

The Chequered Life of a Farmhouse and its Inhabitants
An exploration of the history of Graylingwell Farmhouse, Chichester
(with some of the chequers still to be coloured in)



Carol Brinson

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Background to the research

On a walk round Graylingwell Park with friends in late 2022 I saw the shape of Graylingwell Farmhouse swathed in scaffolding and white sheeting. This reminded me of an interest aroused some years before, because, apart from a liking for historic buildings, I had read that Anna Sewell, author of a favourite book, *Black Beauty* had lived there in the 1850s.

“There is a topic for you to explore for the Midhurst u3a Local History Group” says one of the friends on the walk. That certainly set me on a world-wide trail of research and a chain of stories, surprises, links with my life, diversions, and questions still to be answered. Strong links with Australia and New Zealand are emerging.

I have connections with the area because as a very young child I lived in Chichester and later went to college and work there. My father, Derek Hawkins, was a local veterinary surgeon. Maybe he was the ‘vet’ to Graylingwell in the 1950s. It’s too late to ask him. Sadly, my parents divorced when I was six and my mother, my brother and I moved away, but I continued to visit Dad in Chichester until he emigrated to Western Australia in 1970.

I am not a trained historian nor an experienced researcher but I’m enjoying learning. What you will read here is what I have gleaned from reading other people’s findings, some of which proved contradictory, and putting some thoughts together and posing some questions.

I hope the result will give to the residents of Graylingwell Park and the developers and eventual occupants of the farmhouse, and anyone else who may read it, as much enjoyment as it is giving me in the unravelling.

Almost every recent reference to the house includes Anna Sewell and *Black Beauty* but there is so much more to it than the Anna Sewell connection. In fact she was hardly there, and she wrote the book some twenty years later, in Norfolk, but if this often-mentioned small piece of the house’s history continues to give interest to it and to *Black Beauty*, hooray! In 2023 a new book came out: *Writing Black Beauty : Anna Sewell and the story of animal rights* by Celia Brayfield published by The History Press. She writes that the family “rented a beautiful old farmhouse at Grayling Wells [with a] garden but no trace of this now remains and the area has been subsumed within the city as a public park.” I am unsure whether she means that the house has gone, which it clearly has not, or just the garden. I am trying to contact her.

The building appears to date to the early 18th century, and is listed as such, but there was obviously a farm and a house on the site long before that. Historic England say there “was originally a long field running southwards from the garden of Graylingwell Farm. In contrast to many of the fields in this area, it has a long curvilinear form, which suggests the fossilisation of a medieval if not earlier pattern of cultivation”⁷. Furthermore, a Transcription dated 1623 includes “All that capital messuage and mansion house called the manor house of Graylingwell.”¹

For the references and sources indicated with numbers in the text see page 10.

It just so happened that whilst doing this research I was also reading Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*. This delightful description of a farmhouse jumped out at me (not, of course, Graylingwell but apt nonetheless, at least until it came to be part of the hospital) :

It was not a manorial home in the ordinary sense, with fields, and pastures, and a grumbling farmer, out of which a living had to be dragged by the owner and his family by hook or by crook. It was more, far more; a country house, built for enjoyment pure and simple, with not an acre of troublesome land attached to it beyond what was required for residential purposes, and a little fancy farm kept in hand by the owner, and tended by a bailiff.

Graylingwell - the name of the spring-fed well can be traced with some certainty to Saxon times with various spellings¹⁰ - is an area to the north of Chichester in West Sussex. "It appears to have been part of a royal warren"¹⁰, and then farmland which came to belong to the ecclesiastical authorities of Chichester until purchased, with its existing farm buildings, by West Sussex County Council for a hospital for the mentally ill, or "asylum" as it was then termed. It was transferred to the newly created National Health Service in 1948. The hospital was closed in stages from 2001 and the site sold to developers. Demolition of some of the buildings, conversion of others, and new building began in 2010 to turn the site into a carbon-neutral community called Graylingwell Park. The Chapel has been converted beautifully into much used community space. The development is ongoing, the latest project being the conversion of outbuildings of Graylingwell Farmhouse into studios.

Graylingwell Farmhouse remains protected but unused.

Road names today, reflecting history, include : North Mead, Penny Acre and Homestead Road referring to fields which were part of the original Graylingwell Farm. Mansergh Road – Mr Mansergh was the County Council surveyor who first identified the land as being suitable for the siting of the Hospital in 1893. Peacock Close – Mr W Peacock was for years the bailiff for the hospital farm.

History -

plenty of names to investigate:

Pre-18th century (with a different house on the site?)

"The lands of 'Havedstoke and Sumeresdale' (Havenstoke and Summersdale) were bestowed to the diocese of Chichester at the death of Bishop Ralph Neville in 1244. [...] The 200 acres of farmland, initially ordered in Neville's will to be used for the making and baking of bread to feed the local hungry during the 13th century, was soon separated into distinct farmlands which were later rented out, ultimately forming parts of the Summersdale and Warren farms."³¹

"Earliest records show the site of Graylingwell Farm as "Graegels" well or spring, indicating that this was occupied by a person of that (Saxon) name. The name became changed down the ages; in the reign of Henry II as "Greynges Well" and "Graylings Well" in 1220."²⁹

1231 - "I, Ran[dulph] de Brok have granted to Sir Ralph [Neville], Bishop of Chichester and King's Chancellor, all my land of Graillingewll ..."²⁷

1481 - "lease to Richard Lee : 'Gravelyngwelle' "¹

1530 - "lease to Ellis Bradshaw (Manor of Graynyngwell and lands called Havenstoke, west of Granyngwell, lately ditched and hedged from Somerdale to a little plot called Harpes)"¹

1532 - "Ref to James Bradshaw of Granyngwell"¹

1539 - "Lease to Ellis Bradshaw late Mayor of Chichester"¹

1596 - "Conveyance (bargain and sale), in consideration of £27 ... from (a) Ellize Mephant alias Prime of Graylingwell in Chichester, gent., and Dorothee Fades of Graylingwell, widow, to (b) John Ryman of Apuldram, gent"²

1623 - Transcription: "Captain William Keeling : All that capital messuage and mansion house called the manor house of Graylingwell with the site thereof in the parish of St Peters the Great also the subdeanery in the city of Chichester in the county of Sussex; consisting of one hall, a parlour, a kitchen, a buttery and a cellar adjoining to the said hall, and three lodging chambers and two barns"¹

Was this the Captain William Keeling who was an East India Company sea captain and 'founder' of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands of Australia? ([William Keeling - Wikipedia](#)). If so, as he died in 1619/1620, was this something to do with his Will after his death?

