August 2020 Issue number 1

Ewhurst History Society Journal

Welcome to the first issue of the Ewhurst History Society Journal. As we are unable to meet due to Covid-19 restrictions, we have produced a journal as a way of keeping in touch with our members. A number of local history societies produce journals and Ewhurst did have one for a short while in the 1980s, produced by Brian Johnson, a former chairman.

This issue has five articles, all written by members. Jane Harry's article describes the extensive work recently carried out on the church. Nigel Balchin, and Gareth Hayton, who lives in Forest Green, have both done some interesting local history research and also note how they approached their research and the sources they used. John Greenwood, who has drawn an amazing panorama of the view from Pitch Hill, also describes his methodology. I would also like to thank John for the drawings of houses and the church used in the headline and at the end of the journal. (These were previously used to illustrate the maps in '*Ewhurst Houses and People*'.) And finally, John White's article gives some food for thought.

We would like to issue the next edition around Christmas time and are hoping that members will be able to contribute. While the first issue has a strong local flavour we are not looking for just local history. Articles could be about a wide range of historical subjects – social history, family history, industrial history, antiques and collecting, places to visit, and anything off the beaten track or quirky. Local history could be from Surrey, Sussex or even somewhere you have been on holiday!

If you have an idea for an article (500 – 1,000 words + a few illustrations) please get in touch with the editor at janet.balchin@googlemail.com

A LOOK BACK AT THE REPAIRS TO THE CHURCH CHANCEL & BELL TOWER

By Jane Harry

Following a stormy night in January 2017, we arrived in church the next morning to find the altar and the chancel floor covered in rubble and dust where the ceiling had collapsed overnight.

Above left: the biggest section to collapse, above right: some of the plaster lumps

The architect and specialist conservation workers were soon on site and said the ceiling collapse was most likely due to the roof leaking. Using a "spider" they closely examined the inside and outside of the roof and confirmed all our fears by telling us the whole of the chancel roof was in danger as the cement mortar holding the roof slabs in place was breaking down.

Thankfully, we had enough funds to stabilise the chancel ceiling, so that we could safely use the church. However, the funding needed to stop water coming in through the damaged chancel roof and eroded stonework of the bell tower, was way beyond our means.

Above left: The spider only just got into the church!

Above right: The bell tower stonework was badly eroded as well as parts of the East gable

Below left: mortar was missing from under the slabs

The Group also worked with Historic England who put the church on their "At Risk" Register. This pointed out that the whole of the church roof needs major repairs, as does a lot of the stonework. The total cost for the whole church would have been over a million pounds, which we hope, will eventually get done but it all takes time, money and a lot of paperwork!

The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded us an interim grant of £20,000 in 2017 and at the end of 2018 awarded a further £180,000 towards the repair costs. Both parts of the grant were given because we showed that we were involving our village community at every level, including plans to increase access to the church's history to people of all ages.

The restoration workers were on site by June and the work began by preparing the chancel, graveyard and church interior for the work. This meant scaffolding both inside and outside the chancel but the good news was we could still use the church!

The next stage was to remove the roof and see where our problems were. Once the Horsham slabs, the slates beneath them and the waterproof membrane were removed, we could at last see the state of the roof timbers.

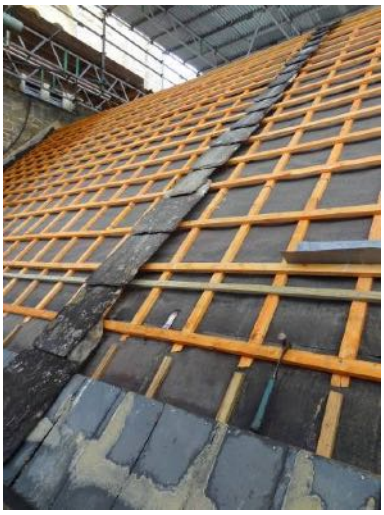
Left: the timbers exposed. The curved side of the chancel ceiling is visible beneath them. Several of the timbers had notches where there were no cross beams - showing the timbers were recycled even then. A few medieval carpenters' marks were found but nothing else. Most of the original items in the roof would have been lost when the ceiling collapsed with the spire in 1837

To our relief, the timbers were still sound and only needed minor repairs, but the interior stonework of the chancel gables was much worse than we expected, especially where the chancel cross was supported by the east gable.

Left: The rubble-like state of the east gable wall

Right: The lower stone is a mortar repair to the stone. Above is a solid stone replacement. The colour was matched by adding stone dust of the relevant colours and tooling marks were added to match the original stone. Galleting was also inserted. These are small bits of ironstone to reduce weathering of the mortar although folklore has it they are there to ward off the devil!

