

◆ Neville Lytton, the Balcombe frescoes and the experience of war, 1908–1923

by Keith Grieves

The Hon. Neville Lytton of Crabbet Park and the Royal Sussex Regiment left much evidence of a reflective approach to the impact of the First World War on his life as a squire. In 1914 his leisured lifestyle was overtaken by the age-old function of the landed gentleman in war which was to go to the Front at the head of his tenantry. In 1916 substantial portions of the Crabbet estate were sold and in Worth the association of locality and controlling landowner abruptly diminished while he served in a front-line unit during the Somme offensive. In France, Lytton grew to appreciate the essential role and virtues of the 'common man' and to understand that his advance would bring an end to squires and their 'kingdoms'. After the war he revealed himself as an acute observer of the impact of war on the 'South Country' landed elite. Lytton also contributed to the memorial hall movement by undertaking War and Peace frescoes at the Victory Hall, Balcombe in 1923. He visualized a village community which was not dependent on the country house and celebrated the natural beauty of the Sussex landscape. As an artist-memorialist of the Great War, who had served in a locally-raised battalion, Lytton provided as much insight as Edmund Blunden into the effect of total war on the pastorally-minded.

INTRODUCTION

As a member of an old-established gentry family in Sussex the Hon. Neville Lytton left Crabbet Park House in Worth to fight a gentleman's war and make the world safe for the *status quo*. As men left the parklands and farms of Sussex to serve in locally-raised battalions they did not envisage any changes to the timeless social dynamics of paternalism and deference characteristic of 'close' communities, which by the early 20th century existed even in Wealden areas alongside the 'open' pastoral holdings on the heathlands.¹ As the war unfolded, the hierarchical assumptions in the rural social structure were silently challenged by the unfolding economic and social consequences of large-scale war.

Neville Lytton experienced this watershed personally as the Crabbet lands were dispersed. The gulf between the fighting men and their relatives grew wide, privilege became questionable as the mystique of *noblesse oblige* collapsed and financial imperatives forced gentlemen into professions in the postwar era. Lytton was a perceptive commentator of these trends in books written to improve his

parlous finances. These changes made their impact felt within the context of Sussex topography, estate management and regimental activity. In his war service he remained connected to the county, but increasingly distant from the community of landed gentry.²

Lytton did not return to Crabbet Park in 1919, but he retained a firm attachment to the countryside. Before he finally left Sussex, Lytton painted two remarkable scenes in the Victory Hall, Balcombe which are the legacy of his life in Sussex and express an affinity with the new possibilities of village living in the postwar era. In addition, an insight is gained into the memorial hall movement. Consequently, the life of the Hon. Neville Lytton in the years 1908–23 interconnects the themes of land ownership, military service, democratization and reform in the context of the Sussex landscape.

The experience of war of this Sussex squire by marriage, for he was of aristocratic birth, shows that the traditional domination of localities by estate-owning families was substantially weakened during the years 1914–1919.³ Through the evaluation of family correspondence, estate papers, official war diaries, postwar memoirs and the Balcombe frescoes

a dimension of the war and social change debate emerges. Neville Lytton's life illuminates a transitional moment in the history of parkland Sussex and provides an example of the departure of South Country squires from their seats of residence as an inevitable result of the gradual democratization of rural life.⁴ Lytton's wartime service with a battalion from Sussex on the Western Front will be considered so that the depiction of war in the Balcombe frescoes can be contextualized.⁵ The purpose and opening of the Victory Hall will then be discussed and a parallel drawn between the idea of a memorial hall and Lytton's depiction of Peace in the Balcombe frescoes. Finally, the changes at Crabbet Park will be identified so that the cultural shift from country house living to more democratic visualizations of village community can be identified in the context of war and its immediate aftermath.

WARTIME SERVICE

It was rarely the case that artist-memorialists not only knew the vicinity of their commissioned work in the pre-war years, but also undertook regimental service in a locally-raised battalion. Lytton's association with the 11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment spanned the period September 1914 to July 1916, a period which included its formation, initial and divisional training and early experience of trench warfare. On his departure for France on 4 March 1916 Lytton held the rank of major and commanded 'C' Company which included many men he had encouraged to enlist in the autumn of 1914. Such continuity of contact between officers and enlisted men from civilian to military life was not unusual in a 'Service' battalion. Some comprehension of the protracted recruiting and training processes in a landscape known to all participants is needed to understand the poignancy of the men's initial wartime experience and to appreciate Lytton's observations of war. The military usefulness of 'locality' broke down during the large-scale 'breakthrough' battles on the Somme in 1916.

On the outbreak of war in August 1914 the Hon. Neville Lytton was 36 years of age, a father of three children and a portrait and landscape painter. He lived at Crabbet Park House in Worth, near Three Bridges railway station on the northern fringes of the county. Until Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, proposed the likelihood of a long large-scale war, Lytton had wondered whether he might

become an interpreter, having lived in France to attend the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, or a galloper or, indeed, if England was not in danger, whether it was appropriate to 'abandon profession, home, family — in fact, everything?' In the hot, balmy days of August 1914 Lytton was reflecting on his ignorance of military affairs, on the threat to France and on the death of a friend who was a cavalry officer, but was shocked into action by the arrival of an acquaintance whose peacetime life of pure idleness was but a memory. Lytton wrote,

It was not till my young friend Edward Horner arrived and camped with the Somersetshire Yeomanry in a neighbouring park that my doubts and misgivings disappeared. Instead of his usual dandified pallor he was bronzed and robust. His example proved beyond doubt that there was only one way to serve, and that was to become a soldier.⁶

Of course, Edward Horner's death and commemoration at Mells parish church became emblematic of a 'lost generation'.⁷ Consequently, his transformative impact might be overstated, yet the arrival of the Somersetshire Yeomanry with a young squire who was no longer 'dressy and scented' suggested that soldiering had again become the *duty* of the landed gentry regardless of their military expertise.⁸

The clarity of this situation was reinforced by the emergence of local raisers of manpower. In Sussex, Colonel Claude Lowther MP of Herstonceux Castle gained War Office permission to form 'Southdown' Service battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment. As part of the 'pals' initiative men were urged to join, train and serve together in Kitchener's New Army.⁹ Lytton did not contemplate joining the Sussex Yeomanry whose links with landownership and horsemanship in the county were well-established.¹⁰ Instead, he quickly associated himself with Lowther's initiative which combined county patriotism, using the downland as a unifying symbol of Sussex, with traditional methods of finding recruits for the army at a time of crisis. According to Lytton, Lowther had asked

if I had any influence in the county and whether I thought I could raise him some men. I said that I had a certain amount and that I would do my best, so he gave me a big parcel of attestation papers and sent me off. The next day I hired a car and started on a tour of my part of the county.¹¹

These illuminating references to 'influence in the county' and 'my part of the county' identify residual quasi-feudal knight-service features of rural landownership which took an age-old, personalized form as Lytton visited cottages on, and near, Crabbet Park estate to obtain recruits who would follow him to war.

As a Justice of the Peace, which required a land qualification, he administered the process whereby recruits swore an oath of loyalty to the Crown, while the accompanying country doctor ensured that the cottagers were fit for military service. Lytton noted that he was a far from welcome visitor, but it was more remarkable that this act of squirearchical power facilitated a response to war which was not dissimilar to responses made in 1588, 1804, or, on a lesser scale, in 1899. In September 1914 Lytton was not assured of a temporary commission, but the recruiting process was pursued in the expectation that as a landed gentleman of local 'influence' he would lead the men in war.¹² At this time, the long-term socio-economic changes in the countryside had not yet diminished the military prerogatives of landownership, nor had the significance of the horse in war been seriously questioned. In the first few months of war there was little intimation of the profound changes which would quickly ensue.