1625 - "Lease to Richard Fisher of Graylingwell"¹

1633/4 - "Lease to Nicholas Woolf of Ashington, gent."¹

1662 - "Lease to Magdalen Smyth of Whitstone, Co. Devon, widow (Manor of Graylingwell and lands called Havonstoke 'late in occupation of Nicholas Woolf' "¹

1671 - "Assignment of residue of mortgage term of properties ... from (a) Prudence Butler of Amberley, relict and executrix of James Butler late of Amberley, esq., dec'd; and Thomas Cowper of Ancton, yeo., to (b) John Downer of Gravelingwell [Graylingwell] in Chichester yeo., and John Penfold of Havant, co. Hants., yeo"³

1685 - "Lease to John Ford of Graylingwell, gent. (In his own occupation. Ford was one of the lives in the previous lease, and presumably related to Magdalen Smyth)"¹

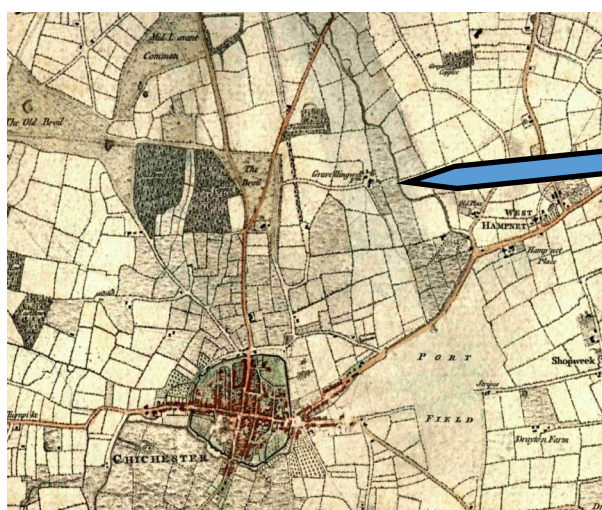
18th century onwards

1704 - "Lease to John Miller (later Sir John Miller) of Chichester, esq. (Graylingwell and Havons late in occ. of William Castle and Edward Haske"¹ (Possibly Hurle, not Haske).

Did the Dean & Chapter have the present house built around this time? For Sir John Miller, MP and Mayor for Chichester, perhaps? Lily Richards of Chichester University who has also researched the house³¹ thinks so too. See Appendix 1. For more about the Millers see page 7.

1722/3 and 1739/40 - "Leases to Daniel Richards of Birdham and Richard Esq - mortgages (Miller family still in possession. 1739/40 - late in occ. of John Miller dec'd and now Mary Miller wid.)"¹

1763 - "Lease to John Miller late of Dorking, now of Warnham, esq (Manor of Gralingwell and lands called Havons late in occupation of Robert Quennell dec'd and now of Robert Quennell and John Farhill, esq.)"¹



Yeakell & Gardner
1777-1783 map -
from Portsmouth
University website
Old Sussex Mapped -
farm named here as
Gravellingwell Farm.
It is thought that the
name may derive
from the gravelly soil
at the site of the well

1796 - indenture - "The Dean and Chapter of Chichester to Mr John Miller - counterpart of lease of Gralingwell for Three Lives"⁴ 'for Three Lives' = a term of a lease usually for the life of its holder, his son or wife, and a grandson

1811 - indenture - "Sir Bysse Shelley Bar't by the Direction of the Widow of Mr John Miller and their son to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester - surrender of lease"⁴

Sir Bysse, of Castle Goring, was the grandfather of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.

1812 - "Lease to Helen Catharine Miller (wid. of John Miller esq) and her son Thomas Miller, both described as 'of Graylingwell'. Several mortgages between 1812 and 1829"¹

1829 - "Lease to James Guy and William Sowton"¹

William Sowton was a local solicitor. Resident tenants 1831-36 were the Hack family - see page 7

1840 - "The Dean and Chapter of Chichester to Mr William Sowton. Lease of Graylingwell Farm for three lives"⁴

1845 - "Lease to John Abel Smith of Belgrave Square, London. Manor of Graylingwell and lands called Havenstoke (late in occ. of Robert Quennell, then of John Miller, then Thomas Collins and now of Thomas Smith and Charles Farndell"¹

The Smiths¹¹ sub-let the house to the Sewell family - see page 8

1854 - indenture - "The Dean and Chapter of Chichester to Humphrey William Freeland esq. Lease for three lives"⁴

Freeland was MP for Chichester 1859-1863

1854 - indenture - "The Dean and Chapter of Chichester to John Abel Smith, esq. Lease for three lives of Graylingwell Farm"⁴

Both these 1854 indentures were dated 20 Jan. Possibly the first, and some of the other indentures, were for land only?

1866 - Kelly's Directory gives Graylingwell Farm as the address of Edward M Street¹⁰

Gentrification ...