Before the slab-laying began, over two weeks were spent checking the slabs for size and condition. Luckily we were able to re-use about 75% of the original slabs, which saved both money and the need to source new stone.



Above left: new roof felt and battens and lines of slate slabs on the eaves of the roof. A "guide line" of slabs is placed up the centre of roof against which all the other slabs are measured. Marks were made on the battens by the roofers for positioning the roof slabs. Copper nails secured the slabs – only two or three per slab, which seems so little for such large stones – the nails are just 0.335cm wide and 6.5cm long.

Two of the slabs have been signed on the back before being placed on the roof.

One of the larger slabs was signed by all the children in Cherry class from Ewhurst CofE Infant school (above) and all the people involved in the project signed a smaller one (left).

Once the roof was well underway, it was time to replace the stone supporting the chancel cross and return the cross to the roof. This was a very delicate operation due to the weight of the stone and the accuracy of fixing it in place.

Left: The mechanical winch is in place, ready to hoist the cross. It gives a more controlled lift than an electric one – and a chance to admire the view from the top of the chancel roof!

Below left: Simon, the stonemason, ready to guide the cross onto the stone fixing, a steel rod drilled into the new stone.

Below: The cross now safely on the repaired stone and chancel wall. The wall is strengthened with steel rods capped with iron plates

Left: Once the roof was finished, it was time to go inside the church to re-plaster the chancel ceiling – where the Project all began!

Before the plastering was completed a hatch was put into the roof for future chancel roof surveys. The Roof Project Group took the opportunity to use the hatch to put in a Time Capsule box into the chancel roof space. The box contains information about the work and information sent in by all the village organisations as well as current newspapers and village magazines. A special service was held to bless the box and its contents and to celebrate the success of the Project.

The Way Ahead – Friends of St Peter and St Paul Ewhurst

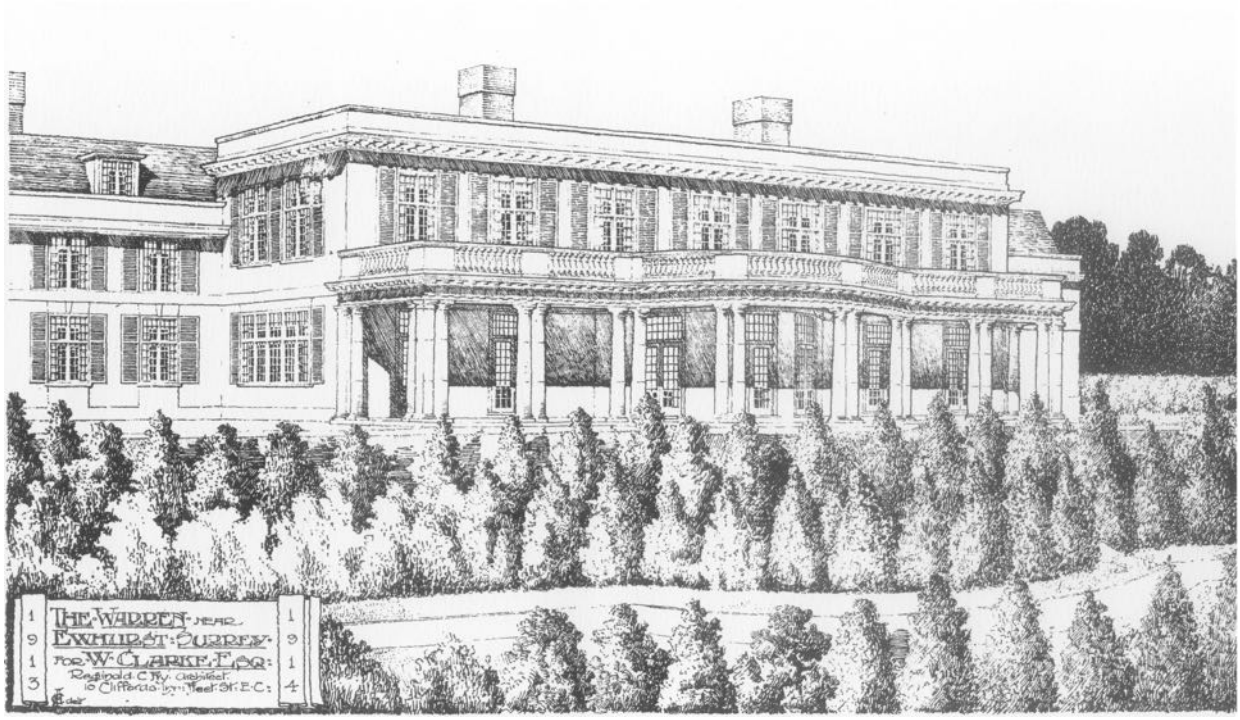
Despite the work done by the Roof Repair Group our lovely church is still on the "At Risk" Register and needs urgent work to all the other roofs, especially the South Transept as well as stonework repairs. With this in mind, the Roof Repair Project Group are in the process of starting up a new charity, the 'Friends of St Peter and St Paul Ewhurst' to raise money towards these urgently needed repairs.

