

Ewhurst History Society Journal



The History Society's activities were interrupted by the first Lockdown in May 2020. A year has since passed and we still have not been able to hold meetings, but we hope that members are enjoying The Journal, now in its third issue.

This issue has five articles, all written by members. Marian Heathcote's father, Bill, was born and grew up in Ewhurst. His older brother, Vic, emigrated to Australia in 1912 and Marian has recently been in contact with his descendants. Nigel's article is about a past resident of Ewhurst, the author, Ethel M Dell, one of the most famous novelists of her generation, although almost forgotten today. Andrew Ferguson, author of 'Scots Who Enlightened the World', has written about Mary Somerville and her contribution to science. Having inherited a silver bowl, John Greenwood has researched the story behind it. Finally, John White has taken a look back at some old parish magazines from 1971 and 1996.

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We would like to issue the next edition in the summer and hope that members will be able to contribute. Articles can be about a wide range of historical subjects – social history, family history, industrial history, antiques and collecting, places to visit, or anything off the beaten track or quirky. Local history could be about 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@gmail.com

MY AUSTRALIAN CONNECTION

By Marian Heathcote

I will never know what prompted Victor Arthur Henry Tett, my Uncle Vic, to leave his family home in Ewhurst and take the potentially hazardous journey to an unknown future on the other side of the world. I do know that he left in 1912 and that he was only just 19.

Searches in the shipping records, by my husband Barrie, revealed that Vic sailed on the SS Beltana from London. His journey to Sydney, via the Cape of Good Hope would have taken about 40 days. The vessel had a capacity of 1100 passengers and the majority of them were listed as farmers.

Vic was of farming stock. His father was the Farm Bailiff for the Doulton family who, in the 1880s, had built Woolpits (now the Duke of Kent School). The Tett's family home was just down the road at Woolpit Farm, a building which dates from the 16th Century, and this is where Vic had been born in 1893 and had lived with his parents, William and Elizabeth, and his six siblings, four boys and two girls. My father, Bill, was Vic's youngest brother and was only 11 when Vic left and, although I never questioned him closely, I do not think that he remembered very much about his older brother.



Woolpit Farm c. 1909

The children are thought to be Olive (born 1905), Ethel (born 1897), and Marian's father Bill (born 1900)

Vic was baptised in the Village Church, attended the Village School and would have been very familiar with the houses, lanes, fields and footpaths in the local area. I now share the same familiarity as we live less than a mile from Woolpit Farm.

It is rumoured that it may have been a family dispute that led to Vic's decision to leave Ewhurst or maybe it was just a sense of adventure. Information about Australia's Immigration Policy tells us that in the early 1900s the Australian Government were encouraging able young men to make the journey to the "land of opportunity" promising a healthy and prosperous life in another part of the Empire.

As I was growing up all I knew about the uncle that had emigrated to Australia was that his sister, my Auntie Ethel, had maintained some contact with him. I was aware that his first wife had died, that he had remarried and that there were offspring from both marriages so I had Australian cousins.



Vic and his first wife, Virginia

Using "Ancestry" Barrie discovered that Vic had lived with his first wife in Bega, New South Wales, which as is now described as being famous for Bega Cheese and is, presumably, farming country. They had two sons William (Bill) and Frederick (Fred).

We also learnt that, following the death of his first wife, Vic had moved about 30 miles south to Cobargo and had remarried. There were three daughters from this marriage.

Three of his children's names, William (Bill), Ethel and Olive, echoed the names of his siblings.

Fast forward to October 2019 and on "Ancestry" we received a post from Carolyn in Tasmania seeking information about Victor Tett. We replied giving details of the family and general background information. There was a rapid response from Carolyn saying that her mother, Barbara, who lives in Canberra, was very excited to learn of the contact and she had forwarded our email to her. We discovered that Barbara is Fred's daughter and would have had regular contact with her grandfather Vic throughout her childhood. Barbara recalls that his farmhouse was built in the 1920s and had a kitchen separate from the main home and bedrooms. There was a large veranda out the front and side. Vic rode his horse all the time on the farm checking cattle, fences etc.

