rest of the village.

In the matter of amenities the Railway property was well ahead of the rest of the village. We had piped running water and flushing toilets whereas they still drew their water from a pump or in a bucket from the well and made

much the same sanitary arrangements as their fore-fathers had done for centuries. It may sound a bit naive now but made us feel definitely 'one-up'. I can begin to say 'we' as, after the flurry of 1902, things did not much change for a good many years and the old order continued well into my own time.

The water whereon our social superiority depended was supplied from a great tank mounted on top of the pump-house that survives, somewhat truncated and minus the tank, as a sort of storehouse beside the car-park. Originally the water came from a well under the floor but this was condemned fairly early on and afterwards, for years, was brought up from Bexhill once a week in a converted engine-tender.

Not until the nineteen thirties when the water-mains reached Crowhurst did the rest of the village catch up.



The Crowhurst No.2 signal box with Signalman Ernie Venn at top of steps with ganger Gus Cooper below. Period 1948-52



Signal Box interior

The building of the Station,

It is something of a mystery why the Railway should have excavated and leveled an area nearly twice as large as was actually needed for their station, the greater part of the Craig Close site being several feet below the original field level. Whatever they had in mind for sixty or more glorious years it chiefly provided a happy hunting ground for successive relays of us kids. This open space was divided, roughly down the middle, by a path flanked by an iron fence leading to the cottages and was always called 'The Green'. I don't know how the name started; it may have been just a natural way to speak of a green open space.

It was not until I started to put all this down that I began to realise how much of my own childhood was tied up in 'The Green' and the plantation or 'Plant' as it was shortened to. The Plantation was never actually connected with the station, not being Railway property but part of Court Lodge Farm. It has however always seemed to be curiously coupled with it, being its almost exact contemporary.

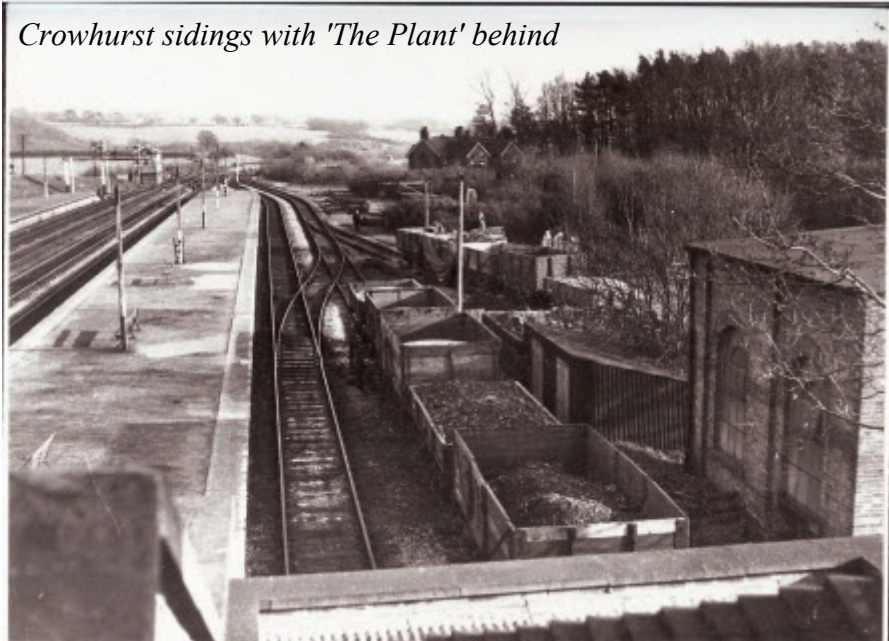
Mainly of Spruce and Douglas Pine, all planted in orderly rows, there was also a fair sprinkling of Silver Birch, Chestnut and Sycamores. With a few Poplars and some Evergreen Oaks around the edges, the landscaping aspect would appear to have been the main object. It certainly screened the station and all its works from the village and, especially when viewed from a little distance, was really quite beautiful.

As nothing will grow under pine-trees there were practically no brambles or other undergrowth so that even after fifty-odd years it still retained a definite plantation effect and was seldom called anything else.

Not overmuch youthful imagination was required to transform it into the Canadian North-West or Sherwood Forest or anything else and in those carefree days it certainly never occurred to us that, as a valuable crop, it would ever be cut down.

Station Road was laid down by the Railway at the time the station was built and surfaced with a red terra-cotta-like material made, it was said, by firing clay taken from the cutting at Sandrock Hill. Provision was made for pedestrians to cross the railway by the station foot-bridge. For some reason the erection of that footbridge must have made quite an impression on the small Crowhurst community of the time as I remember my old school-master speaking about it many years after, saying how they had gone to see the girders put into place.