According to English Heritage - "In the later 18th Century, the owners of Graylingwell carried out a small scale 'embankment', gentrifying the farmhouse by fencing a larger area of garden with iron railings, and – most interestingly – creating a tree-lined small avenue to the south which was not an entrance avenue but presumably served as a landscape feature for leisurely exercise. The avenue can still just be traced in damaged low banks and a now-thinning line of conifers between the farmhouse and the detached E-shaped hospital ward to the south.

... The separation of track ways to the surrounding fields and to the house, which faces away from the yard, is indicative of a farmstead of high status."⁷

and ... dilapidations

It seems that the house's present state wasn't the first time it suffered, according to a letter in 1829 to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester from one William Dunk:

*"Rev'd Gentlemen,
I have surveyed and examined the Dwellinghouse Cottage Barns and other buildings on the Graylingwell Farm and find the Interior of the Dwellinghouse Sash Frames (etc?) as also the Outside thereof and Barns Granary (etc?) in a dilapidated state - The Cottage in good Repair.
I remain Rev' Gentlemen your obliged ...
Wm Dunk"⁵*

Presumably something was done about this because it was leased out again until ...

1893 - a big change

Graylingwell land and buildings were sold by The Ecclesiastical Commissioners (formerly the Dean & Chapter of Chichester Cathedral) to West Sussex County Council for the building of a mental hospital. The 'County Asylum/Lunacy Act' in 1845 followed by the 'Lunacy Act' of 1890 made counties legally obliged to provide asylum for their 'lunatics'.²⁶

What would become of the farmhouse ? Read on

1896 - By now the Council were well under way with building the hospital on most of the farm land. They turned their attention to the farmhouse, as reported in the Chichester Observer newspaper 2.12.1896 :

*West Sussex County Council Quarterly Business
The New Asylum at Chichester*

Mental hospitals were at that time called Asylums

Your Committee have for some time past had under consideration the question of the best method of utilising Graylingwell Farmhouse. They are of the opinion that it should be converted to afford a residence for a Farm Bailiff and allow accommodation for 16 patients ... capable of working on the farm and in the gardens ... supervised by the Farm Bailiff and his wife.

The Committee instructed Sir Arthur Blomfield & Sons to prepare plans for the proposed conversion of Graylingwell Farmhouse and an estimate £1,211.7s.6d has been obtained from Messrs James Longley and Co for the work, and Your Committee have resolved that the same be approved.

Arthur Blomfield & Sons were the architects and James Longley & Co (of Crawley) the builders of the hospital (see Appendix 3)

The house continued to function in this way for over fifty years as a working farm. "In its approach to the treatment of those deemed mentally ill, the institution took a very sensitive and forward approach, attempting to keep patients occupied through working on a farm that was part of the hospital. There appears to have been no compulsion."¹⁵

However ... "The farm stock was auctioned off on 25th March 1957. (See Appendix 4). The stock included 100 dairy shorthorns (one of which had held a national record for milk yield), pigs, sheep and poultry."¹⁶ "Farm bailiff W H Higgott, a competent Cheshire farmer, was upset when the farm was run down with the loss of 18 jobs."²⁸ It seems it was no longer economical despite providing produce for the hospital.

Patients continued to live in the house, and others attended as a Day Hospital.

However in 1985: "Under the 10-year plan published by the West Sussex Health Authority concerning the St.Richards and Graylingwell complex, the building known as The Farmhouse Day Hospital, used by day patients suffering from depressive illnesses, appears to have been omitted. Although no decision has been made by the Authority of it's [sic] intentions for this building, other than a works study project which is awaiting the results of an architectural and structural study, with a cost analysis concerning it's [sic] possible restoration, I believe this building is worth preserving in view of its connections with the town of Chichester and the area known as Graylingwell."²⁹

In 1986, following a campaign by local people, it was listed, Grade II, albeit named Summersdale Farmhouse until corrected recently.⁹ Then ...

"On 16th October 1987 the devastating hurricane winds which swept across the south of England tore up many of the trees in Graylingwell's grounds, damaged buildings and especially savaged the old listed Farm House building ... The Farm House is now (1988) out of use and boarded up."¹²

The hospital as a whole closed in 2002 and development of the site for housing and community space began although there were ideas for the farmhouse to be "earmarked for the benefit of local people" (see Appendix 6) ...

but in 2008 it looked like this:



Pat Chambers - Gravelroots⁸

and in 2019 like this :



Save Britain's Heritage and Gravelroots⁸

...it is at least now being protected from the weather:



<https://propertylink.estatesgazette.com>

Left: Farmhouse

Right: previous farm outbuildings being converted: [The Studios - Chichester Community Development Trust \(chichestercdt.org.uk\)](http://TheStudios-ChichesterCommunityDevelopmentTrust(chichestercdt.org.uk))

The future for the farmhouse?

I believe the house is to be restored for re-use, possibly residential.

Let's hope this characterful building can continue its chequered life in a useful, sensitive, way.

In June 2024 it was announced by the Community Development Trust that *Plans can be seen for the wider development of phase 6 [of the whole Graylingwell development], which includes the farmhouse.* So there is hope.

Focus on some of the connections

The Miller family Various lessees and tenants 1704-1845

“The **Miller Baronety**, of Chichester in the County of Sussex, was created in the Baronetage of England on 29 October 1705 for [Thomas Miller](#), [Member of Parliament](#) for [Chichester](#). His father Mark Miller was an [Alderman](#) and Mayor of [Chichester](#). The second Baronet represented Chichester and [Sussex](#) in the [House of Commons](#). The third Baronet was Member of Parliament for Chichester. The fifth Baronet sat as Member of Parliament for [Lewes](#) and [Portsmouth](#). Another member of the family to gain distinction was the Hon. [Sir Henry Miller](#), second son of the sixth Baronet. He was an ‘old settler’ in New Zealand and was [Speaker of the New Zealand Legislative Council](#) from 1892 to 1903”²²

Baronets, MPs, Mayors, the first name John several times, second and third marriages and half-siblings, make lively if confusing reading. Marriages to a Margaret Peachy and an Elizabeth Meux²⁰ amongst others pose the question whether there are links to the Peachey family at West Dean and Friary Meux, a brewery many years later in Westgate. Maybe not.

