

## A Potted History of Liss

Today the village of Liss, located about 4 miles north of Petersfield, is flanked to the north and west by the newly constructed A3 dual carriage way A3 which runs from London to Portsmouth with the only roundabout being located north-west Liss.

The earliest evidence of any inhabitants being in the area is dated at about 250,000 years ago from a flint hand axe found near to Liss Forest, the flint now being housed in the British Museum. Later evidence is associated with the Bronze Age with a number of earthworks being identified around the village.

During the new road works for the A3 being conducted, Roman artifacts were found by Yvette Cook while walking the spoil heaps near to Brows Farm, West Liss. After some initial investigation work, funding was obtained from the Lottery Heritage Fund for a 3 year dig to be conducted in a field immediately to the west of the A3. The remains of a Roman Villa were found, together with evidence of an earlier round house but could not be fully verified since the associated area had been excavated for the new A3. The activity was conducted by people in the village through the Liss Archaeology Society (LAG) during September of 2008 to 2010, the finds having now been fully identified and documented.

The spelling of Liss has been varied over the years, including Lyss and Lysse, these being the preferred spelling until the last century, and is of Celtic origin and means the Chieftain's Court or Hall.

King Alfred the Great gave land to his wife Earthwith on which is built the Nunnery, St Mary's, Winchester, also known as a Nunnaminster. This must have included the land and Manor of Liss since the Manor returned to the Crown at the time of the Dissolution and was presumably one a number of manors in Hampshire that belonged to the Nunnaminster, presumably supplying them with an income.

Records show that the manor changed hands many times across the years but the Cole family 'reigned' for more than 100 years and is surely one of the principal families to be known as 'Lord of the Manor'. There are several memorials in St Peter's Church, West Liss showing the family's importance and one of these memorials is associated with a Dorothy Cole who died at the age of 24 years and left a sum of money to the poor and young of the village. This sum of money is in a Trust and small sums of money are still allocated to young who need assistance with books or equipment for college.

The Cole family also built the two bridges across the River Rother to allow ease of travel in their carriages to and from Lyss Place.

The very first census was conducted for William the Conqueror in 1086, known as the Domesday Book and records that Liss, at that time, had a building known as Liss Mill for which the owner had to pay rent to the manor. In years to follow there is evidence of more mills being in the area.

The village grew over the next three centuries and by the 14C there was a hall-house at Saddlers, located at the end of Church Street near to St Peter's Church. The church dates from the 1300's with evidence of a Saxon stone building in the footings of the church tower and within a tower window. It could be that there was a church on this site before this, with a yew tree, often associated with churches, located in the grounds and has been dated as being more than 1000 years old. The church was under the control of the diocese of Odiham and changed to Winchester diocese in 1867, the Rev'd W Freeth became curate and the first rectory was built in Farnham Road. The parish is now part of the Portsmouth diocese.

The village developed around St Peter's Church and the village 'Plestor'. The word Plestor means the playing area, where the village stocks were located in front of the Spread Eagle Inn. Church Street became a busy area with the Sunday school at one end and the post office at the other. There was a saddler's shop with a house where bread was baked, bacon was cured and candles made. There was also a place where ginger beer was brewed, which was a very successful business and eventually a factory was built and known as George Mells Mineral Waters which later became a well known brand. In the field between the church and the Spread Eagle Pub a regular fair was held.

Many farms developed around the area, especially adjacent to the drovers' routes. These drovers' routes have resulted in the numerous sunken roads which are an attractive feature of the area around Liss.

1857 saw the enclosure of both waste and common land in the area which was followed by the railway coming to Liss, joining London directly with Portsmouth. Prior to the arrival of the railway the area around the River Rother was wet and the building of the railway led to this area being drained and with popularity of the railway the village developed in the area now occupied by Liss with the older area becoming West Liss. Education of children became a requirement by law and the original school was built and opened in 1873. As the village continued to grow the school was expanded with additional buildings on the opposite side of Rake Road. Later with two new schools Liss Infants and Liss Junior schools were built along Hill Brow Road. The original Liss School is now the Triangle Community Centre, a very busy centre with a very varied array of activities.

With the village growing St Peter's Church became too small. Also the majority of the population was south of the railway, and St Mary's Church was built and consecrated in 1892, becoming the Parish Church in 1959 with a new rectory in 1921. St Peter's Church has been purchased by the International Presbyterian Church and is again in regular use.

Additional railway activity came to the village between the two World Wars when a line was built connecting the army camp at Bordon with Liss. This was removed in recent times and the rail bed is now the Riverside Walk The Military Railway was used during the making of numerous films, probably the most famous being 'The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery'.

In recent years the village has continued to grow and still supports a good number of shops and businesses. Village life is thriving, with many organizations being supported by the population.