Crowhurst sidings with 'The Plant' behind



Unloading at Crowhurst goods yard 1929

Station Road & Craig Close

*Crowhurst News
June - Dec 2009*

During all the time that I went down the hill to school there was a long white, typically 'railway', wooden fence on either side. A fragment or two of it still remain in the frontages of the houses that started to be built in the nineteen-twenties and have gradually filled in since.

I suppose the changes really began one Saturday night in June 1964 when the last train ran to Bexhill. Several Crowhurst people made the trip for old-times sake. I saw them start off but have no idea how they got back.

There seemed to be an unseemly haste to get the track taken up and the ballast removed, perhaps to scotch any attempt to get the line re-opened. Any hope of that was finally and spectacularly extinguished on a day in May 1969 when the viaduct was blown up. It was said to have been unsafe I don't know. It looked strong enough to last for centuries and seven of the seventeen arches withstood the initial blast. It was rather sad to see the debris of nine million bricks and a vast amount of concrete spread across the marsh.

On the 8th of April 1970 at the George Hotel at Battle, British Railways offered for sale by Auction certain of their buildings, land and property at Crowhurst. The changes that developed from that sale have been vastly greater in this little corner than in all the years the Railway owned it. First a notice-board to let the public know the show was about to commence; followed by a pause; then a protracted period of spasmodic tearing down and putting up.

It was rather distressing at the time to see some quite nice apple trees knocked down with a fine crop still on them to make way for the 'disposal unit', and a rhododendron I was rather fond of murdered by a bull-dozer. On the other hand the new road certainly does make us more accessible. The old path that carried all our comings and goings for so long has gone, the road being about twenty feet nearer to the station.

I believe the Developer chose the name Craig Close out of respect for a friend. It does not, as yet, have any connection with Crowhurst history. As a glance at the early plans will show, the development did not quite follow the original intention, but I think our cottages do blend in quite well with their new neighbours.

Doubtless the new inhabitants will build up their own stock of memories and I hope they will be happy ones. To some of them this little sentimental journey into the background may, perhaps, be of some small interest.

Building Materials for Craig Close



The Seventeen Arches



THE PASSING OF CROWHURST VIADUCT

The Crowhurst Viaduct, spanning over the marsh at Crowhurst, was built between 1897 and 1902 by the South East and Chatham Railway Company. It was also known as the Seventeen Arches for obvious reasons. It was the centrepiece of the Bexhill, Sidley and Crowhurst line built to provide Bexhill with a quicker route (62 miles) to London (and particularly the City) than the 72 miles of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway's line into Victoria via Lewes. There was much rivalry between the two companies at the time.

The viaduct was a major investment in its day of some £244,000 and many hundreds of navvies, bricklayers and other workers were involved in its construction. It was massive in scale being 417 yards long, 52 feet wide and 100 feet high. The foundations consisted of huge concrete blocks 52 feet x 32 feet and buried 30ft in the ground. Nine million bricks were used in its construction.

Like so many other branch lines the Crowhurst to Bexhill came under the eagle eye of Dr Beeching, who pronounced it unviable in his famous report and it closed in 1964, with the track being taken up, leaving the viaduct in splendid isolation.

It will be exactly forty years ago this month that its fate was sealed. Eight of the seventeen arches were

blown up on 23rd May 1969, the remainder on 12 June in the same year.

The viaduct was a much loved local landmark and an excellent example of Victorian railway architecture. Its demise raised strong emotions as shown in the two eye-witness accounts appearing here, while the spectacular manner of its departure is caught in the accompanying photographs.



FAREWELL. A LONG FAREWELL TO ALL MY GREATNESS Final death throes of the old Crowhurst line: Viaduct blown up



PRESS NOTICES

Explosives man says 'I loved this old viaduct'

A crack like nearby thunder, followed by spurts of dark brown smoke and half of Crowhurst Viaduct seemed to fly into disjointed fragments which then slowly fell, gathering a billowing cloud of dust as they went. What must have been the largest assembly lonely Crowhurst Marsh has seen in generations gathered yesterday (Friday) morning to see Mr. G. Baber make the final move which would send eight spans of the viaduct crashing to the marsh. But the crowd, among them a large and noisy contingent from the Boys Grammar School, had to exercise patience. Originally announced as 11 a.m., demolition did not take place until a few minutes before 1 p.m. In a strong easterly wind the schoolboys played cards, and annoyed waiting newspaper and television men, to pass the time during their chilly vigil. The last of dozens of gelignite charges were still to be placed when the first of the sightseers arrived before 9 a.m. and the red warning flags were not put out until about 12.30. Cameras from 50s. to the most expensive television equipment sprouted from behind the cover of shrubs and trees as the final checks were made by Bexhill Police before blasting and there were groans of impatience as a small party were seen on the viaduct itself moments before the big event. When it came, the end was short. Half of what took thousands of bricklayers two years to build lay in rubble and confusion within the blink of an eye. It seemed an anti-climax.