As the present building is described as being early 18th century, was it built for the Millers?

The Hack family Residents 1831-36

“John Barton Hack 1805-1884 [known as Barton]; wife Bridget [nee Watson, known as Bbe]; children – William, Edward, Annie, Louisa, Alfred.

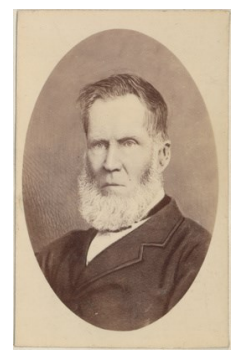
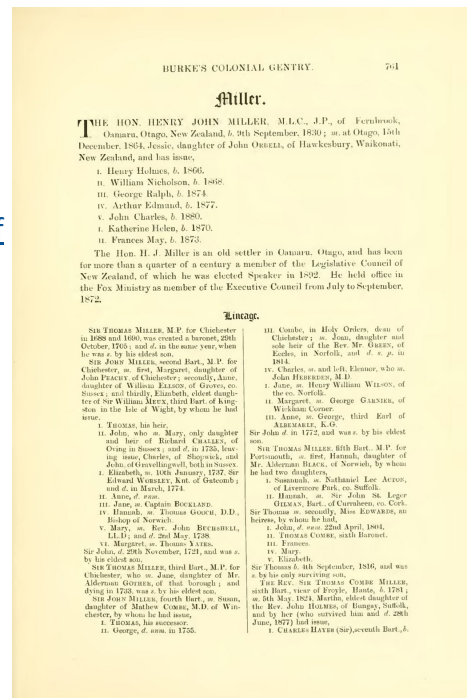
In March 1803 Stephen [Hack – Barton’s father 1775-1823] leased premises for his family home and a currier workshop in Little London [Chichester], ... the lease including two three-storey buildings and surrounding gardens, stables and outbuildings. These two buildings are still there today. Number 29 was the former currier business and in 1962 became the Chichester and District Museum. Number 30 was the Hack family home and is still a private residence.

Barton Hack settled into the currier business with Thomas Smith and the following year returned to Liverpool [where he had been working before] to marry Bridget Watson, another Quaker.... After the wedding, Barton and Bridget (Bbe) travelled to Chichester to their new home ... next door to the currier business.

By 1830 Barton Hack’s tuberculosis had progressed to a serious state, prompting him to move [from the centre of Chichester] to the countryside. In 1831 he rented Graylingwell House, just north of Chichester. A large house set in twelve acres, with a garden, orchard and enclosed farmyard, it was part of a larger farm belonging to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester Cathedral. ... Barton Hack’s family at Graylingwell Farm was growing, with Bbe giving birth to their fifth child Alfred on 25 October 1833. Around this time Barton experienced another bout of tuberculosis, which prompted their consideration of a move to a warmer climate. It was at this time that the colonisation plans for South Australia were gaining momentum.... In 1835 they purchased land orders in the new colony”¹⁸

The Hacks were active Quakers.¹⁹

To find out what happened to them after they left Graylingwell Farmhouse read *Chequered Lives : John Barton Hack and Stephen Hack and the early days of South Australia* – Iola Hack Mathews with Chris Durrant 2013.



John Barton Hack (1805-1884), by unknown photographer, c1870 State Library of South Australia

John Abel Smith Lessee 1845

“... a banker by profession who entered Parliament as MP for Midhurst in 1830 and was returned for Chichester the following year. Apart from one short break, he continued as MP for Chichester until 1868. A staunch Liberal, he is best known for his support of religious emancipation and for advocating the admission of Jews into Parliament. He was a founding partner of the Hong Kong-based trading company Jardine, Matheson and Co. Abel Smith Street, in central Wellington, New Zealand, was named after him in 1840: he was a Director of the New Zealand Company.

There is a large mausoleum for John Abel Smith, designed by George Gilbert Scott, now with Grade II listing, in Chichester’s Portfield Cemetery.”⁶ A short new road nearby has been named Abel Smith Way.

“John Abel Smith was part of the South Australian, North American, & New Zealand land schemes in 1835.”¹⁴

It would seem that he did not live at Graylingwell Farmhouse but sub-let it, to, amongst others, the Sewell family.

The Sewell family Residents 1853-1858. Isaac, Mary, and daughter Anna (there was a son too, Philip, but he was married and working abroad as an engineer so didn’t live at Graylingwell).

The family is now mainly famous for Anna, who wrote *Black Beauty*. (There is a plan afoot to have a blue plaque³⁰ for Anna and her mother; perhaps it will be put on the farmhouse....). They moved into Graylingwell Farmhouse when her father, Isaac (1793–1879), came to Chichester as Manager of the London and County Bank (which became the NatWest). They were tenants of Thomas Smith (a leading Chichester Quaker¹⁹) and John Abel Smith.



Mary Sewell²⁵

Comparatively little is known about Isaac beyond the fact that he was tall, very kind, and a respected Quaker. A writer of a ‘sketch’ about Philip Sewell [Anna’s brother] described Isaac as ‘a shrewd man of business, but a very loveable nature with a keen sense of humour’.²³

Mary (1797–1884), on the other hand, made something of a name for herself as a writer, took an interest in education and wrote a series of letters on the subject and began writing poetry/ballads, including *The Children of Summerbrook*. (Summersdale influence?). Later, her publisher was Jarrold of Norwich who became Anna’s publisher.²⁵

Her (Mary’s) first volume of ballads was entitled *Homely Ballads for the Working Man’s Fireside*. ‘I have a knack of a rough sort of rhyming that serves my purpose’, she said. Her writing was simply an extension of her charitable work. She considered that the poor were in need of good advice and she observed that they were more inclined to take it if it rhymed.