Details of the charity, and how you can help, will be published later this year or early in 2021. We hope you will support us!

WILLIAM CLARKE – THE MAN WHO BUILT 'SUMMERFOLD'

By Nigel Balchin

Designed by Reginald Cuthbert Fry, Summerfold, perched high above the village, with its spectacular panoramic views over The Weald, was built over 100 years ago. In many people's minds it is a house whose main association is its ownership by the Duke of Sutherland, and his royal family connections - the house was leased by Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1927. At the time of publishing *Ewhurst Houses and People* we knew that the house was originally built for an engineer called William Clarke but we knew little else about him. What follows is what I have subsequently discovered and how.



The Warren by Reginald Cuthbert Fry reproduced by kind permission of Anne Saker

William started building the house in 1913, at the age of 75. According to the late Albert Carter, in his memories entitled *A Pitch Hill Childhood*, the house was not finally completed until after the First World War. Renamed Summerfold House when the Duke of Sutherland bought it in 1924, it was originally called The Warren, named after the land on which it was built; land leased from the Bray Estate. As with many of the well-to-do William maintained a number of houses as well as his country retreat. He had a London address - the 1911 census saw him at Queen Ann's Mansions, Westminster (once the loftiest residential building in Britain and now the site of the Home Office) whilst his wife, together with four servants, was at their house in The Drive, Hove. Concurrently, William appeared on the electoral roll for his home at The Rookery at Roehampton, a property he retained until his death. In 1870 William had married Elizabeth Hutchinson, the daughter of John Hutchinson, the inventor of the spirometer. William and Elizabeth had five children.

With all research today the first port of call is the internet. The downside of this is that you tend to get hundreds of results, particularly if you are searching on a common name such as William Clarke (especially given the absence of a helpful middle name) and I constantly had to seek corroboration that we had the right William Clarke. I was aided in this through a parallel research project in which I was transcribing Bray Estate correspondence relating to Ewhurst held at the Surrey History Centre (SHC). This yielded correspondence between William Clarke and the Brays and, following a trip to the National Archives, I was

able to compare signatures with William Clarke railway correspondence held at Kew. More corroboration came later in the project, including references in various online newspaper archives accessed at the SHC.

William was a retired engineer. We now know that he was a railway engineer with a very interesting career. My internet research led to an article in the British Railway Journal by Gerry Beal, entitled *The Standard Buildings of William Clarke,* which describes William's career in some detail.

William Clarke was born in Carlisle in 1838, youngest son of Sarah and Robert Clarke, an iron founder. His first engagement was with the Shrewsbury and Crewe Railway and from 1859 to 1862 he was in India as Resident Engineer in charge of the Lahore Division of the Punjab Railway. On his return he was engaged as Engineer to a succession of branch railways, including Shrewsbury and Hereford, Shrewsbury and Welshpool, Tenby, and Ludlow. He also designed the Dowles Bridge, carrying the Tenby and Bewdley Railway across the River Severn. Partially dismantled in 1966, the brick abutments and piers still stand and there are proposals to install a footbridge over them. In 1866 William became Assistant Chief Engineer of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR). The British Railway Journal credits him with designing some 24 stations across regions such as Bristol and North Somerset, Leominster, Bridport, Ross and Ledbury, Kingsbridge and Salcombe, and Bromyard between 1873 and 1897.