Of the many and varied assignments covered by Press men, a single event seldom makes such an impression of sadness on one's mind—unless that assignment is the passing of an old friend. So to me, the recording of the demolition of the 17 arches on the Crowhurst marshes was not just another photo coverage. For the marsh, with its red brick viaduct towering in the background, is where on those few off-duty moments, I got away from the hustle and bustle and relaxed in the peace and solitude of the countryside.

It was in the fascination of the early winter mornings, with the dawn breaking through a mist-shrouded marsh, that the countryside would suddenly come to life. Duck and snipe would rise from their nightly abode to wing their way into the new morn, and with the crisp hoar crunching underfoot, out of a fairy wonderland would materialise that old and silent friend, climbing into the morning sky—the red giant of the marsh. Last Friday that magic of the countryside had disappeared as from every nook and cranny marauding teenagers destroyed the peace; camera lenses peered from every bush and boulder, all concentrating on the one who had dominated this scene so silently and serenely for nearly 70 years. Wild life seemed conspicuous because of its absence. And as the scene was set I took up my position with other Press men as zero hour approached. Heavy rain and a cloud-darkened sky seemed to herald a final protest to the impending destruction. A brief but tense moment of silence, broken only by the count-down — three-two-one. A mighty roar, an alien crescendo echoing down the valley as if the heavens were bursting at the seams. The old red giant of the marsh had spoken, announcing his own obituary. The shutter clicked—immortalising the death of an old friend.

This personal reminiscence was written by our photographer (Mr. Jimmy Burke), whose picture last week of the viaduct demolition is followed today by further scenes and stories from this nostalgic occasion.



Hardcore anybody? The work of demolishing the Crowhurst viaduct is now over except for reducing a few large blocks to a more manageable size. Now the task is to remove the mass of rubble that stretches from one side of the Crowhurst valley to the other.

Station Demolition 1984

Crowhurst News
April 2009

Twenty-five years ago this year an act of corporate vandalism was perpetrated on Crowhurst with the demolition of the impressive and beautiful Victorian façade, booking hall and ancillary facilities of Crowhurst Station. We understand this was done without warning or consultation with the demolition contractors appearing one day and commenced pulling the station down. It is not clear why Crowhurst was so treated as similar buildings at other village stops up the line e.g. Robertsbridge, Stonegate and Etchingham were retained.

Fortunately, Steve and Frances Royston, who moved into the village in that year, 1984, took some photographs of the old station and the stages of the demolition. Some of these are shown below together with the original façade in all its glory.



Here the focus is on the village school and an article from the W.I. Scrapbook written post-1974. It provides a harrowing account of the physical conditions the pupils had to endure in the early years of the twentieth century and a fascinating glimpse of the schools budget in 1874, which amounted to £74. 5s. 2d. which after paying the staff (I wonder what the Phoebe Brown's duties as monitor involved for the princely sum of £1. 16) left £8 19s 2d for everything else. That compares with the school's current budget, which is in excess of £400,000.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

In 1943 the Squire of Crowhurst, Thomas Papillon, of Crowhurst Park, gave the land opposite the church and donations amounting to £87.13s.11d. which enabled a Church Day School to be built. This school, modernised and enlarged in 1958 continues to serve the village to-day. - Thus wrote Miss M.E. Newman, B.A., in her excellent book "Some Notes on the Church and Manor of Crowhurst", researched during her all too brief retirement after being Headmistress from 1947 to 1966. Miss Newman did so much to put the school on its feet again after the disruptive war years.

There had been another period of great stability when John Grayson became headmaster in 1894 and was succeeded upon retirement by his daughter until 1937. Between them they gave 43 years of service to the school and village.

We are fortunate that the "Log Books" kept by the "Master" have been preserved and give us a fascinating insight into the life of the school. Attendance was considered of prime importance as the Government Grant depended on this. The School had a very tight budget:-

In 1874 we read that income was:-

Government Grant	£33.
Voluntary contributions	£14.15s.
Children's School Pence	£26.10s.2d.

Expenditure was:-

Master's salary	£55 per annum
Assistant teacher	£8.10s.
Phoebe Brown (Monitor)	£1.16s.

This left very little for fuel, cleaning and repairs - or educational materials.

On 14th January 1910 Mr. Grayson wrote "No fires and no coal to make any - children wet and miserable."

9th February 1917 comes the plaintive entry "Children suffering severely from chilblains on hands, feet and EARS! The ink has frozen for the greater part of the week - Arithmetic taken on black board!"

The summer heat was equally trying and in July 1905 it is recorded "one little boy very ill in school this morning through the great heat... a girl in standard IV fainted. The rector took five boys to bathe in the river."

Perhaps this can be paralleled to-day by the school's achievements in winning the Primary Schools' Swimming Gala in 1974 and having 22 children swim ¼ mile or more since 1969!