Instead, a hectic round of recruiting activity took place. On 10 September 1914 Lytton was a member of the platform party at a recruiting meeting at the Carfax, Horsham, to raise a Southdown battalion.¹³ During the recruiting campaign Lytton obtained a captaincy and on 12 November his participation in a pageant which included a regimental band, the Boy Scouts, the Civil Guard and many spectators, resulted in the signing on of a further contingent of Horsham and district men. Lytton emphasized that Colonel Lowther was a 'Sussex man' and had gained the affection of the recruits. He congratulated the Chief Constable on encouraging police officers to join the first Southdown battalion. He precipitately announced that conscription would follow in three weeks and told the meeting, 'don't let it come to that'.¹⁴ The meeting emphasized a local, voluntary response and the relevance of paternalistic social relations to military service.

On 15 November 1914 he 'received much warmth' at the George Hotel, Crawley where, as elsewhere, he highlighted the successful early development of the Southdown battalions.¹⁵ By this time he had left Crabbet Park for Cooden Hill Camp,

near Bexhill, and as he travelled from Three Bridges many of the 150 men he had enlisted joined the train at Crawley, Horsham and Balcombe. The county remained the training ground for the first half of 1915 and after the war Lytton remembered marches and manoeuvres in familiar places. Billets in barns and farm sheds during four-day marches brought intimation of the discomforts which would abound in the following year. Alongside *his* men Lytton dug trenches on the South Downs and he effectively undermined a complex training manoeuvre at Ashburnham Place by knowing the parkland 'like the palm of my hand'.¹⁶

After its arrival at Le Havre the battalion, as part of 116 Infantry Brigade, 39 Division, entrained for the front and on 12 March 1916 'C' Company marched up the waterlogged trenches to the front line at Fleurbaix. At 5 p.m. on the following day German artillery shelled the billeting area. Twelve 5.9" shells exploded, one of which was a direct hit on a billet. Nineteen men were killed and Lytton noted, 'Some of them were men from our own farms in Sussex whom I had known for years'.¹⁷ During the same action, and nine days after arriving in France, Lytton sustained two leg wounds. He went to a Casualty Clearing Station and, subsequently, to the Duchess of Westminster's Hospital at Le Touquet. On 29 March he returned to his unit, prematurely, in the sense that he was unable to get on a horse which was available to him at the front.

During April 1916 the brigade moved to the Givenchy-Festubert brickstack sector and Lytton experienced the constant danger inherent in a 'lively' portion of the front line. A steady attritional rate of casualties was caused by shrapnel fire from whizz-bangs, machine-gun fire and snipers, wire drill and the defence of mine-craters by sapheads, forward of the front line.¹⁸ The intensity of this active period of trench warfare induced Lytton to remark that, 'He who has never had a first leave from France during this war does not begin to know what life is, nor ever will know'.¹⁹ His period of ten-day leave was an 'eye-opener' because a gap clearly existed between his experience of war, in which some sense of the 'doctrine of impermanency' was quickly obtained, and the understanding of those friends and relatives at home who had no mind-picture of the Western Front and could not respond to the heightened emotional circumstances of home leave.

After his return to France news reached units of 116 Brigade on 23 June that they were to undertake

an attack near Richbourg. One day later the battalion's commanding officer, Lt-Col. H.J. Grisewood, had to relinquish his command for having opposed an earlier plan for a raid on Givenchy, thus incurring the wrath of the brigade commander. Lytton deeply admired Grisewood's protective action and bitterly regretted the ending of a friendship which reflected the fraternal existence of the Southdown battalions. The attack was primarily undertaken by 12th and 13th battalions, Royal Sussex Regiment, supported by one-half of 11th battalion, who otherwise were to form the burial and salvage parties on 30th June 1916. It was a diversionary action ahead of the imminent Somme offensive. In a congested, narrow section of line five hours' fighting after daybreak under incessant shell fire brought severe casualty levels. The Aubers Ridge raid by the 'pals' battalions of Sussex caused for people in country towns and villages within sight of the South Downs a misery as concentrated as that experienced in the manufacturing districts after the first day of the Somme.²⁰

Lytton's company was not deployed to go over the top but some insight into his outlook, following Grisewood's departure, was clear in his letter of 28 June to his wife, 'Eight nights running without closing an eye is a bit thick isn't it, and the noise has been too much to sleep by day, and the rain and mud terrible'.²¹ Shortly afterwards Lytton joined the brigade staff as Sniping Officer and observed the attack of September 3rd on Schwaben Redoubt on the Somme, which was the second substantial attack by the Southdown battalions. It marked the end of the intimate link between Sussex and the battalions formed in the county in the autumn of 1914. Both before and after the attack of 3 September Lytton tried to return to the battalion as a company commander, but without success. In November 1916 he took charge of French war correspondents at General Headquarters (GHQ). Thereafter, on his constant visits to the front line with journalists and visitors to the British armies in France he sought news of his old battalion and emphasized in subsequent correspondence with civilian officials who only knew him as a conducting officer at GHQ his regimental service and regard for the junior officers.²²

Lytton was not alone in his admiration of the distinctive county composition of the battalion. One of the first officer replacements for Lytton's company

was the poet and former Christ's Hospital schoolboy, Edmund Blunden, who arrived on 15 May 1916. In his prose memoir *Undertones of War* Blunden referred to a 'warm fraternity', to a 'family atmosphere', and of Aubers Ridge he noted: 'so closed the admirable youth or maturity of many a Sussex and Hampshire worthy'. In particular, Blunden characterized the 'alert and proud' battalion and its ready admiration of unconventionalities, abhorrence of parade-ground discipline and keenness to demonstrate its readiness for battle — if not for the unfolding dehumanized artillery war — by describing the personification of these qualities he so deeply admired. Lt. Blunden served under Lytton in May and June 1916 and concluded,

He was outspoken in his loathing of war, he did not rely on his rank to cover all points of argument or action, and his gallantry in going through the dirtiness, the abnegation of service, the attack upon all his refinement, was great. It naturally remained unrecognized by the crasser part of the officers and men. He commanded the company with thoroughness and caution, and sat at our mess, piously endeavouring to keep up his vegetarian habits (apart from an occasional ration of bacon) and to keep alive a spirit of artistic insight without refusing military method.²³

Lytton undertook the demands of front-line service with an assiduous attention to detail which reflected an acceptance of military procedures, but fell short of support for the customary practices of the regular army. He conscientiously undertook the duties of junior command, but resisted the temptation to modify sensibilities which were vigorously *ante bellum*. Lytton's experience of front-line conditions, of infantry battalion defined by county and voluntarism, of the impact of war on different social classes and his reluctant acceptance of military method provide one essential context for discussion of the War fresco at the Victory Hall, Balcombe.