The reading of books together [Mary and Anna] was to become a lifelong habit. Margaret Sewell [Anna’s niece] recalls that mother and daughter ‘indulged in a good deal of hero worship, their heroes being social reformers or contemporary writers of fiction and biography’.



John Abel Smith by William Overend Geller, after Frederick Richard Say.⁶

THE CHILDREN OF SUMMERBROOK.

SUMMERBROOK.

AWAY from all the noise and stir
Of cities and of towns,
A little village lay concealed,
Amongst the Sussex Downs.

Its history was never writ
In any learned book;
Few people even knew the name
Of pleasant Summerbrook.

The houses stood about the fields,
Or near a winding road,
That skirted now a chalky hill,
And now a beechen wood.

It passed the school-house and the mill,
Down to a sunny glen,
Where stood the clustered cottages
Of many labouring men.

And then with many a pleasant turn,
Kept on its winding way,
And snug farm-house or mossy cot,
On either side there lay.

[The children of Summerbrook : scenes of village life : described in simple verse : Sewell, Mrs. \(Mary\), 1797-1884 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)



[Anna Sewell, Author of Black Beauty | LiteraryLadiesGuide](#)

Anna immediately took an active and professional interest in her mother's work".²⁴

Anna (1820-1878) was not often at Graylingwell because she had been unwell since childhood and spent much of the time when her parents were there in Germany having spa treatments. Whilst at Graylingwell though, she seems to have enjoyed it. She was already used to driving a horse: "For what seems to have been the first time in her twenty-five years, the Sewells (then living in Lancing) also owned their own horse, so Anna's equine contact increased considerably".²³

At Graylingwell "For health and activity Anna went out daily in her pony-chaise, often accompanied by Mary who remembered these as very 'pleasant drives' (Bayly, Mrs Mary, *The Life and Letters of Mrs Sewell*, London, James Nisbet and Co). They surely explored the soft surrounding countryside of the Great (sic) Downs to the north and must regularly have gone down into Chichester. The Sewells made some good friends at Chichester."

Near the house were Chichester barracks, so the sight and sound of soldiers must have been familiar to Anna. There was also plenty of open land for her to ride across and, it might be thought, a pleasant ride along the narrow River Lavant near their home. But riding beside the river may have been risky. Until 1856 the Lavant was 'the receptacle of privy soil from all adjacent houses', and realistically thought to be the source of much disease. During Anna's Graylingwell years there was great concern at the high rate of fever and disease in the area. When the Sanitary Nuisances Act was passed in 1855, the Sewells, like all other Chichester residents, would have received a notice from the city council advising them of 'the propriety of immediately and closely inspecting their ... premises and the removal of ... noxious accumulations, the judiciously providing and keeping in good and clean condition sufficient drains, the providing of receptacles for filth of every kind'. They were also warned that as well as keeping their house well ventilated and cleansed, 'pains [should] be taken to provide ample supplies of wholesome water'. (Quoted in Roy R Morgan, *Chichester: A Documentary History* 1992).²³

Despite these health hazards "The house at Grayling Wells was probably the most beautiful that Anna had lived in. Not only was it an old manor house but it stood in an exceptionally fine garden"²⁴

and... "Graylingwell Farm House was attractive, spacious, and set by itself down a long carriage drive, east off College Lane. [...] it was surrounded by tracts of open farmland, had an orchard next to the house, its own meadow, and a large pond which was *the* Grayling Well. The son of one of Mary's friends recalled it as an 'old-fashioned country house ... standing in its large garden, where bulrushes grew in the pond, and there was a crab-apple tree laden with bright cheeked fruit'. (Bayly, Mrs Mary, *The Life and Letters of Mrs Sewell*, London, James Nisbet and Co). Mary and Isaac always felt that having a gracious garden was important so that Anna, if she was not able to walk far, might at least make her way out into pleasant surroundings."²³

She may have looked like this as she trotted round the countryside:



[Chaise - Wikipedia](#)

No doubt helped in part by her familiarity with horses, riding and carriage driving acquired during her life in Sussex she went on some twenty years later, by that time living in Norfolk, to write her only published book *Black Beauty*, published by Jarrold in 1877. It has since been re-issued many times, and filmed, and is ever-popular.

Appendix 1

History of the Farmhouse

The lands of 'Huedstoke and Sumeresdale' (Havenstoke and Summersdale) were bestowed to the diocese of Chichester at the death of Bishop Ralph Neville in 1244 and would remain bishopric lands, surviving the reformation and civil wars, until the 19th century. The 200 acres of farmland, initially ordered in Neville's will to be used for the making and baking of bread to feed the local hungry during the 13th century, was soon separated into distinct farmlands which were later rented out, ultimately forming parts of the Summersdale and Warren farms.

Graylingwell Farmhouse (interchangeably referred to as Summersdale Farmhouse) was built at some point in the early to mid-18th century, appearing for the first time as 'Gravelling Well' in a 1772 'Gardner' map and again in 1778 as 'Gravellingwell Farm' on a Yeakell and Gardner map.

A 1796 indenture leased Graylingwell for 'three lives' (a term used for the description of a family unit, being the holder and his son or wife and a grandson) to a certain Mr John Miller, and further evidence points to the Miller family remaining involved with the farmhouse throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. Records of individuals who owned and leased the farmhouse are sometimes difficult to track, though throughout Graylingwell's occupants there have been some notable personalities. In the early 1800s, John Barton Hack is noted as living at Graylingwell farmhouse, renting for his growing family from 1831; he left his home in Chichester in 1836 in search of warmer climates as a cure for his ailing health, becoming an early colonist of South Australia. The Sewell family moved into the farmhouse in 1853 for the sake of their daughter, Anna, and her health which improved enough for them to move on from Graylingwell in 1857. Various newspaper records show one Edward Miller Street, mentioned in various newspapers and a Justice of the Peace publication, living in the farmhouse until at least 1870.