We have exchanged many details and photos and we have learnt so much about Vic's life. He became a successful farmer and acquired a number of farming properties in the Cobargo area. His first farm, Longswamp, was "huge" with adjoining rough hillside and mountainous land. All of his properties are still farmed by his descendants. Vic was very involved with the local community and there is even a "Tetts Road" in Cobargo!



Old Cobargo

And now for the twist in the story. Five months before our first contact Barbara and her husband had visited England. They had spent a week in London and had travelled by train and bus to visit the Tett's family home, Woolpit Farm. The following are extracts from her email about their visit:--

"We were RIGHT THERE this May if only we knew of you. How amazing it would have been to meet you face to face and share time with COUSINS. We walked around Ewhurst and up the lane to Woolpit Farm and looked around the Church and the graveyard where the relatives are buried. I certainly gained a special understanding of where Pop came from and how absolutely beautiful that area is."



Barbara at Woolpit Farm in May 2019

Yes, they had walked past our garden boundary and, at that time, neither parties were aware of the other's existence!

Cobargo, where Vic lived and farmed for most of his life, is only a small settlement with under 800 inhabitants but it was shown on our BBC News in January 2020. From there Clive Myrie reported on the devastating fires which were raging in Australia. Their Prime Minister had finally returned from his holiday in Hawaii and Australians were very angry at his apparent neglect of the situation. He visited Cobargo and Clive's piece featured the very hostile reception that the Prime Minister received. I wonder if Uncle Vic's descendants were present in the crowd!

Barbara informed us that the Tett's farms were all blackened by the fires but because of sheer tenacity, being well prepared and staying to fight the fires, all stock and buildings were saved.

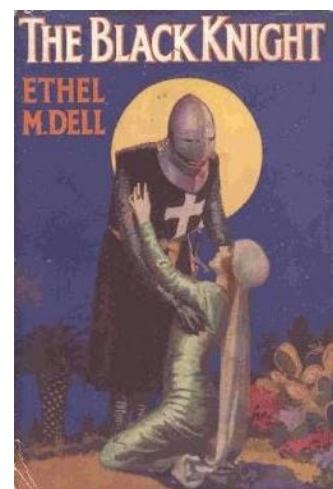
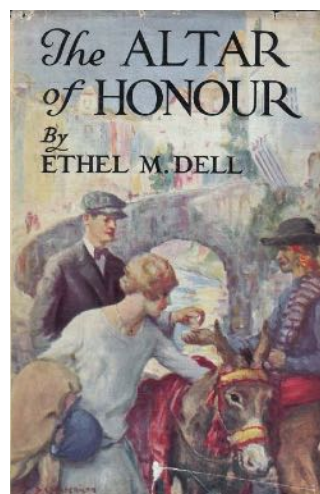
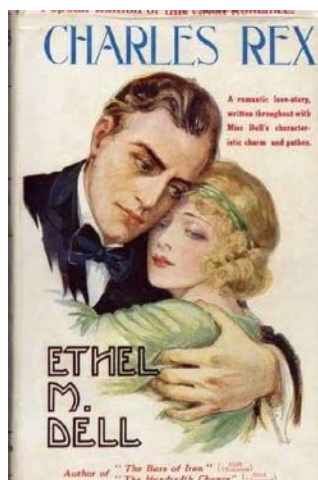
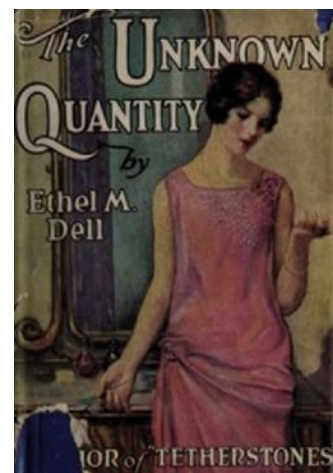
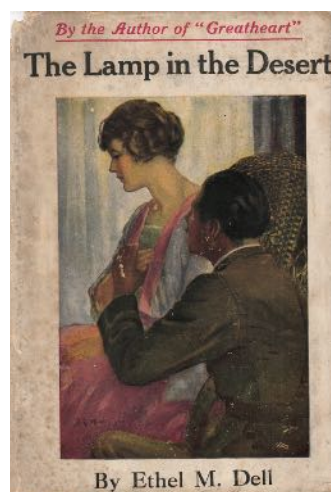
It is thanks to that initial "Ancestry" contact and subsequent discoveries that we now feel a strong connection to the Australian branch of our family.