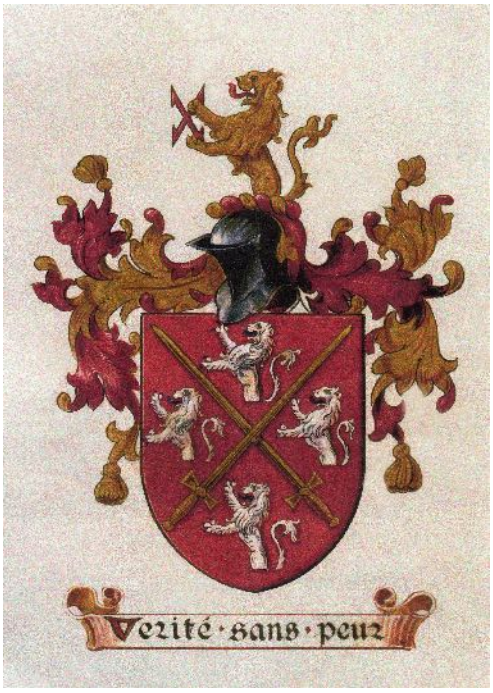
The pillars are all that remains of

Dowles Bridge

Through Ancestry, the family history website, I was able to make contact with one of William's distant relatives, Barbara Lucas, who was very positive in supporting my research, with further corroboration and with two specific assists. Firstly, she kindly sent me a copy of William's coat of arms, granted to him in 1918. Sadly, subsequent enquiries with the College of Arms proved inconclusive. Secondly, a quote from William's son Reginald's memories of his father. ''William was a gifted railway engineer, who could look from a distance at a new curve on an Indian hill track and declare it, rightly, too sharp for the locomotive. William built a house on the edge of a cliff and employed a retired guardsman with a donkey to shore it up daily with earth to prevent a disaster.'' Clearly he had form on building up high, reflected in his subsequent quest to build high up on the edge of Pitch Hill.

By coincidence, whilst conducting my research we were contacted by Anne Saker, a granddaughter of the architect, Reginald Cuthbert Fry. She was sorting out various of her grandfather's papers and wondered if we would be interested in a drawing of the house. *(See picture above)*

William died at The Warren in October 1923 aged 85 and was buried in Ewhurst churchyard. He left an estate valued at £194,000 [£11m in today's terms].



William's grave in Ewhurst churchyard, near the gate to the Old Rectory Drive, and his coat of arms, reproduced by kind permission of Barbara Lucas.

My research was very satisfying, giving a fascinating insight into another of Ewhurst's notable residents, but, as with all such research, it left a number of questions unanswered, including:- What brought a 75-year-old man to Ewhurst to build a house? Why Ewhurst? How did he learn of the availability of building plots on Pitch Hill? Perhaps he knew William Rigby, a railway contractor who lived at Ewhurst Place from 1904 to 1928. In addition, I have yet to track down a photograph of William. The quest continues!

FOREST GREEN'S LOST PLACE OF WORSHIP

By Gareth Hayton

In January 2017 the Ockley, Okewood and Forest Green parish magazine included an archive article referring to the opening of the new Church of Holy Trinity in Forest Green in January 1897, this being built as a memorial to the 17-year-old Everard Hensley of Pratsham Grange, on the slopes of Leith Hill, who was tragically killed in a shooting accident. I had assumed that prior to this the Forest Green congregation worshipped at the 13th century church of St John The Baptist in Okewood, which lies in a beautiful setting in the woods behind the Scarlett Arms, or alternatively at the non-conformist chapel on The Green itself, which still stands, although now a private house. But the 1897 article also mentioned the St Barnabas Mission Room that the new church apparently replaced, but which I knew nothing of. So where was this building, when was it built, and what was it like?