In 1890 the Lunacy Act passed, necessitating the development of a mental institution in West Sussex. The first public reports of this development were covered in a December 1892 publication of the East Grinstead Observer, noting that the hospital would be built on the grounds of 'Grayling Wells Farm' after the purchase of the land (finalised the following year) by the County Council from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. It would remain the possession of the Graylingwell estates throughout its life as a hospital, becoming a completed recovery space away from the main hospital in 1898 (a year after the Asylum had opened) with capacity for 16 live-in, non-violent patients, and on-site hospital staff. The farmhouse became a crucial source of both active treatment for patients on site and for the production of food for the main hospital. In the 20th century until its closure as a medical building, Graylingwell Farmhouse existed as a base for the psychiatric day hospital, an experimental space as patients were permitted to return home in the evenings and weekends.

The farmhouse lay unused and in disrepair until the CCDT adopted the site as an emerging project. ____

Research and text by Lily Richards, Chichester University

[History of the Farmhouse - The Studios](#). In emails from Lily Richards:

It is such a lost piece of history to this area and one that is remarkably difficult to find information on.

The initial construction of the farmhouse threw me too, I couldn't find anything clear about why and when it was first built. I do certainly think you're right in that the Miller family must have had something to do with it.

Appendix 2 - "Grayling Wells"

I came across this pluralised version of the name first in *The Woman Who Wrote Black Beauty* Susan Chitty 1971 Hodder & Stoughton, then in *Writing Black Beauty: Anna Sewell and the story of animal rights* Celia Brayfield 2023 The History Press and in Lily Richards' research (see Appendix 1), then in Thomas Ruys Smith's *Before Black Beauty: Looking for Mary Sewell*, his introduction to his edited version of *Homely Ballads and Stories in Verse: The Poetry of Mary Sewell* 2024 UAE Publishing Project in collaboration with Redwings Horse Sanctuary. Puzzled by this, I wrote to Thomas Ruys Smith who replied by return: "That is a great question and I think I have an answer. Here's a snippet from Mrs Bayly's book^[25] about Mary, which I would imagine is where we all got it from: *Mr Philip Sewell's marriage took place in 1849, and in the same year his father moved from Lancing to Hayward's [sic] Heath. The next move was to Grayling Wells near Chichester, in 1853...* He added: "though it seems that Mary S herself used it in her correspondence too? *To Mrs R - Grayling Wells, April 19, 1857* also from Mrs Bayly's book. So still a puzzle!.. How interesting that we've all got it wrong!". Including Mrs Sewell apparently.

NB - Professor Thomas Ruys Smith was also enthusiastic in offering his support for a blue plaque.

Appendix 3

From Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society newsletter No.96 October 1997

Centenary of completion of Graylingwell. - a letter from Peter Longley.

In the SIAS Newsletter No 95 you referred to some important anniversaries in Chichester and an exhibition in the Museum there.

This year is also the centenary of the completion of the West Sussex Asylum (Graylingwell) by my Company in July 1897. This has been marked by an exhibition (now closed) in the Museum mounted by the Mayor of Chichester, Ray Brown, who works at Graylingwell. He showed me some original contract drawings signed by my grandfather, Charles Longley, in 1895, on behalf of the partnership (as it was then). I particularly liked the water tower whose walls at ground level were, and are, 5'7½ or as we say 7½ bricks thick!

It is written that 11 million bricks were used, which I can well believe.

Peter Longley

Appendix 4

DISPERSAL SALE

GRAYLINGWELL, CHICHESTER, SUSSEX

CATALOGUE

OF THE ENTIRE Heavy Milking

ATTESTED

GRAYLINGWELL HERD

OF

Dairy Shorthorns

THE PROPERTY OF

GRAYLINGWELL HOSPITAL

On Tuesday, March 5, 1957

At GRAYLINGWELL, 1½ miles from Chichester, 12 from Midhurst, 14 from Petworth and 11 miles from Arundel.

MOTORISTS PLEASE NOTE.—The farm is situated off the minor road from the roundabout at the eastern end of the Chichester By-Pass (A 27). (Motorists are requested not to drive through the Hospital Grounds, but to use the Farm Entrance). Taxis are available at Chichester Station and Buses pass the entrance to the Hospital Grounds.

The "Dolphin and Anchor," "Ship," "Globe" and "Nag's Head" at Chichester are convenient hotels.

By **JOHN THORNTON & CO.**

Light Refreshments will be available

Sale (UNDER COVER) to commence punctually at 11.30 a.m.

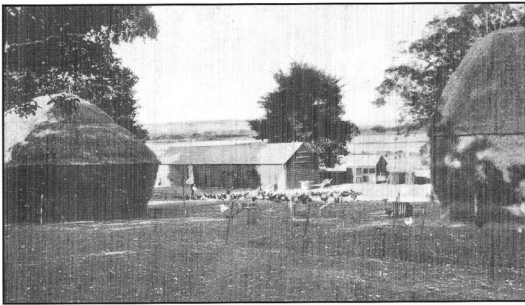
Catalogues may be obtained from Mr. W. H. HIGGOTT, Farm Manager, Graylingwell, Chichester, Sussex (Phone: Chichester 3288), or from the Auctioneers, JOHN THORNTON & Co., Victoria House, Southampton Row, London, W.C.1. (Phone: Holborn 5722), will execute commissions to purchase (written instructions should be sent).

Telephone : on Sale Day : CHICHESTER 3288.