THE WAR FRESCO

Twenty-two male figures in the sombre colours of khaki and grey fighting kit are depicted in three groups divided by two scarred trees on the east wall of the hall (Fig. 1). The theme of the panel is the relief of a party in the front line, 'some fresh and clean, going into battle, others all torn and tired with unutterable suffering'.²⁴ On the left German

prisoners stand, having been captured by the retiring party. One of them has a bandaged head and Tommy Atkins, in his humanity, offers a cigarette to a wounded or exhausted man. In the centre a wounded man is borne on a plank of wood at shoulder height by four stretcher-bearers, one of whom gazes fixedly out of the panel. They are helmeted, wear puttees and carry no arms. The wounded man is covered by a blanket. The purpose and significance of this group is the most clearly delineated and reflects with direct relevance back on the group on the right of the panel where nine men are moving forward 'fresh and clean' to battle while several rest, one of them drinking from a water bottle. The rifle muzzles are protected and packs are carried.

Large-scale war is portrayed in two crowded scenes and a central dominating panel which draws attention to the destructiveness of war. The everyday features of the unglamorous toll of war highlight the attritional nature of trench warfare and take place against a background of broken pithead winders. The structure depicted is similar to his sketch 'Pit-head near Lens' which dated from his visit to Canadian troops in Flanders in July 1917.²⁵ In the foreground a rubble-strewn path of wood and stone blocks provides an unfamiliar setting when compared with representations of the third battle of Ypres by war artists such as Paul Nash.²⁶

Consequently, the foreground and background features reflect the opportunities Lytton gained after November 1916 to sketch near the front line, rather than an attempt to depict a specific moment in the history of the war. To the right is the purposeful deployment of men; in the centre and to a lesser extent to the left of the panel we are confronted by the impact of war on individuals. No one is in charge. The uniforms literally disguise individuality and highlight the mass of working men whose toil achieved victory. Lytton recognized that the Great War was not won on the playing fields of his *alma mater*, Eton College. The panel highlights the exhausting, relentless, almost fatalistic production-line process of troops concentrating at the front line; and later, the stretcher-bearers and guards of prisoners going about their duties.

The images accord with his tributes — perhaps in a self-consciously unexpected way — to the 'uncommon virtues of the common man'.²⁷ In 1924 he remembered the columns of British gunners who moved through Arras in 1917. Apart from the fact

that they were on horseback his description, like the panel, focused on the 'glorious harrowing' of the *soldier*, albeit in a more romanticized idiom.

They might have been the Archers of Agincourt or Cromwell's Roundheads — they were the Briton of all time. The round helmet, the buckskin jacket, and the slung gasmask gave an appearance of glorious vitality. Then there was that graceful salute with the whip, and the sad, overwrought expression that comes from the danger and lack of sleep. It was not so much the well-groomed officer whom I adored, but the men swollen with cold and clotted up with mud.²⁸

The round helmets and slung gas masks are strong features of the panel. The endurance and courage of men in war accorded the 'Briton' a value which Lytton had not contemplated in peace. This dawning realization was compounded by his personal knowledge of 'their families who are aching for news of them'. The War fresco not only emphasized the 'common man' without using the language of class, but used the shared memory of war to demand 'gains' in peace in an artform which was an integral feature of the new memorial hall. As true fresco the pigments were applied directly to wet lime plaster to produce a permanently fixed image of monumental appearance. True fresco experienced a revival in the early 20th century in techniques which were imitative of those of Renaissance painters. Collectively the War fresco and the opening of the Village Hall in 1923 signified the belief that consequent social improvement should ensue from the unexpected mobilization of one-sixth of Balcombe inhabitants for military service.

MEMORIAL HALLS AND BALCOMBE

In many villages in Sussex memorials in parish churches to the war dead of the Great War formed the main commemorative expression as at Bolney, Northiam and Shipley. At Bramber, Rye and Sompting lychgates formed a focal point of remembrance.²⁹ Elsewhere in Sussex the granite cross was widely chosen, as at Warnham, and some towns contain sculptured figures on a plinth, as at Worthing, but few indeed are war memorial halls which contain meaningful frescoes and the names of men from the district who *served* in the Great War. At Balcombe the initial response to the war

reflected the assumption that the parish church remained the embodiment of the village and that the subject of remembrance was essentially a religious one. Shortly before the legislative reform of parochial government one of the last actions of the Vestry of St. Mary's Church, Balcombe, was the design of a wall panel to commemorate the 38 men of the parish who died in the war. It also agreed that the words to be inscribed should read, 'Remember ye with thanksgiving and all honour before God — know these men of Balcombe who gave their lives for King and Country in the Great War, 1914-1919'.³⁰ On 15 January 1920, without wide discussion and on behalf of all Balcombe residents, the Vestry undertook to apply to the diocese for permission for the wall panel. The application conveyed no sense of the quest for social change in the village.

After 1918 a lively national debate took place on the contrast between recreational and educational facilities for troops in army camps and the absence of village halls and institutions in English villages. Although the Local Government Board was prepared to sanction expenditure for this purpose, few rural district councils saw the need.³¹ Redundant hutments existed in limitless numbers in France, but the unrepeatable feat of their construction was emphasized by the dismantling of the war economy in 1919. In 'close' villages the well-established gentry were not quick to support memorial halls which were an expensive form of commemoration. Furthermore, like schemes of cottages for disabled soldiers and scholarships for the children of fallen men, a memorial hall implied criticism of the limitations of paternalistic structures. Memorial halls typically emerged in large villages where there was no dominant landowner but where influential, enlightened, pushful personalities acknowledged the significance of the memorial hall movement.

Gertrude, Lady Denman of Balcombe Place was such a figure. She advocated the benefits of mixed village clubs for men and women and was the driving force behind the rebuilding and enlargement of the working men's club and institute, which had originally opened in 1902. She was anxious to ensure that the enlarged hall contained facilities for the Women's Institute (WI). Her national leadership of the WI movement did not preclude her foundation and presidency of Balcombe WI in 1917.³² An important feature of the formal opening of Victory

Hall on 10 November 1923 was the emphasis given to the parity of representation of the Men's Club and the WI on the Hall Management Committee, as explained by the honorary secretary, Digby Haworth-Booth of Mill House.³³ In a letter to H. Faure Walker, Chairman of the Parish Council, he made clear that 'representatives of every interest in the Parish should take part in the Inauguration'.³⁴

Lady Denman and Faure Walker were the two principal landowners in the parish of 4,700 acres. She was the daughter of Sir Weetman Pearson Bt., first Viscount Cowdray, who had acquired neighbouring Paddockhurst (3000 acres) in 1894. He doubled his landholding in the parishes of Worth and Balcombe with the acquisition of 15 farms, which comprised the Balcombe estate, in 1905. Shortly after her marriage in 1906, Lady Denman took managerial responsibility for the estate and subsequently in 1919 for Brantridge Park. Her authority stemmed from an 'improver' landlord reputation rather than from an age-old familial attachment to land.³⁵ Before 1914 Weetman Pearson had seriously pursued the possibility of developing the Balcombe estate for housing. Neither Faure Walker nor Lady Denman dominated employment opportunities in Balcombe, which was a large village of over 1200 inhabitants. It included a substantial number of servant-keeping private residents, two nonconformist chapels, important railway and water-supply functions, independent forestry and nursery activity and a rector whose living was not in the gift of the principal landowners.³⁶ While Lady Denman was a powerful presence as early as the Great War, when compared to other Sussex villages on larger, well-established estates, Balcombe was less 'feudal' at that moment.