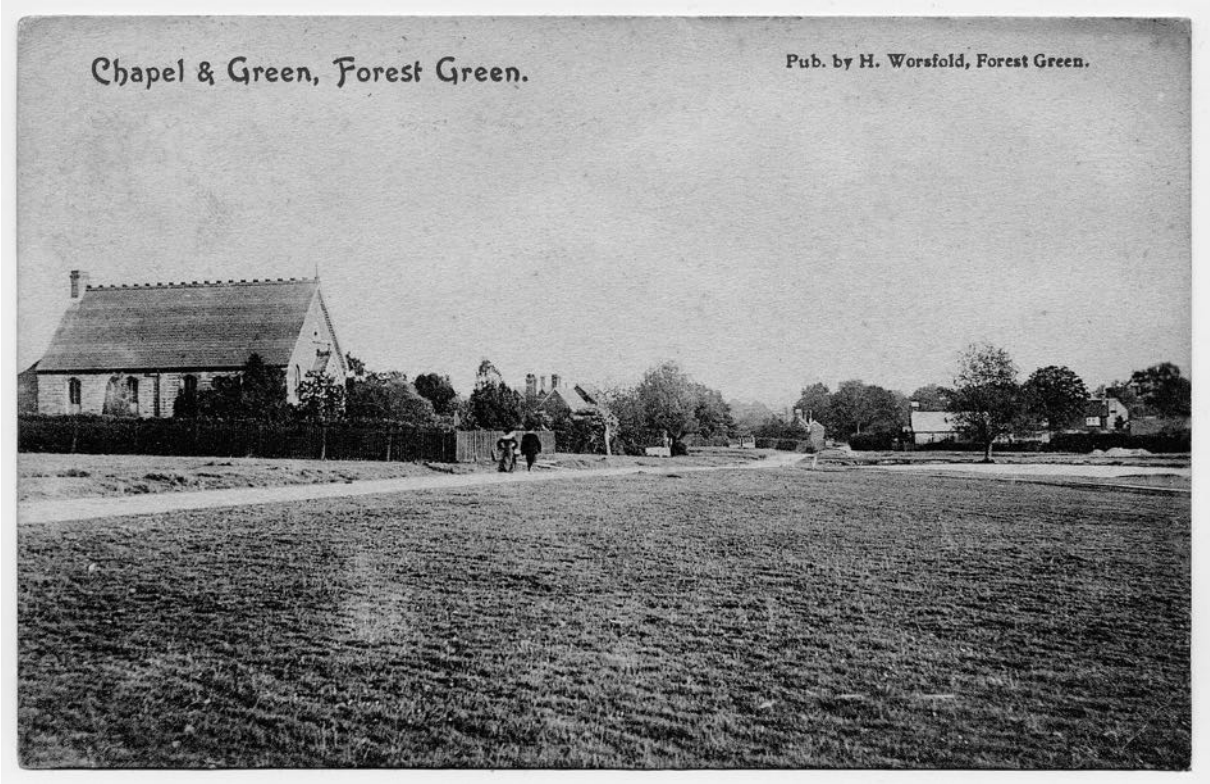
The Ockley archivist, Briony Thomas (sadly now no longer with us) provided details from an Okewood Parish Magazine from the summer of 1887 which recorded that the Mission Room was opened by the Archdeacon of Surrey at an afternoon service attended by rather more people than the new building could actually hold, on Trinity Sunday, the 5th of June of that year. The article went on to state that the building existed thanks to the generosity of Mr Steere, who paid for it, and Mrs Creasy (of Jordan's Farm) who provided the land. The site chosen, apparently after some deliberation, is shown on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map and it appears to have been in a small paddock south of the Forest Green lower pond, an area which now forms part of The Green.

Forest Green on the 1897 Ordnance Survey Map

The Mission Chapel is marked in the centre of the lower portion of the map, with the Congregational Chapel and the Parrot to the north.

The building was apparently typical of many to spring up quickly in the Victorian period, being of what we would now term flat pack construction. These were used not just as churches, but also as hospitals, schoolrooms, shops, commercial buildings and houses in the UK and all over the British Empire. It was of corrugated iron construction on a timber frame, and came from an extensive range of prefabricated buildings produced by Humphries of Knightsbridge. Mr Humphries himself was clearly a charismatic character, being described, presumably by himself, as "Small in stature, big in business." Nevertheless, his company guaranteed to have a building completed within three weeks of the site, with the foundations completed, being handed over to them.

From the Parish Magazine's description the inside of the building appears to have been simply furnished, with a curtain separating the chancel, an engraving of the Last Supper above the Holy Table, this itself carrying the expected cross, candlesticks and vases of fresh flowers. It is recorded that Mrs Steere and Mrs Henry Lee Steere made the kneelers and that Mr Lee Steere provided the brass alms dish. An early 20th century postcard of the non-conformist chapel shows the Mission Hall in the background, a simple rectangular building with a porch and a bell cot on the eastern gable.



Forest Green looking south: the non-conformist chapel is on the left and the Mission Hall is on the right on the far side of the pond.

The 'iron church' or 'tin tabernacle' as these corrugated iron buildings were sometimes called, was not long in use, for the last service was held in it on 24th January 1897, "when snow lay thick upon the ground". Nothing of it remains on the ground now and it is understood that it became a reading room, but was subsequently destroyed by fire in the 1920s.