PLEASE BRING THIS CATALOGUE TO THE SALE

Appendix 5

From 100 Years of Sanctuary : Graylingwell Hospital 1897-1997 – A Social History by Barone C Hopper



The Farm

This is a picture of the farmyard from the Westhampnett side taken from a private brochure of 1909. You can see the South Downs in the background. This view was adjacent to the Grayling well and pond.



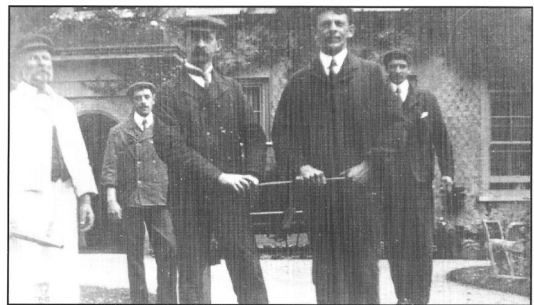
Female Nurses Fire Drill

All staff had to exercise a regular fire drill. This picture, taken at the farmhouse, shows the farm bailiff on the far left who also doubled as a voluntary fire instructor.



The Grayling Well and Pond

This was the well and pond after which Graylingwell popularly acquired its name, taken about 1909. The pond was eventually removed in the early 1960s and the well was demolished by the 'great storm' of 1987.



Male Attendants Fire Drill

The male attendants are shown at the fire drill dressed in serge uniforms. This early picture was taken outside the Graylingwell farmhouse in the early 1900s.

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Appendix 6

WEST SUSSEX OBSERVER ON-LINE: www.chichester.co.uk PHONADS 01243-532532.

Chichester Observer Thursday, August 25, 2005 3

Chichester Buildings Society

NEWS

Graylingwell's hidden treasures

A case for community uses for historic buildings and sports pitches at the former Graylingwell Hospital site has been put to the government's national regeneration agency – which is now due to take over the huge complex and its acres of open land from the NHS in October.

Chichester City Council is pressing for the former home of Anna Sewell, author of the children's classic *Black Beauty*, and the large hall in the old hospital, to be earmarked for the benefit of local people.

It would also like to see other areas including a cricket pitch and pavilion considered for preservation.

The world-famous author's former home, a listed building, is a substantial 18th century farmhouse.

The city council was represented at a meeting with representatives of the agency, English Partnerships, which will soon become responsible for the massive range of old hospital buildings and its extensive grounds.

The switch from the NHS has been ordered by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, along with many other redundant hospital sites across the country. The idea is to use at some of them for John Prescott's cheap housing initiative.

By PETER HOMER
peter.homer@chicobserver.co.uk

City councillor Ray Brown, who was at the meeting, told the city planning and conservation committee that the English Partnerships representatives said that they would take account of community views, and look at interesting aspects of the site.

They were given details of Graylingwell history, including the Anna Sewell connection and the ancient Grayling Well, believed to date from Roman times.

A cricket ground there could lead itself to a sports area, and there was a very nice cricket pavilion.

The condition of the main hall was not as bad as he had expected when they looked at it. The curtains and the stage were still there.

The committee agreed to set up a special working group to consider the future of Graylingwell, and help keep up the pressure for community uses on the site when redevelopment in the area takes place.

It is hoping to involve local people in the debate of what should happen in the area.



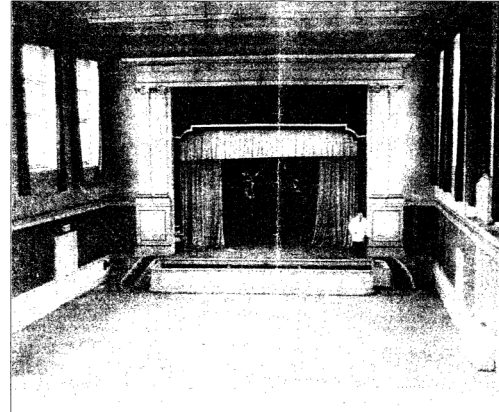
Chairman Cllr Barry Fletcher said that following decisions on the former Shippams factory site and Eastgate, Graylingwell would be the next big thing in planning terms, although it might be some years down the line before anything started.

The committee was told that possible uses for the old farmhouse suggested in the past had included a community centre, or a restaurant and pub.

Meanwhile, it could even revert to residential use for a temporary period until its future was decided.

Members heard that a planning agreement covering the future use of Graylingwell buildings for office purposes required the large hall to be refurbished and used by the community.

Cllr Fletcher said that if a pub use was chosen for the farmhouse, breweries had money and could bring the property back into good order and do something with it.



Among the Graylingwell facilities that the city council would like to see made available for public use are the former home of *Black Beauty* author Anna Sewell (left) and the multi-purpose main hall, with the stage and curtains intact. Contributed pictures

"Vernacular Architecture and the Local Historian" from *Local Historian* (The Quarterly Journal of the Standing Conference for Local History Vol.12, No.2 1976). This article sums up very well the background to the study of buildings such as Graylingwell Farmhouse. Although written back in 1976 it is very relevant today, apart from the fact that knowledge and published texts have increased greatly since then, thanks in part to organisations such as the Vernacular Architecture Group, the Weald & Downland Museum, and other similar museums in the UK and further afield.

Vernacular Architecture and the Local Historian

BARBARA HUTTON

Fieldwork has long been accepted as a necessary tool for the local historian, but the study of vernacular buildings, a rather specialised form of fieldwork, has been a skill more slowly acquired. This is because as a discipline the study of the ordinary buildings of villages and towns is relatively new; although it has an extensive literature it has few if any authoritative textbooks, and by its very nature it must be to a certain extent experimental. I shall try to explain these difficulties and to suggest how they can be overcome.