Over 400 inhabitants of Balcombe took part in the opening ceremony which began with the singing of 'Land of Hope and Glory' by the Balcombe Musical Society, and was followed by the singing of 'Jerusalem' as Lord Denman and ex-servicemen progressed to the vestibule where the carved oak panel was unveiled. It contained the names of 200 men who served in the war. Unlike the *monuments aux morts* in France, memorials in England were not always confined to the dead and approximately one in twenty commemorative events listed men who served and returned.³⁷ On this occasion reveille was sounded from the steps of the hall and Mrs Molly Sanderson, games player and friend of Lady Denman, sang a solo. A presentation — akin to the

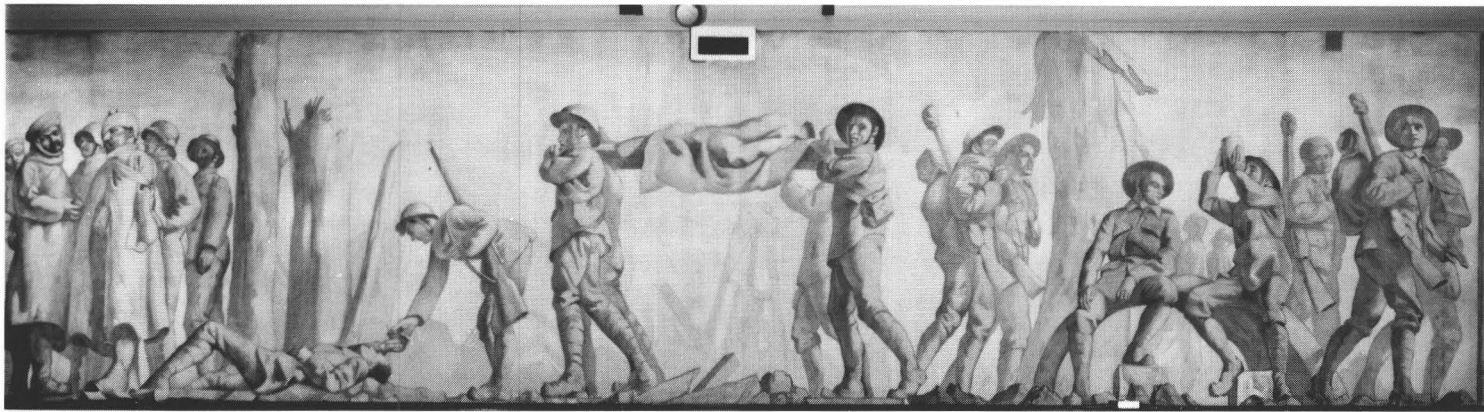


Fig. 1. The War panel, Victory Hall, Balcombe. (Reproduced courtesy of RCHME and the Victory Hall Management Committee.)



Fig. 2. The Peace panel, Victory Hall, Balcombe. (Reproduced courtesy of RCHME and the Victory Hall Management Committee.)

freedom of the premises — was made to Lord and Lady Denman and short speeches included Neville Lytton's brief comments on the technique and key features of the frescoes. The end of the proceedings was marked by the National Anthem and the hymn 'Now thank we all our God'.

The communal event clearly expressed the preference in Balcombe for the amenity of a large hall which could accommodate 500 people, rather than a stone shrine. No longer was the parish church the only appropriate place for a war memorial. The new hall drew attention to the utility of an undenominational, depoliticized meeting place in the countryside as debates on rural conditions moved on from elementary education, sanitary cottages and clean water. Despite the focus on Lord Denman, the opening of the hall did not reflect gentry or aristocratic paternalism. His grandeur as a dignitary arose from a pre-war career as an imperial administrator and his pretensions to the duties and privileges of landownership were circumscribed by his wife's fortune from Pearson global mineral exploration.³⁸ The unveiling of the Hall and the frescoes was dignified and semi-processional, but the public act of thanksgiving, although patriotic, was largely unmilitary and mostly informal.

To appreciate the less deferential proceedings at Balcombe a brief contrast can be made with the remembrance service held the following day at Boxgrove parish church on the Goodwood estate. That concluded with a written message from the Earl of March, inevitably president of the Boxgrove branch of the British Legion, who noted,

I thank you for turning out in such numbers to do honour to my boy and those Boxgrove and Halnaker comrades of his, who kept the flag flying, and whose names shine upon us from the wall of Boxgrove Church, with the glory that can never be dimmed.³⁹

This expression of loss placed loyalty above comradeship and came close to suggesting that his son, Lord Settrington, who died in north Russia in 1919, and Major Lord Bernard Gordon Lennox, who made the ultimate sacrifice in 1914, died in defence of community — defined by the estate system — rather than in defence of nation and that the experience of war bound this particular *locale* more closely together. In contrast, the opening of a self-governing village hall in Balcombe suggested greater possibilities for the gradual democratization of village life as the Public Library opened, the Working

Men's Club continued its independent path under the secretaryship of builder Tom Bell, and the Women's Institute took a crusading interest in social conditions in the countryside, albeit under the watchful eye of Lady Denman.

THE PEACE FRESCO

These themes were mirrored in Lytton's panel on the north wall of the hall which depicted Peace (Fig. 2). Consequently, the artist's insight was in harmony with the idea of renewal inherent in the construction of Victory Hall and an overall unity of expression was obtained. The panel on Peace is connected to the War panel by a group of mourners and the friends of a blinded man in the shadow of St. Mary's Church who are being lured by a child towards the music makers and the dancer.⁴⁰ In the middle portion the entertainment is enjoyed by a man and woman who listen and watch in the shade of an oak tree whose lower branches frame the upper edge of the panel. In the third portion of the panel men are at work 'on the restorative arts of peace', i.e. they are building the hall under the supervision of Mr. J. Bond, Clerk of Works and Balcombe estate bailiff, and Lady Denman.

The oak trees, church and construction of the hall place the panel in Balcombe, and the central portion contains the clear bare outline of the South Downs, surmounted by the knot of beeches which makes Chanctonbury Ring one of the best-known landmarks in Sussex.⁴¹ The topographical unity of the flat Wealden commons and the 'beechen boss' to which all Sussex looked, not least from Balcombe where the view towards Chanctonbury Ring is a fine one, was invigorated by the sense that its features were also recognizable in France. In April 1917 Lytton explained the landscape around Arras by noting 'it is not unlike the Weald between the North and South Downs, but much less wooded'.⁴² During the Second World War he noted that the hall had 'become a place of Pilgrimage for the county of Sussex and neighbouring counties'.⁴³ The portrayal of local and county images enabled Balcombe to become a place of significance beyond the needs of the immediate area.

Similarly, the depiction of 'calm restorative activity' held appeal because working people were given a place in the panel. Sidney Parker, the plasterer and builder, is shown in fine detail. In true Fresco painting the plasterer works very closely with

the artist. Three estate workers form a purposeful ensemble as Lady Denman, in a far from dominant position, scrutinizes the plans beneath a sturdy oak tree, which conveys the values of endurance and rootedness and is emblematic of a South Country scene. Friends of Lady Denman are located in the central portion which includes Molly Sanderson, who sang at the opening ceremony and was the English-born wife of a Melbourne businessman, and Denis Brown, an Australian doctor, who looks towards the Downs. As lifelong friends of Neville Lytton, the French artist, Charles Geoffroy Dechaume and his wife Geneviève were shown in the shadow of St Mary's Church. The viewer is reminded that the artists suffered during the war for 'Charlot', the man with the stick, was severely wounded and lost a leg.⁴⁴ Neville Lytton is the flute player, which was illustrative of his admiration of the cultivated sensibilities of the late-18th-century English gentleman, prior to the onset of industrialization. '*Le commandant et sa flûte*' was a celebrated feature of Lytton's management of French war correspondents at GHQ. Whenever argument became excessive the ivory flute restored calm because 'Such unreasonable varieties of loud and soft tones give the instrument an open-air pastoral quality that is enchanting to the listener'.⁴⁵ His interest in the charm of old English airs was accompanied by a fascination for the decorous beauty of country dances — the model for the dancer was possibly Elizabeth Geoffroy Dechaume — and in depicting Alexandra (Sandra) Fortel, his future wife, as the guitar player, Lytton looked forward to new horizons as a difficult postwar era of transition came to an end. She was also depicted as one of the women with scarves over their heads. The countryside might yet become a focal point for delight, elegance and freedom of self-expression in a panel which idealised an anti-feudal and anti-materialistic form of village community.

