

February Meeting of Kings Bromley Historians- Members Evening Susan Anne Vincent and the Princesses The Northbourne Pall

Allan Howard gave a presentation on these two topics, both of which arose from going through various papers that were found in Ivy Butcher's effects.

There was a letter sent in 2014 to the Royal Archive, by Mrs Diane Sumpter, of Downs Solicitors, Dorking, who was dealing with the will of Jane Lane who died in 2013. This concerned a set of letters written to Susan Anne Vincent, including 6 letters from Princess Mary, Duchess of Gloucester (1776-1857, d. of George III), 5 letters from Princess Sophia Matilda of Gloucester (1773-1844) and 5 letters from Princess Mary Adelaide of Cambridge (1833 -1897). The Royal Archive kept these letters.

Susan Anne Vincent married John Henry Bagot Lane, Lord of the Manor of Kings Bromley. Jane Lane was her great great grandchild and the last of the line.

Allan visited the Royal Archive at Windsor Castle to examine these 16 letters. They are all chatty letters from apparent friends. Susan Anne's father Henry William Vincent was Queen's Remembrancer from 18 December 1823 – 1 February 1858, a job which involved him in undertaking various legal tasks for the Royal Family. It is clear that Susan Anne accompanied him on visits to these minor royal princesses and became friendly with them. She was particularly friendly with Princess Mary Adelaide.

At the time Mary Adelaide was something of a concern to the Royal Family. Popularly known to the public as 'Fat Mary' it was becoming a problem to 'marry her off' as she became older and larger. In this she was in a similar position to Susan Anne who was similarly afflicted - this may have been part of their bond. Eventually, and through the efforts of Queen Victoria, a suitable candidate was found in Prince Francis of Teck, a very minor German royal; and so at the age of 30 she became Duchess of Teck.

This would be rather obscure history were it not for the fact that Mary had four children, one of whom married the future George V and became the very austere and very popular Queen Mary, the great grandmother of our present queen.

Susan Anne Vincent's life followed a similar trajectory. She married John Henry Bagot Lane when she was 32 and went on to have seven children. This was a convenient marriage for both parties, he was to inherit the Kings Bromley estate within five years, she was to inherit even earlier the Vincent fortune that had recently come to her father. Susan Anne is probably best known to us as the artist who painted a series of watercolours of Kings Bromley and the Manor between 1876 and 1878.

The Northbourne Pall came to our attention when a letter from Charles Lane to Ivy was found. They had been to Rochester Cathedral and found a 1991 brochure which described 'The Northbourne Pall'. This is a large early twentieth century embroidery donated to the cathedral as a memorial to Dean Ernald Lane who was Lord Northbourne's brother in law.

Subsequently, Kings Bromley Historians Lynne and Dennis O'Dea made a trip to Rochester and were fortunate enough to get to see the pall, which is normally kept in a very large wooden box. They were able to photograph it. These photos were shown during this presentation. Dean Lane was probably the most eminent member of the Lanes of Kings Bromley, who is also commemorated in a large stained glass window in the north transept of Leigh church and also, of course, in our own village hall, previously known as The Dean Lane Institute.

These talks were illustrated with many slides. Extensive articles on these two subjects are being prepared.