THE LOST HOUSES OF ETHEL M. DELL

By Nigel Balchin

The demolition of Little Woolpit on Pitch Hill, and its subsequent redevelopment, brings to a close a chapter in the history of the village and marks the end of Ewhurst's link with one of the best-selling authors of romantic fiction in the early twentieth century. It also completes a somewhat inauspicious hat-trick.

The author in question was Ethel M. Dell. Whilst she was an author whose name would have been familiar to our mothers and grandmothers - she was still being requested when Janet was working on Surrey mobile libraries in the 1970s - she is largely forgotten today. Her escapist, romantic stories, often set in exotic locations, tended to be derided by the literary establishment, but were lapped up by her readers. Unlike her heroines, she was a shy, plain spinster who had never travelled and was never interviewed by the press. Pictures of her are very rare.



Born in 1881, and comfortably middle class, she began writing stories from an early age and, after a number of rejections, her first novel, *The Way of an Eagle*, was published in 1911; by 1915 it had been reprinted some thirty times, selling over one million copies. She carried on writing until her death in 1939, notching up over 30 novels, many of which were adapted for both film and the theatre. Her books continued to sell in large numbers and she became very wealthy, reportedly earning £20,000 in 1918 - £1.75m in today's terms. For a number of years she was one of the most widely read novelists in the English language.

In 1918, she moved, with her sister, to a large house in Boxgrove Road, Guildford, called *Glen Ancrum*. This house had been built in 1869 by Lieut. Col. Charles Lennox Tredcroft, who lived there until his death in 1917, aged 85. Ethel renamed the house *The Greenwood* and lived there until her marriage in 1922. Her privacy, which she guarded fiercely, was enhanced by a six-foot-high brick wall fronting Boxgrove Road, much of which survives to this day.



The surviving lodge to The Greenwood and part of the garden wall in Boxgrove Road.

The Greenwood, in its grounds stretching to 9 acres, was sold for £8,000 in 1922. The house was demolished in the late 1950s and the site redeveloped as The Greenwood Estate, Boxgrove Road, with over 50 houses on it. (Those readers paying attention may begin to see a pattern emerging here.)

At the age of 40, Ethel married Gerald Tahourdin Savage at Holy Trinity in Guildford. Reflecting her continued shyness and need for privacy, the wedding was held in secret at 8am on Wednesday 7th June 1922 under a special licence issued the previous afternoon by the Archbishop of Canterbury's faculty office. The honeymoon destination was similarly secret, the couple travelling 'incognito'.

Shortly afterwards, having spent time in the New Forest, they moved to Little Woolpit in Moonhall Road, Ewhurst. Whilst we know very little of their time in Ewhurst, her biography, written by her niece, relates that they were very happy there, forging a number of close,

lifelong friendships, albeit the later years were overshadowed by Ethel's increasing ill health. We do know that Gerald was a keen model-maker and that he built a model railway in the grounds.



Little Woolpit, Moon Hall Road, demolished 2021.

Gerald and Ethel stayed in Ewhurst until 1929, moving to Winchester where, in 1935, they commissioned a new house, to be built in a late Arts and Crafts style. They called it Meadowlands, but sadly they did not enjoy it for very long. It was not finished until 1937 and they let the house in 1939 when Gerald was called up and posted to Hertford. Ethel died in Hertford in September 1939 from cancer, at the age of 58.



Meadowlands, sitting in its 1.3 acre plot, was offered for sale in 2016. The house has since been demolished and the site redeveloped as a small housing estate with eleven houses.

Meadowlands

Ethel was very well known in her heyday but is now largely forgotten. She has left a significant legacy through her writings – she certainly doesn't leave one through the houses she lived in!

MARY SOMERVILLE 'THE QUEEN OF SCIENCE'

By Andrew Ferguson



*I raised my head above the parapet, that parapet of light and stayed there. However
this was in direct conflict with my well-intentioned father and other men of the day*

But it was my love of maths and sciences that drove me.

