

## Round And About In The Parish

It was suggested to me that as we approach the centenary of the end of the 1st World War it might be an appropriate time to write about it. The Danehill Parish Historical Society compiled a booklet 'We Will Remember Them'

with research by Phil Lucas and Ron Cook and there is nothing that I can really add to that.

This article concerns how the War impacted on our villages in a different way. When I was researching Streeters Rough about 18 years ago a former owner of Jack O' Toms, (Chelwood Gate) lent me his early deeds which showed that the original holdings (known as The Shelley Lands at Maresfield ) passed down to Count Munster, (sometimes he was known as Prince Munster). His wife, Princess Munster was part of the Cuckfield Women's Suffrage Society and she was also a patron of the first ever Women's Labour Day.

Count/Prince Munster owned land at Chelwood Farm, Chelwood Gate, Danehill and at the Isle of Thorns. He came to Maresfield Park in about 1896 and quickly became an integral part of village life and he seemed popular. He employed several of his fellow countrymen from Germany and it was said that they were big, arrogant men who bragged about their strength. Peter Kirkby has

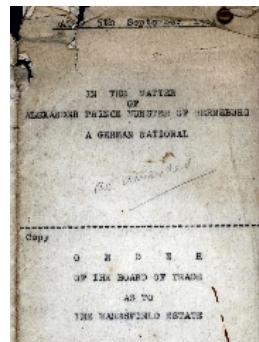


told me that his grandfather and his friend Noah Horscroft boasted that they were stronger and they had a contest over who could carry the most sacks of grain - the Nutley men won. Prince Munster settled happily into village life at Maresfield and to celebrate Queen Victoria's 60th year on the throne there was a commemorative tree planting ceremony on the new recreation ground. The photo on the previous page shows the Empress Frederick of Germany (Queen Victoria's eldest daughter) with Count Munster holding the bouquet. Mr Sandford the park superintendent is present and the two boys are the sons of the Rector of Maresfield.

Just before the onset of War, Count Munster returned to Germany but exactly how and when is not clear. He was never to return to England.

During the war the lands belonging to Count Munster, and his property Maresfield Park, were sequestered as he was a German national although it seemed to be rather later (c1924) that the lands were eventually sold off. I had been told by a local historian that Count Munster had been entertained with royalty at Polesden Lacey and there was a photo of him there. I suggested to my husband, Allan, that it would be nice to go out for the afternoon, and perhaps Polesden Lacey would make an enjoyable place to visit. Once there, I revealed my ulterior motive. It was research. The guides were very helpful, consulting a list of contents and directed me to the right location. Another guide pointed out the portrait of Count Munster, resplendent in his ermine, robes and a Crown. It was looking good. "Could I take a photo?" The answer was yes. Looking even better.

When I explained why I was making these enquiries they asked if I would like to see a journal which listed dates of visitors to Polesden Lacey. I could barely contain my delight. And, right there, was Count Munster's name, indeed being entertained with royalty and people of high status. The drawback? This entertaining took place well after the War and it just simply couldn't be "my" Count Munster. The person who had told me about Count Munster had simply seen the photo and thought he was from our Parish. Phew! Thank goodness I decided to check this out for myself otherwise I could have been misleading you. The photo was



of Aubrey Fitzclarence, 4th Earl of Munster 1862-1928 and nothing to do with Germany. This demonstrates how easy it is to jump to conclusions.

In preparation for World War 1, an army training camp was established at Forest Row and Francis Lucas who was then living at Greenhall had this camp right on his doorstep. It's possible that to escape the noise etc he decided to move to the area known as Streeters Rough, Chelwood Gate. In July 1914 he purchased land at Jack O' Toms, (hence the Count Munster connection) then he added Reapyears Farm to his holdings and he purchased land from Sir Harry Clarke-Jervoise, (Chelwood Beacon) and this included a laundry and a garden nursery. It is from these beginnings that Streeters Rough began to be developed, as we know it today, and probably this would not have happened if it had not been for WW1. The architect.builder for Francis Lucas' new property, (The Barn), was Job Luxford who lost a son in this War, as too did Francis Lucas (Keith Lucas) . George Deacon who had the nursery also lost family members in WW1. The impact of this war on the villages was considerable and the men who were lost will never be forgotten.

My thanks to Peter Kirby and Mollie Smith of the Nutley Historical Society and to the Maresfield Parish Council.