Until the modernisation in 1958 there were outside toilets (no water!) and only one tap - in the old infants porch which had been converted to a kitchen for serving and washing up the meals innovated during the war. An enamel bowl was filled by the teacher on duty and the children washed in order of seniority!

Now the school is warm, well lit, airy and has every convenience, but we hope that it retains the best characteristics of the village school. Local residents, and especially old pupils, are very welcome visitors.

The Women's Institute Hut

Crowhurst News
April 2008

The Crowhurst News has been given access by Margaret Humphries to two scrap books of life and events in Crowhurst over the period 1953 to 1977, for which we are very grateful.

These provide a fascinating picture of those times, which are not that long ago. It is interesting to see how much has changed in the past fifty years, but some underlying themes reappear.

This item has an echo in the debate over a new village hall in the last few months, sadly with the same result. It took a further 36 years before the WI Hut was replaced with the Village Hall. Let's hope the current generation doesn't have to wait as long!

The W.I. Hut.

The W.I. Hut had been the responsibility of the Women's Institute since 1920. A small annual rent was paid to a farmer who owned the land, but the cost of repairs & renewals became a severe tax on the W.I. Funds. The heating of the hut became a problem but with the help of generous donations from the Village electric heaters were installed.

Apart from the two Doctors who visited the hut once a week the main income had been from casual letters.

The Parish Council was asked to consider taking over the responsibility of the Hut.

In April 1961 the land on which the Hut stands was given to the Parish Council & by July 27th 61 the transfer was complete. Earlier a fund had been started with the idea of erecting a permanent Village Hall in the future.

The Council now elected a sub-committee whose task it was to try to raise enough money to start building.

Although a general appeal was issued & two money raising efforts organised, the final sum raised was only £1120. The Council then decided to call a Public meeting to decide whether or not to give up the idea of a permanent building & to spend the money patching up & improving the present hut.

The meeting decided that the permanent building was impossible & the Council were asked to find out the cost of improvements to the present building, meanwhile the W.I. are to carry on as hitherto & to continue with letting the Hall etc.

This is the situation at the close of 1963.

1957 party at WI Hut

Crowhurst News
June 2008

This photograph was taken in May 1957. We assume it was taken in the old Women's Institute Hut, which was replaced in 1969 by the Village Hall

By the age of the majority of the people present it looks as though it may have been a 21st Birthday Party. Are there any 72 year olds out there who can tell us the location, what the celebration was for and identify any more of the revellers?



May 1957
 Peter Tibbles
 Mrs E. Cox.

MRS P. GLAZIER
 ANNGIBBS MRS GIBBS
 Sylvia Philcox
 MR B. GLAZIER

JOHN KEMP
 Miss Cox

Village Groups from

The village's organisations have always been at the heart of the community and remain so today. They give expression to individuals interests, service to others and common community goals. Without them and the village hall, the home for so many of their activities, Crowhurst would be a drear place indeed, no more than the suburban fringe of the Hastings/Bexhill complex.

Organisations come and go according to interests and fashions of the time. Here are reports of some village organisations, once so strong, but sadly no longer with us.

THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

CROWHURST held their 45th annual meeting this month, when Mrs. Wolfson, a v.c.o., gave a talk, and Mrs. Slade gave an account of the County Federation meeting. Mrs. Wisdom, the retiring President, was in the chair.

As the afternoon meetings had not been as successful as was hoped, it was decided to revert to evening meetings all the year.

It was also decided to visit a Hastings pantomime instead of holding a Christmas party, as the W.I. Hut might be under repair.

The hon. Secretary reported on the year's activities, and the hon. Treasurer presented a satisfactory balance sheet.

Mrs. North was elected President, and the hon. Secretary, hon. Treasurer, and most of the committee agreed to serve for another year.

Hostesses: Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Turley.

PROGRAMME 1963

JANUARY 16th. 2.30 p.m.

Miss Temple—Travel slides
Competition—My Prettiest Handkerchief

FEBRUARY 20th.

Mrs. Winter—Paper Sculpture
Competition—Handwriting

MARCH 20th.

Mrs. Chester Hillman—Lifeboats and Royal
Lifeboat Institution
Competition—Pot plant or bowl of bulbs

APRIL 17th. 7 p.m.

Care of the Hair
Competition—Decorated Egg

MAY 15th.

Mrs. Fenner—Sharing the World's Larder
Competition—A get well posy

JUNE 19th.

Mrs. Cook—Crown Jewels
Competition—Flower arrangement for
President's Table

JULY 17th.

Mrs. Unsworth-White—Housekeeping under
Two Elizabeths
Competition—My Favourite Holiday Souvenir

SEPTEMBER 19th.

Denman College Film
Competition—Dressed wooden spoon

OCTOBER 16th. 2.30 p.m.