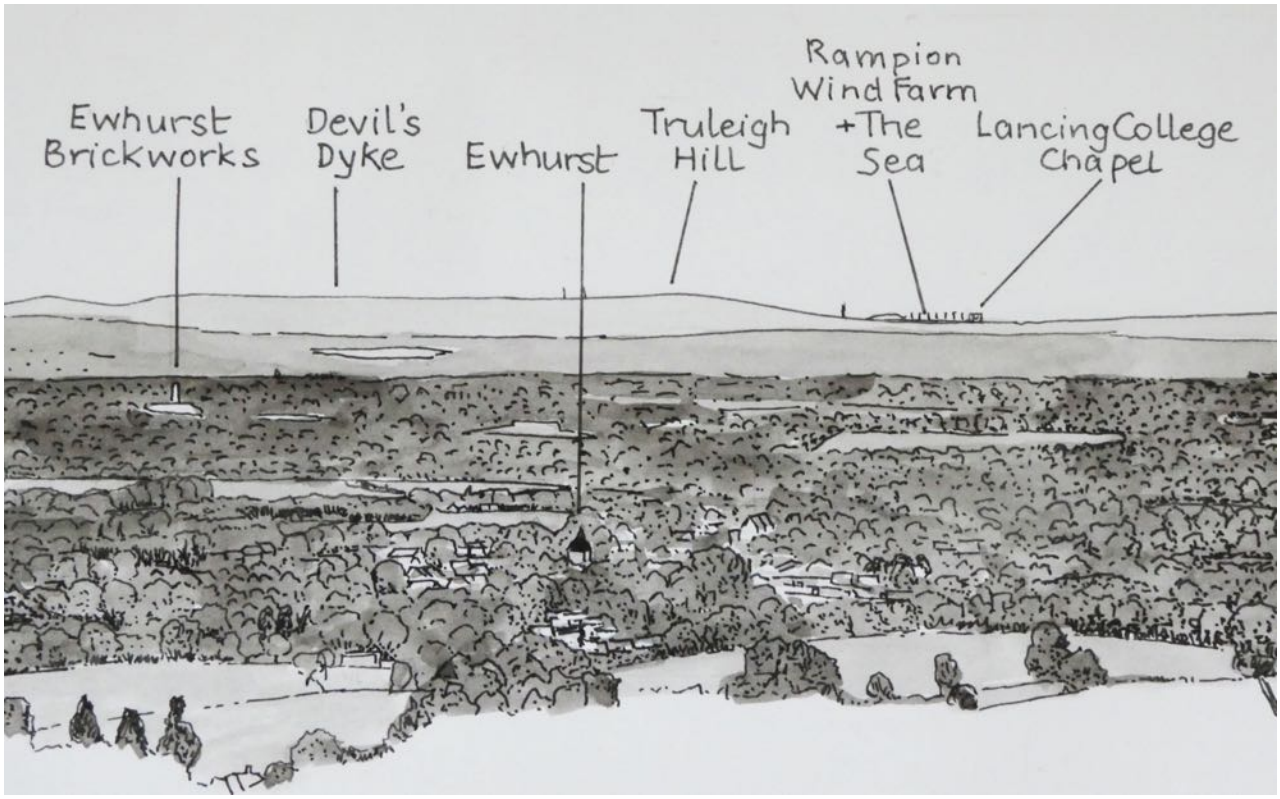
However, many examples of Humphries of Knightsbridge buildings still exist, one relatively local and accessible one is at the Weald and Downland Museum, the chapel from South Wonston having been re-erected there. Rather further afield, the Humphries of Knightsbridge hut which the men of Shackleton's 1908 Antarctic expedition assembled on Cape Royds in order to over winter, packing the wall cavities with seaweed as insulation as they did so, still stands. It is now a World Heritage site, something that Mr Humphries would no doubt have approved of.

DRAWING PANORAMAS AND THE VIEW FROM PITCH HILL

By John Greenwood

Many years ago a friend living on the crest of the North Downs asked me to draw the view from his house and to identify what he could see. This took me many months – he rejected the first draft – in the course of which I learned about how the eye sees views, particularly those in southern England where the hills are relatively low. Since then I have drawn several such panoramas for friends and for myself, most recently one of the view from Pitch Hill.

There is already a good panorama near the summit of Pitch Hill, erected by the Friends of the Hurtwood and known as the toposcope. It shows, correctly, the principal features of the view. Mine is larger and shows more detail, particularly of the more distant items.