First, however, I ought perhaps to point out how useful an understanding of buildings can be to the historian. He has long been used to dealing with documents relating to vernacular buildings, perhaps to wondering whether the house described room by room in an inventory of 1734 is in fact the house standing today, or if it has been substantially altered (and if so, when) or even entirely rebuilt since then. He has been used to tracing the fields of a farm on maps, and may wonder how the buildings in the farmyard can be related to the working of those fields a hundred years ago. He may have documentary evidence of some cottage industry, but be at a loss to know which, if any, surviving cottages were concerned with it. Many more instances will spring to mind in one's own locality, where the investigation of buildings might bring additional evidence for something already hinted at in documents, but it may also happen that the study of buildings undertaken for its own sake will throw up evidence which documents can then be searched to explain. Ideally, both studies should go hand in hand. The need for a 'firm determination that study of documents and exploration shall be conducted side by side, and that neither branch of the inquiry shall be self-sufficient' was stressed in connection with the English landscape, but applies equally to buildings.¹

Although architectural historians through the nineteenth century were much concerned with village churches and the great house, they did not devote their attention to lesser buildings. Perhaps it was the vernacular revival in architectural style, deriving some of its inspiration from William Morris's praise of the simple life, that caused architects first to notice ordinary houses, but at the same time the study of folk life and rural traditions awakened a similar interest in a different sort of student who would perhaps today call himself a social historian. The study of primitive buildings had begun earlier on the continent, particularly in Germany, but the work done there was not applied in England until the pioneering studies of Addy in 1898 and Innocent in 1916.² Thereafter, forwarded on one hand by architectural studies of individual buildings and of structural

methods, and on the other by the study of rural buildings in the context of folk life and traditions, the discipline moved slowly but steadily forward until after the Second World War. It was when the work of the Royal Commissions³ started up again after the war, with new staff coming in whose experience had necessarily been different from before, that a minor 'explosion' in the study led to the formation of the VAG.

The Vernacular Architecture Group, formally constituted in 1952, had as its aim merely to put in touch with each other those who were already working on the subject, and has remained a relatively small body whose organisation is not suited to unlimited expansion. But it has undoubtedly played a major part in establishing the study of buildings, with two achievements in particular to its credit. First, because the Group from the start included people with different kinds of interest, no distinction has ever been made in this field between amateur and professional. This will appeal particularly to local historians for whom much the same conditions operate, greatly to their benefit. Secondly, from the first the VAG has kept a bibliography of its subject, which was published in book form in 1972⁴, and to which a first supplement is now in press. Since 1970, the VAG has also published a journal, *Vernacular Architecture*, to which anybody can subscribe⁵. It must also be explained that the VAG also welcomes as affiliated members regional societies with compatible aims—to record buildings and to study regional building traditions—and hopes by doing this to foster high standards of work and to standardise terminology. By holding its Spring meeting each year in a different region, the VAG brings its members from all over Britain and overseas into each region in turn, and thus into discussion with members of the regional society, where there is one.

Starting up a regional society is difficult, because there are relatively few people able to teach beginners, and it is not a study easily to be mastered alone or from books. This is because vernacular buildings are above all regional in style and construction. While there are of course national trends and fashions, these are inevitably modified according to local requirements and tastes. Some of the most intractable problems to be faced in this study arise from the apparently arbitrary distribution of house-types and building styles, which must have spread purposefully and by some means, though the means and the reasons are not always evident. It is only by further and deeper study, before the buildings themselves succumb to natural decay or are altered out of all recognition by restoration, that these problems, which are critical to the local historian, will be solved.

However, regional societies are springing up and flourishing in many parts of the country, and experience shows that the work of one or two good teachers can in a fairly short time result in a sizeable group of keen and competent members. To study a building alone is difficult; with a companion it becomes easier, while in a group of three or four discussion and varied skills make it still more rewarding—but more than about four people becomes a crowd. A regional

society can bring together the necessary small groups and can vary their composition so that members continue to learn from each other's experience. As in the case of local history, the invaluable WEA or extra-mural class often provides a starting-point.

My own society, the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Vernacular Buildings Study Group, may be instanced as an example. It originated from a weekend school arranged in 1972 by one keen extra-mural lecturer, who became its secretary, and almost all the members came into the group completely inexperienced. Now after four years there is a sound nucleus of twenty or more really experienced members, who have been to summer schools and evening classes and, perhaps more important, have been out on the job regularly at weekends to widen their experience. There are plenty of other members gradually expanding their skills, and classes continue to back up field study by documentary research. It looks as if the group, which was host to the national VAG in 1976, is all set to pursue a long-term programme of studying the vernacular buildings of its region. This must be, in very general terms, the sort of background of most regional societies, though each one has its own particular character.

The local historian who wants to study buildings will be best placed if he is able to join a regional society. If, as all too often happens, there is no regional society, he has two options: he can do what he can alone to train himself, by attending summer schools and evening classes and by reading widely, while at the same time examining as many buildings as he can obtain access to.⁶ Alternatively, he can try to find some experienced person to teach him, probably through the medium of an evening class, and start up a regional group himself, thereby getting the benefit of colleagues to work with. Members of the VAG will do what they can to help a new society, both by advising and by giving an occasional lecture to explain the aims and methods of the study, but naturally a society can only be born out of local enthusiasm and interest.

The study of vernacular buildings differs in one important way from other kinds of field work that the local historian may undertake. Apart from derelict buildings (which can be dangerous to work in), every vernacular building is either someone's home or his place of work. It is asking a lot to seek permission to treat someone's home or even his cowshed as a research problem. To members of my own group, I usually put forward two principles: if an owner is kind enough to let you examine his building, you owe it to him to do the job as competently and thoroughly as is possible without inconvenience, and you also owe him the courtesy of a promptly-sent copy of your report and drawings. We also deposit copies of our work in public archives for the benefit of local historians.

“It is a fractured thing, life; it is in its nature... a fallen cathedral can be rebuilt ... a house brought back to life...” From *Salt Creek*, a novel by Lucy Treloar based loosely on the Hack family (see page 7)