Mrs. Swanepool—Folk Songs and Wild flowers
Competition—Funniest Shaped Potato

NOVEMBER 20th.

A.G.M. V.C.O.—Mrs. Wolfson
Election of Committee
Annual Report and Financial Statement
Election of President
Competition—Home-made Christmas decoration

DECEMBER 11th

CHRISTMAS PARTY

DATES TO NOTE

March 25th. Annual Council Meeting, Bexhill.
May 29th. A.G.M. Royal Albert Hall
June 27th. 29th. Rally, Brighton
Oct. 31st. Half-yearly Council Meeting

Photograph of an early W.I Meeting

Mrs M Sellens
of
Ashdene Station Rd
was present at
the first meeting
45 years ago



Back Row 1 Miss Je Reeves 2 Mrs Smith 3 Miss Skuse 4 Mrs Sellens 5 Mrs Wisdom
6 Millie Hutchison

Next Row 1 Mrs Goodsell 2 Mrs Cooper 3 4 Mrs Gill 5 Marie West 6 Mrs Sellens
7 Mrs Jones 8

Sitting 1 Miss Moyes 2 Miss Hawker 3 Mrs Hutchison 4 Mrs Johnston 5 Mrs Home

Front Row 1 Mrs Austin 2 Mrs Joyce 3 Mrs Wells 4 Miss Daphne Atkins

BRITISH LEGION CROWHURST BRANCH

HOSPITAL CAR SERVICE

WE WISH to again bring to your notice the above Scheme which has already proved of service to the local community. The following arrangements have been made and are at your service should you find yourself in the unfortunate position of having members of your household as Hospital in-Patients in any of the Hospitals served by the Hastings Group Hospital Management Committee. They are :-

Conveyance during visiting hours on any day (except Sundays) for the first 14 days of their hospital stay and thereafter on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for visiting hours.

A telephone call to either :-

C. H. T. STOVELL,
Holly Close, Catsfield Road.
TELEPHONE 331 ; or

G. B. SAUNDERS,
17 Forewood Rise,
TELEPHONE 309

is all that is needed to avail yourself of this service.

This is a free act of help for the benefit of all parishioners by the Crowhurst Branch British Legion.

It is suggested you keep this card in case of need.

The following letter sent by M^r H T Stovell gives details of the Branch and the many services undertaken in Crowhurst for which we are very grateful

8th December 1963.

Dear Mrs Slade,

With reference to your letter of November 10th, which I apologise for not answering before, the above Branch was formed some 34 years ago, there are now 45 Members including some Founder Members, we meet the first Monday in each month at The Station Hotel.

Enclosed is a card with reference to our Hospital Car Service which we operate for the benefit of all parishioners of Crowhurst, we also look after the old People and needy Children, donation are sent to British Legions Homes, Etc.,

We raise monies for these by running Jumble Sales, Christmas Markets, Garden Parties, Whist Drives, etc.

I enclose a little Booklet which I think will give you some idea of what the Legion is and does.

The New Standard which was recently Dedicated was subscribed for by the Members of the Branch, the old Standard which was laid up in the Church was given to the Branch some 30 years ago.

I trust the above will convey to you the activities of the Legion, for a small village the Branch is very active,

CROWHURST RED CROSS



From M^{rs} Sellers.

CROWHURST RED CROSS 1914-18 War.

Back Row From Left. Florrie West Gertie Ludlow E Rochester Nellie Hutchison

M^{rs} Bye M^{rs} Hatchman Rosa Spray M^{rs} Elston

CROWHURST BONFIRE SOCIETY

PRESENTS

GUY FAWKES NIGHT JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

FRIDAY, 4TH NOVEMBER

COMMENCING 6-45 p.m. AT THE VILLAGE HALL FOR FANCY DRESS JUDGING
CLASSES: Under 10 yrs - 10-14 yrs - Group Classes - Adults Individual

PROCESSION STARTS from SCHOOL 7-30 p.m.

INCLUDING TORCHLIGHTS and PIPE & DRUM BAND

"JUBILEE BENEFIT FIREWORK DISPLAY"

COMMENCING at approx. 8-15 p.m. at PLAYING FIELD

ADMISSION: 30p ADULTS - 15p CHILDREN

Hot Dogs and Soft Drinks available

LUCKY DRAW Numbers available at THE PLOUGH INN

"DON'T FORGET YOUR BOOTS"

CROWHURST BONFIRE SOCIETY

The local papers have been full in recent editions of the bonfire celebrations at Battle, Rye and surrounding villages. It is perhaps not so well known that Crowhurst once had a thriving Bonfire Society, and not that long ago.

This article and photographs first appeared in the 15th November, 1980 edition of the Sussex Courier and show what a major event the Crowhurst bonfire was, drawing large crowds and many outside visitors. Note the familiar names among the prize winners. Can you help us in naming those in the photos. and give us more information about the society?