Lytton's artistic statement in the Peace panel was self-consciously new. Up to 1914 Lytton was *part* of a political and social structure which defined rural community as the maintenance of tenant welfare by squires and parsons who imitated aristocratic courtliness and lived settled sporting lives with part-time judicial responsibilities. Unlike Edwin Lutyens and Edward Marsh, Lytton's pre-war expectation was that an estate would maintain his squirearchical life, even if confidence in this assumption was gradually being undermined. For Lytton South Country

images were not the invented product of an urban world, but his *lived* experience of a tradition-centred life in Worth with no sense of its imminent collapse. In 1924 he reflected, with considerable detachment, on the lifestyle of a squire which had once been his own. He noted that they had 'governed their small kingdoms well, and were kind to their tenants in return for respectful adoration; they never questioned their divine right to rule and govern, and, like God in the first chapter of Genesis, they saw that everything was good'.⁴⁶ In the Peace panel Lytton marked the end of the feudal epoch and suggested that the salvation of the English countryside lay in 'sovietic' models of village self-government as, for example, in the capacity of Women's Institutes 'to run clubs and village organizations without the help of the squire or parson or any else'.⁴⁷ These pronouncements were not unique, but when uttered by a participant of traditional social order from a landed estate, they took vivid form.

As the antithesis of feudalism, the Peace panel depicted people of diverse social origins who undertook work and social interaction without arrogance or servility in a naturally beautiful landscape and within sight of a spire. It is not too fanciful to suggest that the communitarian resources of locality and friendship were celebrated in the Peace panel as a new form of parish patriotism, rather than as homage paid to families of 'influence' due to accidents of birth. Lytton's romanticized attachment to a specifically south country landscape and to fellowship, conservation and artistic endeavour provided an anti-hierarchical response to the experience of war in frescoes which marked the end of his residential association with his 'part of the county'.

He had first visited Lady Denman at Balcombe Place in 1906 and became grateful for her patronage in the postwar years. On the completion of the Balcombe frescoes he wrote, 'I can't tell you how satisfactory it is to do a decoration for a definite spot and to finish it in place, as in the days of the great renaissance'.⁴⁸ Lytton regularly stayed at Balcombe Place for long visits in the years 1919–23 and his thankfulness for remunerative activity was in marked contrast to his pre-war outlook. The ebbing fortune of Crabbet Park was reflected in the wartime correspondence of the Blunt family and marked the collapse of one small example of unquestionable, self-confident, aristocratic hegemony.

CHANGES AT CRABBET PARK

In 1899 the Hon. Neville Lytton, second surviving son of the First Earl Lytton of Knebworth Park had married Judith Blunt. She was the only child of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Arabist, anti-imperialist and poet who was referred to as 'Squire' by his estranged wife Lady Anne Blunt, traveller and horsewoman. Despite the Wealden context, Crabbet Park was one of five 'picturesque' seats in the parish of Worth. It was the oldest in continuous occupation by one family and its sylvan scenery once comprised ironworks and hammer ponds.⁴⁹ The estate included a neo-Queen Anne house (1873), parkland, Arabian Stud, much of Worth Forest and adjacent farms east of the London-Brighton line in Pounds Hill, Worth and Hayheath and west of the line in Crawley, Three Bridges and Ifield.⁵⁰ Ample opportunities existed for aesthetic and sporting interests on the forest ridge of the Weald.⁵¹ In a settlement of 1904 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt made a gift of Crabbet Park House to Judith and moved to his Newbuildings Place estate at Shipley.⁵² A joint agent was appointed to manage his life interest in the Crabbet Park estate and in 1908 Neville and Judith Blunt Lytton moved into the pedimented brick mansion which overlooked an extensive trout lake.

Neville Lytton was described by his son, in these pre-war years, as 'An artist, a bohemian, a horseman and a champion tennis player'.⁵³ He was also devoted to his work as a painter of portraits and landscapes and stood outside avant-garde artistic movements. Instead, he relished the way that rural inhabitants respected tradition and probably agreed with Hilaire Belloc's dictum that families of sufficient antiquity, such as the Blunts, constituted 'a true framework for the countryside'.⁵⁴ Lady Anne Blunt urged her son-in-law to worry less about his paintings and the effort of contributing to the 'family pot' and, instead, to accommodate tennis and the outdoor life.⁵⁵ She funded a prime example of Edwardian conspicuous consumption at Crabbet Park. In a period of 'building mania' up to 1914 a 16-bay orangery and real tennis court was built, comprising arched windows, engaged Tuscan columns, balustrade and veranda. In the years 1911–13 Neville Lytton was an international tennis champion and his competitive, athletic wife Judith, devoted herself to becoming an expert player who would gain parity with men. In the war years army officers were told not to visit the real tennis court

in the fear that broken ankles would delay their departure for France. In September 1910 Emily Lutyens, sister of Neville Lytton, visited Crabbet Park and was irritated by 'their supreme indifference to the rest of the world'.⁵⁶ The contrast between this outlook and the seriousness of the recruiting process in 1914 was a stark one. The pre-war family letters conveyed a sense of settled income secured by marriage settlements and stable rent charges, privileges maintained by natural laws of inheritance and a social conservatism which condemned Lloyd George's politics and described the encroaching house construction in Crawley in such prejudicial, dismissive terms as 'low-class Levantine villas'.⁵⁷

In contrast, surviving wartime correspondence constantly focused on financial issues made worse by the separation of family members by the war. In October 1914 Wilfrid Scawen Blunt concluded that the oak woodland — which was the only timber 'natural' to Sussex — was an unprofitable resource. It would be 'cuttable' in 70–100 years and in the short term the underwood was too small to be cut.⁵⁸ He was slightly cheered that Judith decided against letting Crabbet, as early as January 1915, but thereafter their relationship sharply deteriorated as the burden of Blunt's fragile inheritance turned them into 'belligerents', in Neville Lytton's war-driven vocabulary. One month after he was hospitalized in France the scale of the financial crisis at Crabbet Park became clear. The annual interest charge on the mortgage of £15,000 had risen from £450 to £750 by 1916.⁵⁹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt criticized motor and tennis court expenses and an extravagant country house lifestyle. Judith Blunt Lytton drew attention to land mortgaged prior to the settlement of 1904 and emphatically denied that the estate had ever produced a small net income.