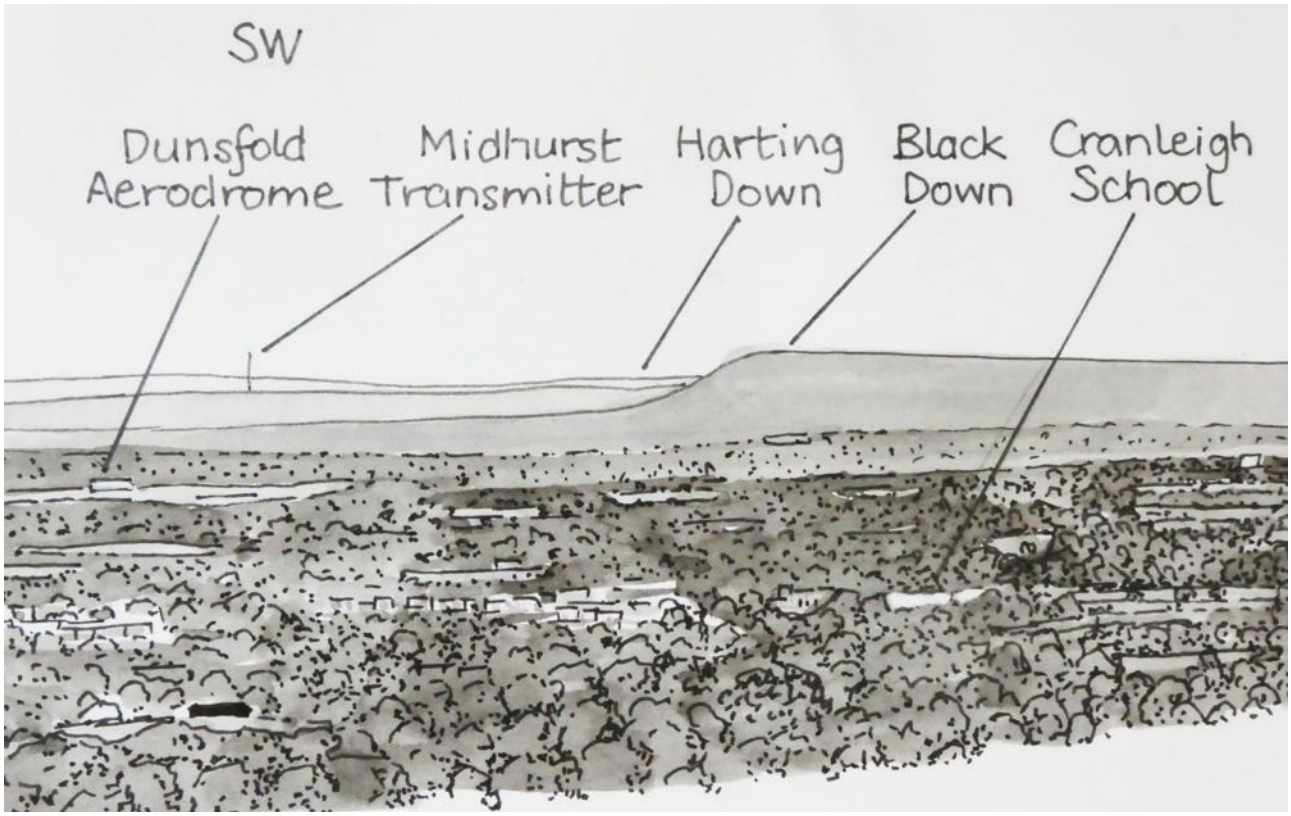
A section of the panorama looking south

The view from Pitch Hill is principally one of trees. Although the percentage of actual woodland on the map has shrunk to around 20%, when viewed from the hill it appears little different to the huge Wealden forest that existed a thousand years ago when Ewhurst was just a wooded elevation with a yew on it. Prominent in the distance, and the exception to this, are the South Downs, wooded to the west but bare to the east apart from a few visible clumps of trees. Central to the view, and largest of those clumps, is Chanctonbury Ring. Just to its left is the Shoreham Gap with the square profile of Lancing College Chapel. From there the Downs continue eastwards to the Devil's Dyke above Brighton, behind and just to the left of Ewhurst church, and thence to Ditchling Beacon before ending in a combination of Firle Beacon, Mount Caburn above Glynde and Windover Hill on the side of which, but not visible, is the Long Man of Wilmington. It is difficult to separate the views of these three hills. To the west of Chanctonbury Ring is the smaller clump on Kithurst Hill above Storrington, the Arun Gap and the rounded heights of Bignor Hill and Littleton Down, in front of which you can see Petworth. Further to the right the southern greensand

hills increase in height, on which stands the Midhurst transmitter from which many of us receive our television signals.

Intriguingly, at the Shoreham Gap the toposcope mentions the sea. Looking on a normal day by eye or even through binoculars, it is difficult to convince oneself that the short length of horizontal greyness in the gap between the hills is sea and not the land in front of it. For proof you need to come to Pitch Hill at 10.30 in the morning on a winter's day when the sun is shining and there is no mist. On these rare days you will have the unforgettable sight of the low winter sun reflected brightly off the sea, while through binoculars you can see turbines of the Rampion offshore wind farm.

Westwards the South Downs disappear behind the escarpment of Black Down near Haslemere, the highest hill in Sussex, which is itself well worth a walk if you like views. This merges with Gibbet Hill above the Devil's Punch Bowl, which being hollow is obviously not visible itself in spite of being indicated on the toposcope. Hascombe Hill, another good short walk, appears in front, while peeping just above it is a section of the chalk downs that mark the western end of the huge ellipse of the Weald near Steep, the home of poet Edward Thomas. To the right of Gibbet Hill is a grey skyline that turns out to be the Hampshire Downs near the unprepossessing settlement of Four Marks beyond Alton. There are in fact two escarpments here: the chalk of the downs and in front the upper greensand at Hartley Mauditt just north of Selborne, in which village this light grey sandstone can be seen in many of the cottages. Before being obscured by the trees of Winterfold one can just make out the curious lumps that are the Devil's Jumps on Frensham Common.