BETTER THAN EVER CARNIVAL NIGHT

OVER 500 PEOPLE in a variety of costumes turned out to see Crowhurst Bonfire Society's annual carnival celebrations on Saturday.

Formed five years ago with the aim of preventing children being injured by fireworks by providing a giant village celebration, the society is now well established and raised over £800 on Saturday.

The fancy dress corn petition saw such costumes as witches, fairies, headless ghosts and even Oxo cubes. A spokesman for the society said: "Every year it gets better and better. It was a great night out and a great success."

Overhead torches led the procession to the bonfire on the village playing field. Music was provided by Battle Town Band and the Hastings Fife and Drum band.

BOYS CHANT

Battle Bonfire Boys did their famous chant at the lighting of the bonfire, which was followed by a glittering display as £500 of fireworks exploded in a multitude of colour above the village.

Despite the slightly sloshy field, onlookers' spirits were not dampened and the evening went off as planned - with a big bang and no hitches.

"We try to keep these celebrations for the village, by the village," said one organiser. "Although we are grateful for the support we get from our neighbours."



The Hastings band who took part in the Crowhurst Guy Fawkes Night bonfire procession

Results. Fancy Dress. Under five years: Stephen Howells and Nathan Linfield; Five to 11 years: Ian Howells, Abigail Linfield, Christopher Hunting, Tara Whitehead and Clare Dale; Over 11 years: Rachel Carter, Pamela Dyer and James Clifford; Group: Witches Brew by Crowhurst Brownies; Float: Worzell Gumage by the William the Conqueror public house, Rye.



Crowhurst Bonfire Society in the procession



Youth Club History

Crowhurst News
November 2009

Here are some extracts from the Youth Club history books. The Club was opened on 5th December 1956, firstly at the Old Bakehouse, then moving to Hye House Hut. Apart from a few years in the late seventies/early eighties, it ran there until the Great Storm of 1987.

They squeezed in at the Village Hall, ferrying equipment up and down the road, until 1991 when the hut we have today was completed.

AD HOC COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER FORMATION OF YOUTH CLUB IN CROWHURST

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee held on Tuesday, October 16th, 1956, at 'Porfields' at 7.30 p.m.

Premises:

It was considered by the Meeting that the Old Bakehouse tearoom was the most suitable accommodation available. The Secretary was asked to ascertain whether the accommodation would be available permanently.

Radiogram:

It was reported that Mr. Bailey had kindly offered to loan a Radiogram to the Club when required and would himself attend to operate it.

Club Leader:

Mrs. Menneer moved, Mrs. Hornby seconded: 'That Mr. Cooper be elected Leader of the Club'. The Meeting unanimously agreed to the proposal and Mr. Cooper accepted the Office.



Crowhurst Youth Group
at Mrs CRANPS 1954

Bexhill-on-Sea Observer, Friday, April 12, 1991

Old schoolroom finds a vital new village role



■ Crowhurst Youth Club team at work on finishing touches to the building

A UNIQUE 'Oscar' ceremony this week included awards for wheel-barrow pushing among other skills.

No wonder Crowhurst folk are pleased with themselves. As their Rother representative, Cllr Mrs Jill Theis, told them in performing the opening ceremony for the village's new youth club headquarters, how many other communities have obtained and then erected their own building?

Cllr Mrs Theis opened the new youth centre on the village recreation ground with the assistance of young Samantha Holmes and Gareth Howells on Monday evening.

She told villagers: "It is remarkable. How many other small communities could have sponsored and built their own clubhouse?"

"It shows exceptional commitment by the organisers and young people.

"Crowhurst is a very special village."

The splendid clubhouse has been erected on the recreation ground not far from the popular children's adventure playground.

The building frame was obtained from Lewes Tertiary College where it was surplus to requirements.

It was transported in pieces to Crowhurst thanks to a number of weekend journeys to clear it from the Lewes site before a Sunday deadline.

That was two years ago. The pieces rested in a village farmyard under a site lease was signed.

Cllr Mrs Theis says: "Work started a year ago on site and almost every member of the village has developed skills in sawing, hammering, fund-raising and - above all - wheelbarrow pushing.

"Furniture and fittings have been generously donated."

Before handing the building over to the village's youngsters, Cllr Mrs Theis told them: "It's yours now - we hope you will enjoy it."

St George's Church

With the induction of the new rector for Crowhurst and Catsfield, Father Michael Brydon, we have dipped into the WI scrapbook to bring you some examples of former church personalities and events.



Visit of the Bishop of Chichester July 14th 1963
 Miss J Baylton Mr R KEMP c/w
 Rev E. EDWARDS
 Rt Rev Roger Wilson Mr. George SAUNDERS organist



CROWHURST CHURCH, INTERIOR, 1914.
 The Church showing the Stained Glass Window which was destroyed by a Bomb. Mrs Gibbs was sheltering in the Church at the time.