The quarrel contained a complex *mêlée* of grievances which stemmed from Blunt's scandalous relationship outside marriage and his conviction that the tenets of 'Honour, Justice, Kindness, Noble Traditions, Noble Lineage' had been insufficiently evident at Crabbet Park after his departure.⁶⁰ The prospect of the sale of lands, except outlying farms west of the railway line, was anathema to Blunt whose radical anti-imperialist world view was subordinated at home to a fiery (and endangered) Toryism. Of land which had last been on the market in 1698 he observed, 'they are an integral part of the family Estate and without them Crabbet would be reduced from the position of a landed Estate to

that of a Villa Residence'.⁶¹

Two years after Neville Lytton appeared at recruiting meetings at the George Hotel, Crawley, approximately 40% of the Crabbet estate was sold there on 20 September 1916. Farms were sold in Worth, Three Bridges and Pounds Hill. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was severely embarrassed that Lord Cowdray bought Blackwater farm at Three Bridges to 'save it from being built over and preserve its rural character', and it was far from coincidental that Blunt immediately started to write a history of the Crabbet estate.⁶² His possession of an almost complete series of family deeds dating from 1602 constantly reminded him of a coherent estate of long existence. He wrote to his wife, 'It has been a great interest to me and will explain some day to Anthony [grandson] why it was that I felt so strongly the disgrace of the sale of the Crabbet lands'.⁶³ In fact he bought back Frogshole at the sale and his wife obtained Woolborough for the Arabian Stud, which enabled him to claim that the Worth Forest lands were maintained intact in his oft-repeated quest for continuity.⁶⁴

Thereafter, there was rarely 'a break in the clouds at Crabbet'.⁶⁵ In Egypt the indefatigable Lady Anne Blunt was exasperated that her daughter could describe the Crabbet Arabian Stud as an amusement rather than work of national importance. In 1917, as another indication of aristocratic decline, horse-breeding became less important than cereal production. After Lady Anne's death much litigious activity ensued between Judith and her father. In their correspondence conflicting points of view were passionately stated. Their near-deathbed meeting of reconciliation brought some relief, but marked a point far removed from Wilfrid Blunt's pre-war expectation that the estate could be managed on 'liberal and easy lines' derived from customary local practice. Blunt insistently opposed land resettlement schemes for ex-soldiers on Sussex smallholdings after 1916. He noted, 'We don't want a lot of foreigners from the North of England upsetting our native ways and introducing intensive cultivation'.⁶⁶

Amid inter-generational rhetorical rages and increasingly anachronistic debates on titles and inheritance of mortgaged Sussex lands, Neville Lytton became estranged from Judith. After a family gathering Emily Lutyens noted in March 1916, 'The war is to her a constant nightmare, but she does not seem to take the slightest share in helping and Betty [Lady Elizabeth Balfour, sister of Neville

Lytton] thinks it has entirely cut her life off from Neville's and made a big gulf between them'.⁶⁷ In April 1916, Wilfred Scawen Blunt recorded that Neville Lytton had 'next to no influence with her and nor had he been more than occasionally at Crabbet during the past year'.⁶⁸ The *Crabbet Park Tennis Book* revealed Judith Blunt Lytton's incessantly competitive playing of tennis during the war and Neville Lytton's brief periods of leave at Crabbet.⁶⁹ By 1920 he looked on continuing strife at Crabbet Park from afar, except where their children were concerned, and in 1923 they were, at last, divorced.

As the war wore on the landed gentry became despondent about their postwar prospects. In July 1916 Lady Anne Blunt had speculated on the survival of their lifestyle. She wrote, 'I never shut my eyes in sleep, or sit down to a meal, without being thankful that the war has left these privileges. If salvation of any sort remains for this 'patria' of ours it will be owing to the terrible ordeal of this war'.⁷⁰ In 1919 Neville Lytton knew differently. After demobilization in early January he reflected on postwar opportunities in an apologetic note to his former patron and constant visitor to pre-war Crabbet Park, Edward Marsh. He noted 'Forgive me for being so sordid about money, but it is now a serious necessity for me'. Lytton considered applying for a temporary post at the War Office, secured work in sporting journalism and looked forward to 'a 300£ job to decorate a hall likely to take effect in the spring'.⁷¹ He also undertook 'cheap portrait painting in the villages of the South of England' and by the end of 1919 worked as an artist by day and author by night to 'keep the wolf from the door'.⁷²

Consequently, his conclusions on the relationship between war and ensuing social change, as it affected the landed elite, arose from direct experience and were clearly expressed. Firstly, no one could have returned from the Western Front unchanged. Secondly, the war had been a profoundly dramatic moment in history equivalent to the coming of Christ: it had brought in its wake the end of leisured lives and the disappearance of residual feudalism. Thirdly, 'for the moment there is nothing but the bitterness of a fruitless struggle'.⁷³ This statement highlighted a new age of uncertainty for the sector of society which before the war had enjoyed high levels of conspicuous consumption. In January 1919 Knebworth Park was let by his brother the second Lord Lytton and First Lord of the Admiralty.⁷⁴ Fourthly, the gap between the soldier and the 'stay

at homes' was a significant new fissure in English society which transcended social classes. Fifthly, without an acre of land, but in every other sense a gentleman, Neville Lytton became an authoritative voice on the countryside he no longer inhabited. He was representative of a dispossessed community and adopted the romantic self-image of a wandering gypsy who spent increasing periods of time in France.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The Hon. Neville Lytton had arrived in Sussex after marriage into the Blunt family, and thereby into the county community, in 1899. He occupied Crabbet Park in the years 1908-15 and, consequently, obtained local 'influence' in the parish of Worth and beyond as a Justice of the Peace and in 1914 as a recruiter on the northern fringes of the county. The military functions of landed families on the outbreak of the Great War were performed in remarkable continuity with Elizabethan and Napoleonic responses to war. Even if the gentleman travelled to training camp by railway, he was still expected to be a horseman whose knowledge of terrain would ensure the safe deployment of men in open ground. Lytton's many criticisms of the army never extended to regimental service and his keen interest in battalions of the Royal Sussex Regiment was amply demonstrated in his writings.

He experienced at first hand the transition to the uncertain and reduced circumstances of the county community undergone by a timeless self-confident landed elite. At Crabbet Park the diminishing estate receipts, cost of country-house living and the gap between military and civilian life was compounded by lack of investment income, family strife and its isolation from wartime imperatives. In particular, the 'distancing aura' was eroded in a war which did not make the world safe for the hereditary principle.⁷⁶ Instead, enforced land sales after 200 years of continuous ownership quickly followed the confident use of the estate system to impel men to enlist in 1914. From Lytton's vantage point Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's obsessively regional and patrician outlook lacked credibility in conditions of total war and uncertainty also

prevailed at Newbuildings Place in the postwar years on its future ownership. Lytton's life as a 'novitiate squire' in Sussex was quickly dissolved by four and a half years of military service.

However, Lytton intellectualized the plight of the country gentleman and had a more flexible approach to the fluid social conditions of peace because he had witnessed and admired 'the uncommon virtues of the common man' in war. The Balcombe frescoes portray 'everyman' near the front line and the restorative arts of peace. They achieve a unity of design, which is not determined either by Victorian values, Christian ethics or aristocratic principles.⁷⁷ The military victory was not obtained by gentlemanly virtues. Indeed, 'patriotic self-sacrifice was not special to any one portion of the community'.⁷⁸ As the financial integrity of estates was undermined and the largest transfer of land took place since the dissolution of the monasteries, Lytton idealized the village community and in the 'Peace' panel provided a vision of what the countryside might become. Using age-old artistic procedures, his hopeful message was simply told in representational form with much variety of colour. It depicted the idea of self-fulfilment in the countryside rather than the survival of compliant social order.⁷⁹ He was a traditionalist whose social outlook was largely recast by war and in the Balcombe frescoes he left a moving, inspirational testimony of his war service, of his enjoyment of the Sussex landscape and — in the best sense of the word — of a disinterested hope for the future.