A section of the panorama looking west

When preparing my first panorama I learned several lessons. Firstly, there is an optimum scale which is related to the distance from eye to paper and which you find yourself using if you sketch the view. If you draw the panorama from Pitch Hill to this scale, however, it is nearly five feet long, so that most such

drawings such as the toposcope are drawn to a condensed scale. Secondly, faced with the low rolling hills of southern England, the eye distorts them vertically near the horizon, a feature used by many landscape artists, not least Turner. Look at the view normally, then roll on your side and you will find that it looks flatter. Thirdly, the intermediate skylines you see one day may differ from those you see the next: you need to observe the view at different times of day and under different lighting and weather conditions. Particularly revealing are days when showers chase each other across the Weald, obscuring one skyline and highlighting another, which you never knew existed.

This is the case as we move further eastwards: the horizon is of the Wealden sandstone, St Leonard's Forest and Worth Forest, with the further hills of Ashdown Forest and Crowborough just visible beyond, while Horsham and Gatwick Airport can be seen in the middle distance. Beyond Gatwick one can make out Dry Hill, a prominent outlier of the Weald near Lingfield, and beyond into Kent, before the horizon is taken over by the obvious escarpments of Leith and Holmbury Hills.

The view can of course be recorded using a good camera and transferred to a drawing at home. Identification of the objects can be done with a compass and a contoured map. In theory one could draw the entire view from the Ordnance Survey's digital mapping, having corrected for the curvature of the earth by means of a simple formula dependent on the square of the distance. The problem with this is that the survey data records heights at ground level and does not take into account the height of trees in a panorama that includes so much woodland. In the gentle hills of the Weald a wooded hill in front can easily obscure a higher, bald one behind.

The ultimate proof of whether a hill is or is not visible is to go there and look back to check that you can see Pitch Hill. Thus it is that I have walked up Dry Hill, Firle Beacon and the hills around Selborne with a map, a compass and a pair of binoculars, but as a poor tree climber I have so far kept my feet firmly on the ground.

TODAY IS TOMORROW'S HISTORY

By John White

As a society, the main objective of Ewhurst History Society is to collect, learn and discuss 'all our yesterdays', particularly in relation to our own locality. One definition of 'history' is the study of past events, particularly in human affairs. That is all very well, but what we do today will be regarded as history for the generations yet to come.

We are living in a fortunate age. We have many written resources to call upon and many of these are easy to access since the advent of the internet. I recall spending hours doing family research at what was then the General Record Office in St Catherine's House on Kingsway in London searching through heavy index books. Even worse was the Public Record Office in the bowels of a building in Chancery Lane. Now I can sit at my computer and see most of it on screen – particularly useful during 'lockdown'. And there is the joy of linking into other people's research and even getting in touch with long-lost family members – something I have personally experienced even if it does destroy a long-held family myth.

There is, however, a downside. So many of our documents are now held digitally, with originals being destroyed by organisations due to lack of storage, and with so much of our correspondence now being carried out by e-mail there is the danger our present lives will not be properly documented for future historians. Many of us have seen how much Ewhurst has changed over the last 40 or so years (the period for which I can speak) and much of that is well documented. However, we may think the recent changes need not be recorded because we all know about them. That is fine whilst we are still around but, once our collective memory has gone, who or what is there to recall it for future generations?

I can recall the time when Ewhurst village had three garages selling petrol, two (or was it three?) car showrooms, a Post Office, a butcher's shop and a DIY store. I can recall my 16-year-old son as a petrol attendant at Cooper's Garage (and able to sell cigarettes as well). I can also recall walking through a field that is now Rectory Close and allowing our children to play with their friends all day in the woods behind Mapledrakes Road without worrying about them (unless they did not return by tea-time).

So this is a plea to our current members (and friends) to put into writing their experience of living in this community in the late 20th and early 21st century, to retain at least some photographs (and write on the back what they are and when taken), to keep some family documents and to ensure that these are available to researchers in the future. There is always the risk that our children will throw away our 'keepsakes' and one way of avoiding that is to leave a note with your will about handing such material to Ewhurst History Society or to a suitable archive. After all, the superb collection of documents in the Surrey Record Centre and other archives would not exist without deposits such as we are able to donate to ensure that our lives today are documented for tomorrow's historians.