THE REV. E. D. EDWARDS

Mr. Edwards had been Rector of Crowhurst since 1938 and was the longest serving incumbent in the Bexhill Deanery.

CROWHURST'S NEW PRIEST INSTALLED



Mr. Purser was installed and welcomed at a service at the Parish Church on Tuesday, conducted jointly by the Archdeacon of Hastings (the Ven. Guy Mayfield) and the Rural Dean of Battle and Bexhill (the Rev. Michael Townroe).

At a social gathering at Crowhurst Primary School after the service Mr. Purser was less formally greeted by Mr. W. J. Cottam, one of the church wardens.

APRIL, 1936.

Price TWOPENCE.

Crowhurst Parish Magazine

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH.



RECTOR—The Rev. Horace Sturt, M.A., Hon. C.F.
 CHURCHWARDENS.—Mr. G. Cole, "Old Shop" (Rector's Warden); Mr. H. Ballard, The Bakery (People's Warden).
 SIDESMEN.—Mr. C. St. J. Phillips, Mr. S. Kirk, Mr. C. Pocock and Mr. C. Beaneay.
 VERGER AND SEXTON—
 ORGANIST.—Mr. G. B. Saunders.
 REP. DIOC. COUNCIL.—Dr. A. Pickels, Mrs. Sturt.
 REP. R. DEC. COUNCIL.—Mr. G. Cole, Miss Grayson.
 PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL.—Lt.-Col. E. R. Papillon, D.S.O. (Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Gaunt, Mr. and Mrs. W. Hutchison, Mr. S. Kirk, Mrs. Phillips, Mr. H. Wells, Mr. Fleetwood Ashburnham, Capt. E. W. Wharton, R.N., and Mr. Charles Wood.
 HON. TREAS. P.C.C.—Dr. A. Pickels, "Hill Top."
 HON. SECY. P.C.C.—Rev. H. Sturt.
 DAY SCHOOL TEACHERS—Miss Grayson (Headmistress), Miss Goble, Mrs. Le Fevre.
 SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS.—Miss Grayson, Miss Fowler.
 ENROLLING MEMBER, MOTHERS' UNION.—Mrs. Gaunt.
 HON. SECY., MOTHERS' UNION.—Mrs. Sturt.
 PRESIDENT, WOMEN'S INSTITUTE.—Mrs. Cobb.
 HON. SECY., WOMEN'S INSTITUTE.—Miss R. Needham-Smith.
 CAPTAIN, GIRL GUIDES.—Mrs. Whurton, "Hye House."
 BROWNIES PACK—"Brown Owl" Miss Philcox.
 COMMANDANT, B.R.C.S. DETACHMENT SUSSEX 200.—Mrs. C. St. J. Phillips.
 HON. SECY., NURSING ASSOCIATION.—Mrs. Cookson.
 HON. TREAS.—Mrs. Cookson.
 VILLAGE NURSE.—Nurse Saunders, "Groundilly."
 BRITISH LEGION—Crowhurst Branch: Hon. Sec. Mr. W. Turley.
 MAGAZINE—Head Distributer, Miss M. Kirk, Sunnyside.
 CHURCH SERVICES—Every Sunday: 8 a.m. Holy Communion, 11 a.m. Matins and Sermon, followed on 1st Sunday in the month by Holy Communion, 6.30 p.m., Evensong and Sermon, Baptisms, Churchings, Marriages. Communion for the sick by arrangement.

F. J. PAVSON, LTD., DORSET

Crowhurst organist's jubilee

CROWHURST showed its appreciation at the weekend for Mr. George B. Saunders who celebrated his 50th jubilee as organist and choirmaster of the Parish Church.

On Friday last week the church was filled for a recital by Mr. Saunders and an augmented choir, and on Sunday after morning service, the Archdeacon of Hastings, the Ven. Guy Mayfield, presented Mr. Saunders with a tape recorder, on behalf of Crowhurst churchgoers.

It was back in 1918, just after World War I armistice when Mr. Saunders became organist at Crowhurst. He was called in to replace Mr. Harold Harmer, the organist and choirmaster for many years who died in the war.

Taught himself

Even then at the age of 15, Mr. Saunders had earned a reputation as something of a prodigy. Four years before, when Mr. Harmer had been unable to play through illness, an 11-year-old George Saunders stepped in and won acclaim from the congregation and brought comment from the local Press.

Born in Esher, he moved with his parents to Battle and then on to Crowhurst. His mother bought him a small organ and Mr. Saundser's taught himself to play. He received only a few lessons: his musical knowledge is mostly self-taught.

Mr. Saunders' wife and son, Robin, have been choir members for many years and now his grand-daughter is also a chorister.