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NOTES

- ¹ P. Brandon & B. Short, *The South East from AD 1000* (London, 1990), 319.
- ² For a definition of the community of landed gentry see D. Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London, 1992 ed.), 356; and for confirmation of the place of Crabbet Park in this community see the list of principal seats in Sussex in *Kelly's Directory of Sussex* (London, 1915), ix and W. T. Pike (ed.), *Sussex in the Twentieth Century* (Brighton, 1910), 95 & 202.
- ³ On the national context see F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1963), 333; A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: a Social History 1850–1925* (London, 1991), 280.
- ⁴ In this article Martin Wiener's 'southern metaphor' is used to clarify the place image of South Country which suggests order and tradition in an ancient, idealized, apparently natural landscape inhabited by hierarchical and anti-industrial communities. M. J. Weiner, *English Culture and the Decline of the Anti-industrial Spirit, 1850–1980* (London, 1981; reprint Harmondsworth, 1985), 42–8; J. Urry, *Consuming Places* (London, 1995), 204–5. On this subject very helpful remarks are available in B. Short, 'Images and realities in the English rural community: an introduction', in his (ed.), *The English Rural Community: Image and Analysis* (Cambridge, 1992), 2–4.
- ⁵ This article is not a piece of art criticism but draws strength from the value of juxtaposing the artistic image with a narrative of the artist's life and the wider changes of the era, so that the frescoes become the product of historical moment and lived experience. To this end Stephen Bann's "'Views of the past"; reflections on the treatment of historical objects and museums of history', in his, *The Inventions of History* (Manchester, 1990), 131 has been useful.
- ⁶ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman* (London, 1924), 185.
- ⁷ C. Dakers, *The Countryside at War* (London, 1987), 210.
- ⁸ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff* (London, 1920), 2.
- ⁹ K. Grieves, "'Lowther's Lambs": rural paternalism and voluntary recruitment in the First World War', *Rural History* 4 (1993), 55–75; P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: the Raising of the New Armies 1914–16* (Manchester, 1988), 84.
- ¹⁰ P. Horn, *Rural Life in England in the First World War* (New York, 1984), 24.
- ¹¹ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 3.
- ¹² W. J. Reader, 'At Duty's Call': a Study in Obsolete Patriotism (Manchester, 1988), 79.
- ¹³ *Sussex Daily News* (Hereafter SDN), 11 Sept 1914.
- ¹⁴ SDN, 13 Nov 1914; *West Sussex County Times*, 14 Nov 1914.
- ¹⁵ SDN, 16 Nov 1914.
- ¹⁶ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 15.
- ¹⁷ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 27; West Sussex Record Office (hereafter WSRO) RSR MS 7/23, Official War Diary of 11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment, 13 March 1916.
- ¹⁸ Compiled from entries from March and April 1916 in WSRO, RSR MS7/23, Official War Diary of 11th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
- ¹⁹ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 38.
- ²⁰ P. Reed, *Forgotten Heroes* (privately printed, 1986); J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War 1914–1918* (London, 1989), 64–5.
- ²¹ N. Lytton to J. Blunt Lytton, 28 June 1916, quoted in N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 39.
- ²² Imperial War Museum (hereafter IWM) 252/6. N. Lytton to A. Yockney n.d. [1920]. 'I was in the Royal Sussex Regiment three years before being posted to the G[eneral] S[taff]'.
- ²³ E. Blunden, *Undertones of War* (London, 1928; reprint Harmondsworth, 1982), 39, see also 168, 150, 62, 50. Blunden wrote of the goodwill of fellow Sussex men. See B. Webb, *Edmund Blunden: a Biography* (New Haven, 1990), 52–3.
- ²⁴ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 163. Battle is depicted in less dominant portions of the hall as an extension of the initial sequence, i.e. soldiers replacing casualties and German soldiers surrendering. These more isolated scenes do make emphatic the importance of depicting military victory.
- ²⁵ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, facing p. 102.
- ²⁶ On 12 May 1917 Nash noted that the landscape in the Ypres Salient was 'not unlike Sussex'. P. Nash, *Outline: an Autobiography* (London, 1949), 202. For discussion of his 'We are Making a New World' see R. Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant Garde Art and the Great War* (London, 1994), 201–2.
- ²⁷ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 210.
- ²⁸ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 113–14.
- ²⁹ W. F. Sellers, 'Sussex War Memorials "Pro rege et patria"', *Sussex County Magazine* 8, 1934, 694–7; personal observations.
- ³⁰ WSRO PAR 234/12/3, Special meeting of the Vestry of Balcombe Parish Church, 15 Jan 1920; *Victoria History of the County of Sussex* 7 (London, 1940), 135.
- ³¹ *House of Commons Debates* 113, 17 March 1919, Col. 1716. For the wider context see N. Mansfield, 'Class conflict and village war memorials, 1914–24', *Rural History* 6 (1995), 79.
- ³² For Bishop Bell's summarizing of Lady Denman's life see *Sussex County Magazine* 28 (1954), 351.
- ³³ I am grateful to Mrs Joan Dutton of the Victory Hall Management Committee for information on this matter.
- ³⁴ WSRO PAR 234/49/3, D. Haworth Booth to H. Faure Walker, 19 Oct. 1923, read at the quarterly meeting of the parish council, 25 Oct. 1923.
- ³⁵ G. Huxley, *Lady Denman GBE 1884–1954* (London, 1961), 131–2; A. Spender, *Sir Weetman Pearson, First Viscount Cowdray* (London, 1930), 15; L. Fairweather, *Balcombe: the Story of a Sussex Village* (Balcombe, 1981), 102. See also the entry on Sir Weetman Pearson Bt in *Sussex Historical, Biographical and Pictorial* (London, 1907).
- ³⁶ *Kelly's Directory of Sussex* (London, 1924), 33–4.
- ³⁷ K. S. Inglis, 'War memorials: ten questions for historians', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* part 167, 1992, 10.
- ³⁸ Lord Denman was Governor General of Australia from 1911 until his retirement through ill health in 1914. In 1939 he left Balcombe Place to live in Hove.
- ³⁹ *West Sussex Gazette*, 15 Jan 1923.
- ⁴⁰ *The Times*, 12 Nov 1923.
- ⁴¹ H. J. Massingham, *English Downland* (London, 1936), 82; A. Beckett, *The Wonderful Weald* 3rd edn. (London, 1924), 267.
- ⁴² N. Lytton to J. Blunt Lytton, 10 April 1917 quoted in N.

- Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 92.
- ⁴³ IWM 252/6. N. Lytton to Director General, IWM 27 Oct. 1942. Lytton has not been discussed in cultural histories of the Great War, despite his apposite activity, because he was not an official war artist (until 1919) nor a middle-class semi-fictional prose writer reflecting on the bourgeois experience of war. In his treatment of landscape some comparison might be made with the novelist Mary Butts in her depiction of Purbeck as a ‘hollow land’ which conveyed the sense of ‘Europe’s broken continuity in the post-war era’. P. Wright, *The Village That Died for England* (London, 1996), 85.
- ⁴⁴ I am grateful to Lady Madeleine Lytton for confirmation of this point and for her helpful memories of people depicted in the Peace fresco. Lady Lytton was the model for at least two of the three girls in a row in a scene where a woman (her mother) kneels in front of a soldier.
- ⁴⁵ N. Lytton, *The Press and the General Staff*, 175 & 112.
- ⁴⁶ N. Lytton, *The English County Gentleman*, 110. See 26, 31, 39, 133. On the invented or reconstructed relationship which emerged in the 1890s and 1900s so that ‘Purity, decency, goodness, honesty, even ‘reality’ itself are closely identified with the rural south’; see the important exploratory essay by A. Howkins, ‘The discovery of rural England’, in R. Colls & P. Dodd (eds.), *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London, 1986), 63.
- ⁴⁷ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 136. For the wider context see A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, 278–9; P. Horn, 226; Dakers, 192–3.
- ⁴⁸ N. Lytton quoted in G. Huxley 132. See also A. Powers, ‘Public places and private faces — narrative and Romanticism in English mural painting 1900–1935’, in J. Christian, *The Last Romantics: the Romantic Tradition in British Art* (London, 1995), 63.
- ⁴⁹ W. Smith Ellis, *The Parks and Forests of Sussex* (Lewes, 1885), 69–72; F. A. Douglas, ‘A literary corner’, *Sussex County Magazine* 3 (1929), 160–61; B. Short, ‘The evolution of contrasting communities within rural England’, in his (ed.), *The English Rural Community*, 33.
- ⁵⁰ A. J. C. Hare, *Sussex* (London, 1894), 147; I. Nairn & N. Pevsner, *Sussex: the Building of England* (London, 1965; reprint Harmondsworth, 1985), 642.
- ⁵¹ On Forest country see W. Hading Thompson & G. Clark, *The Sussex Landscape* (London, 1935), 37.
- ⁵² WSRO Add. Ms. 36, 416. Copy of conveyance of freehold property known as the Crabbet Park Estate, The Public Trustee to J. H. & F. W. Green Ltd, 19 Aug 1959. The collection of deeds and documents includes the best available plans of the mansion and parkland which comprised 412 acres in 1959.
- ⁵³ WSRO Blunt MSS Box 69, Family Portraits No. 5 Crabbet, Script for Home Service transmission, The Earl of Lytton, 25 Oct. 1957), 1.
- ⁵⁴ H. Belloc, *The County of Sussex* (London, 1936), 137. Hilaire Belloc of King’s Farm, Shipley regularly visited Blunt as a near neighbour. The Blunts were specifically celebrated on p. 142.
- ⁵⁵ British Library (hereafter BL) Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms 54117, Lady Anne Blunt to N. Lytton, 28 Feb. 1912. See also her letter to N. Lytton, 21 Sept. 1912.
- ⁵⁶ C. Percy & J. Ridley (eds.), *The Letters of Edwin Lutyens to his Wife, Lady Emily* (London, 1985); Emily Lutyens to Edwin Lutyens, 13 Sept. 1910, 206.
- ⁵⁷ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms. 54117, Lady Anne Blunt to N. Lytton, 31 March 1913.
- ⁵⁸ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. MS. 54116, W. S. Blunt to J. Blunt Lytton, 7 Oct. 1914.
- ⁵⁹ Interest rates rose from 3.5% to 6% during the war, Cannadine 93 and Thompson 328.
- ⁶⁰ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms. 54116, W. S. Blunt to J. Blunt Lytton, 17 April 1916 with handwritten emendations by Judith Blunt Lytton. Her reply of 28 April 1916 was published in the [4th] Earl of Lytton, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: a Memoir by his Grandson* (London, 1961), 249–52. In her letter of 25 June 1916 she described her father as an ‘impeccious mischief-maker’, p. 254.
- ⁶¹ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms. 54116, W. S. Blunt to J. Blunt Lytton, 17 April 1916.
- ⁶² WSRO Blunt MSS Box 64, W. S. Blunt to Lady Anne Blunt, copy, 11 Nov. 1916.
- ⁶³ WSRO Blunt MSS Box 64, W. S. Blunt to Lady Anne Blunt, copy, 18 Aug. 1917; Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *History of the Crabbet Estate in Sussex from Original Documents in the Possession of its Late Owner*. Part 1 (Privately printed, 1917).
- ⁶⁴ Blunt was pleased to obtain Frogshole as ‘Cowdray wanted it’. WSRO Blunt MS Box 64, W. S. Blunt to Lady Anne Blunt, copy, 6 Nov. 1916.
- ⁶⁵ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms. 54116, W. S. Blunt to N. Lytton, 20 Feb. 1916. For Judith, Lady Wentworth’s firm last word on the matter see WSRO Blunt Ms. Box 64, Lady Wentworth to Earl of Lytton, 28 May 1957.
- ⁶⁶ Quoted in E. Longford, *A Pilgrimage of Passion: the Life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt* (London, 1979), 431.
- ⁶⁷ Percy & Ridley (eds.), *The Letters of Edwin Lutyens to his Wife Lady Emily*. Emily Lutyens to Edwin Lutyens, 1 March 1916, 336.
- ⁶⁸ W. S. Blunt to Mary Lovelace, 22 April 1916, quoted in Earl of Lytton, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*, 259.
- ⁶⁹ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. MS. 54149 *Crabbet Park Tennis Book 1909–19*. The relative and neighbour Lord Leconfield of Petworth House regularly visited to play.
- ⁷⁰ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. Ms. 54117, Lady Anne Blunt to N. Lytton, 14 July 1917.
- ⁷¹ BL Wentworth Bequest Add. MS. 54154, N. Lytton to Edward Marsh, 24 Jan 1919. This is a tantalizing statement which includes a reference to his brother-in law Edwin Lutyens as the source of the work. Edwin Lutyens, memorial architect *par excellence*, attended the opening of the hall which is ‘elemental’ Lutyensque in the sense that it used a simple form of classical ratios to obtain a mass of proportion and lodge profile. It is not referred to in his private papers or in his catalogue of drawings. Plans for the proposed Victory Hall drawn by John Bond, probably in 1922, survive.
- ⁷² N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 14.
- ⁷³ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 193. These points invite research, on a far larger scale, on what happened at Petworth, Goodwood, Northiam, Ashburnham and Coombe Place after 1914. See P. Blackwell ‘“An undoubted jewel”’, a case study of five Sussex country houses, 1880–1914’, *Southern History* 3 (1981), 183–200.
- ⁷⁴ The first Lord Lytton remained a career diplomat and on his death his wife became lady-in-waiting to Queen Alexandra for financial reasons. The family were ‘impoverished’ aristocrats and had a small estate of 4800

acres in Hertfordshire.

⁷⁵ 'Frontiers are a sufficient nuisance in themselves without the addition of passports. Let us abolish them', N. Lytton letter to *The Times*, 11 July 1923.

⁷⁶ Cannadine, 85.

⁷⁷ At Boxgrove Parish Church, a stained glass memorial to Lord Bernard Gordon-Lennox depicts him as a young knight in armour with lance astride a medieval castle. The

fresco by Reginald Frampton in the Cubitt family chapel at St Barnabas Church, Ranmore in Surrey emphasizes the virtues of Faith, Hope, Charity, Peace, Justice and Fortitude (1919). At the front of the Balcombe Hall the figures of Dolor and Spes (Sorrow and Hope) establish a different memory of war.

⁷⁸ N. Lytton, *The English Country Gentleman*, 183.

⁷⁹ Wiener, 50–51.
