

by **BEN LEO**

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IT'S NOT hard to see why famous violinist Nigel Kennedy has made Fulking village, near Devil's Dyke, his home. The hamlet is a picture postcard of English country life.

But you do need to ensure that your country-road driving skills are up to scratch, as you meander the five miles north west of Brighton into the South Downs.

As you head down the village's main artery, The Street, its character and history is clear to see. At this time of year, the narrow road is flanked either side by leafless trees and in turn beautiful listed properties.

The majority of houses in the village have a name rather than a house number, such as The Old Bakehouse.

Another building, The Croft, was originally built in 1890. As well as being much larger than most neighbouring buildings, it's most famous for being home to the Moon family.

Born in 1818, Dr William Moon was the inventor of an alphabet for the blind aptly called The Moon Alphabet.

**History**

As a child he developed scarlet fever, which caused partial blindness, and by the age of 21 Dr Moon had lost his sight completely.

He spent most of his life developing the alphabet with his two children, Adelaide and Robert.

Aside from the history behind the building names, what's appreciated by residents and tourists alike is the combination of pitched and thatched roofs, buildings made of flint, brick and timber and the Tudor-style timber facades.

It's these architectural attributes that residents are so keen to preserve to maintain Fulking's identity.

Fulking has one cherished pub and it's a watering hole in more ways than one. The Shepherd and Dog, situated at the bottom of a towering hill, takes its name from the shepherds who used to bathe their sheep in the stream outside the building in the 1900s.

The fresh water from the stream fell down the Downs and collected at the bottom – and still does today.

In the hallway by the pub's entrance is a fireplace. The area used to be one room where the shepherds would sleep after enjoying a refreshing beer inside.

It's thought to have been converted from a house into a pub in the early 1800s and was renowned for the smuggling and storing of contraband. It also has a ghost story or two.

One of the most pivotal aspects to



# Fabulous Fulking offers up a slice of the good life

Fulking's history though is the village's water supply.

Before 1885, people collected water from the stream outside the pub or sometimes dug wells in their gardens.

However in 1886, well-known poet and author John Ruskin designed a ram pump and water distribution system for the village.

The system used water from the stream by the pub to supply four reservoirs, one under each of the hand pumps in The Street.

As well as the ram pump, there was also a drinking fountain outside the entrance to the North Town Field. The pump house and fountain still

exist today.

This system still runs under The Street in Fulking, although it is no longer used thanks to modern water pipes, but Mr Ruskin's hard work hasn't been forgotten.

The Shepherd and Dog is proud to offer a pint of Ruskins Ram, named in tribute of the innovator.

The water used for the brewing process comes directly from the stream outside the pub.

Despite the alluring history of the village, Fulking is also special because of the people who live there.

The deep-rooted sense of community is hard to ignore and is some-

thing the residents are very proud of.

A visit to the Fulking village website could be mistaken for an events schedule in city centre Brighton, given the volume of social gatherings.

The annual village fair is the highlight of the calendar. More than 1,000 people get together each year for a BBQ, drinks, music, tea and cake with all the money raised ploughed back into village projects.

Popular violinist and musician Nigel Kennedy, who lives in the village, is all too happy to wow the crowds with his performances.

The fair raises several thousand pounds a year to fund projects like the

Pigeon Post, Fulking's newsletter, and the continued use of the Village Hall.

Most recently, a new play area was built for the children in the North Town Field.

Fundraising efforts from the Fulking Social Committee saw more than £3,000 go towards the project, with a further £3,000 matched by a local firm.

This Friday the proud residents will once again get together, this time for the Christmas party.

Resident Bob Rowland, the much-loved village ambassador, said: "It's a chance for us to get together and be thankful to each other for living in such a wonderful place."

## Jenny Cooley, 50, landlady of the Shepherd and Dog pub

"My partner Geoff and I took the pub over in 2006. We had never owned a pub before but I worked in a bar for a friend of mine when I was a teenager, nothing on this scale though."

"Before we took over it needed a bit of work doing. It was sad to see it in such disrepair as it's a really lovely building with a lot of history. My father came in as the keys were handed over to us and he said, 'Oh God girl what have you done?' I said, 'I don't know dad but don't tell Geoff

that!' I love walking around the Downs here and taking advantage of the area."

"It's quiet here in Fulking. Watching the changing seasons is great and there's no light pollution either."

"You can come here and sit in the top garden and you can see all the stars and meteorites. The calm of village life is perfect for me. I take pride in saying I'm from Fulking."



## Bob Rowland, 81, treasurer of the Fulking Social Committee

"I'm from South London originally but came to Sussex when I was four."

"I was educated at St Christopher's in Hove and at Brighton College and I've been a chartered accountant my whole life. I was working abroad for ten years, but then I had to come home and start taking life seriously!"

"I retired at 65 and have been getting involved with Fulking since then."

"Apart from my family, the village is the most rewarding thing I've ever been involved in."

"I have two sons, two grandchildren,

two step daughters and a step granddaughter, who I'm all proud of."

"In my life I'm most proud of being chairman of Fulking Parish Council. I'm not in the job any more, but my wife Pam still sits on the council. She's equally as great an advocate of Fulking as I am."

"Every year our village fair is really great and I'm adamant that there's no better village fair around."

"We had to cancel the fair this year because of the weather, but we're all looking forward to next year's."