The local choristers were joined by members of Battle Parish Church choir for Friday's recital. A selection of hymns and anthems were presented and a highlight of the programme was a solo by John Cullingford, a former Crowhurst choirboy now at the Royal College of Music, who sang 'Lord God of Abraham' from Mendelssohn's 'Elijah.'

During the recital a collection was taken for 'a special object' and later at a party for Mr. Saunders in the Village Hall the proceeds of the collection, £24, were presented to Mrs. Saunders. The Rector, the Rev. Richard Purcer, told a reporter: 'We wanted to give Mrs. Saunders a token of our appreciation for the support she had given her husband over the years.'



Mr. G. B. Saunders at the organ in Crowhurst Parish Church.

A letter on behalf of the Queen congratulating him and hoping he would have an 'especially happy day' was received by Mr. Saunders on Friday.

Mr. Saunders played at the Sunday morning service and afterwards the Archdeacon presented him with the tape-recorder which had been bought in a joint effort by parishioners.

In his address the Archdeacon referred to the importance of the organist and choir. Music, he said, was one of the ways 'by which we can see God.'

Mr. Saunders, who is a builder, was a member of Crowhurst Parish Council for many years. He is a life member of Crowhurst Cricket Club of which his son is captain.

Three generations in the choir

THREE generations are represented in the choir at St. George's, Crowhurst, Sussex. Mr. G. B. Saunders, 65 (left) has been organist for 50 years; his wife, Mrs. P. M. Saunders, who is 66, has completed 20 years' service; their son, Mr. R. G. Saunders, 36, has been 29 years in the choir and their nine-



year-old grand-daughter, Pamela, has been there two years.

Snow in 1962/3

Crowhurst News
December 2008

This month's extract from the WI Scrapbook reflects on the harsh winter of 1962/3.

The Great Freezup 1962-3

We have had one or two cold winters in the last ten years but the winter of 1962-63 was the most severe in living memory. It started in real earnest over the Christmas holidays and went on well into February. Those who were away for Christmas had difficulty in getting back as the rail service was disorganised and the roads impassable.

Drifts of snow at times four feet deep or more blocked the entrance to houses and neighbours banded together to clear the snow and free those imprisoned in their homes.

After the snow the roads were hard with packed ice and not many vehicles would venture and tradesmen sometimes failed to get through with provisions. We had to do with out bread and milk once or twice. The children helped by bringing up the milk on their sledges.

Fuel became scarce and pipes froze. Many birds died despite the frantic efforts to feed them on household scraps. Foxes roamed about the gardens in daytime looking for food.

THE RECTORY.

23rd January, 1963.

My dear Friends,

As a general rule, it is not a good thing to talk or grumble too much about the weather, but during the last few weeks the Arctic weather, which has descended upon us, has been hard to face up to. It has been difficult to carry on with our work, and to endure discomforts, such as shortage of water for domestic purposes. I am sure that we feel very grateful indeed to those who have worked so hard to maintain the essential services, such for instance as the tradesmen who deliver our milk, bread, food and newspapers, and the postmen who have been so regular in delivering our letters. I personally feel very grateful to them all, and I know that my gratitude is shared by many. Another point to remember is that, as in the days of war, we have tried to help each other, and there have been many kindnesses done which have been much appreciated. I do hope that, by the time this magazine reaches you, the cold weather will have abated, and that the warmer weather will be on its way. At the time of writing the prospects are not too good.



pictures taken in Station Rd by Mrs Pentecost

November 29th 1974 ...

Homes cut off as floods cause havoc

SHOPS and houses in Crowhurst and Robertsbridge joined the rest of the county under water on Friday as Sussex became flood-bound in the worst rainstorms to affect the south coast for many years.

Low-lying homes in Crowhurst were cut off for several hours as water swirled round the walls and flooded the ground floor rooms.

The village pub, The Plough, helped residents by cooking meals until the floods receded and the villagers were able to assess the damage.

Mr G. W. Putland, owner of Springfield's store at Crowhurst had a rude awakening. The stream behind his shop burst its banks and he woke up to find his bed almost afloat and his ducks and geese swimming past, two feet above ground level.

'My car was filled with water and all the stock in the shop was saturated. My caravan office in the back garden was flooded out, so was my building store.

'It was all pretty chaotic. I should think the damage will run to several thousands.'



Springfield in the 1970s, and possibly earlier, was a village shop, just over the bridge and on the other side of the road to the Post Office, which was also a shop at that time. It is thought that Mr Putland ran the Springfield Stores up until 1981 and then the premises were taken over by a Mr Ibrahim and run as tea rooms until about 1985, when it returned to solely residential use.

And some random photos...



PRE-1939 NOTE STAINED-GLASS WINDOW



the retirement of District Nurse Saunders



CUTTING THE FIRST SODS FOR COUNCIL HOUSES FOREWOOD RISE. 1947