Background

The Scottish Enlightenment was a period of intensive intellectual and creative activity, which flowered in Scotland after the Act of Union in 1707. It is characterised by philosophers such as David Hume and Adam Smith, known as the father of economics, but included the geologist James Hutton who famously 'discovered' the age of the earth, the chemist Joseph Black, who discovered carbon dioxide and the concept of latent heat, and the inventor James Watt whose steam engines powered the Industrial Revolution. In the arts there were the poets Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns, the painters Allan Ramsay and Sir Henry Raeburn, the architect Robert Adam and many more. But all, you will notice, men.

When my book, 'Scots Who Enlightened the World' was published, I used to give talks, predominantly in Scotland, to publicise the book. As many in my audiences would be female, I often chose to talk about Mary Somerville, the mathematician and cosmologist who is most famously remembered in the name of Somerville College, Oxford and as one of the few women to have a crater in the moon named after her.

Mary was intensely aware of the injustice of a world which denied opportunities to women, writing in her autobiography, 'Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age,' that as a young woman she was '*intensely ambitious to excel in something, for I felt in my own breast that women were capable of taking a higher place in creation than that assigned to them in my early days.*'

Childhood

Mary was born on 26 December 1780 in the home of her aunt and uncle whose son she would

later marry, as she wrote *'born in the house of my future husband ... a rather singular coincidence,'* and was brought up in Fife on the shores of the Firth of Forth.

Mary's father was an admiral in the Royal Navy and spent long absences abroad. When he returned home after a long absence, he was horrified to see that his wilful, high-spirited daughter was roaming free on the shores of the Firth. *'This will never do,' he told my mother, 'Mary must learn to become a young lady. She must learn to write and to keep accounts.'*

At the age of ten Mary was sent to Miss Primrose's boarding school for girls in Musselburgh across the Firth. Mary wrote *'I hated it. I was utterly wretched, studying my lessons enclosed in a stiff corset with a steel busk in front, while above my frock, bands drew my shoulders back till the shoulder-blades met, then a steel rod, with a semi-circle which went under the chin, was clasped to the steel busk in my stays, all to improve my posture.'*

Mary only stayed a year before she went home. *'I was like a wild animal escaped. When the tide was out I spent hours on the sands looking at the starfish and sea-urchins and making collections of sea shells.'* She began to educate herself by reading every book she could find, much to the dismay of her mother who insisted she learnt needlework, a much more ladylike pursuit. She studied the piano and went to art school and it was here that she first heard of Euclid when her art teacher explained perspective.

She read the theorems of Euclid under the bedclothes at night because her father was horrified by her interest in mathematics, fearing such unnatural studies would injure the tender female frame and saying to her mother *'We must put a stop to this or we will have Mary in a straight-jacket one of these days.'*

Marriage and Mathematics

Her father was struggling to maintain the household on his pension and so it was time for Mary to marry her distant cousin Samuel Greig. Sadly he forbade her continuing her studies in mathematics. They had two children before Samuel died after just three years of marriage. Mary had a small inheritance and was now able to study the mathematics she loved, winning a competition through which she met William Wallace, a professor of mathematics. He told her that Newton had been a stultifying influence on mathematics in Britain and that she should study the works of the French mathematicians such as La Place.

In 1812 Mary married William Somerville, the son of her aunt and uncle in Jedburgh. William was a doctor and encouraged Mary's interest in science. When they moved to London, Mary met Sir William Herschel, the astronomer who discovered Uranus, the first planet found by using a telescope. She also met his son John Herschel with whom she formed a lifelong friendship.

In 1827 Mary was approached by Lord Brougham. He was interested in spreading knowledge more widely and asked Mary to translate the ground-breaking works of La Place into English in a form simple enough to be understood by the general reader.

'On the Mechanism of the Heavens' was published in 1831 and it proved an outstanding success. Mary used the book to give her own explanation of the cosmos, providing a mathematical understanding of the universe. Using mathematics, she identified an

irregularity in the orbit of Uranus which she thought might be caused by an as yet unidentified planet. In 1846 John Couch Adams, a Cambridge mathematician, used mathematics to prove the existence and exact location of Neptune, acknowledging the debt he owed to Mary.

In 1835 Mary and Caroline Herschel were both appointed honorary members of the Royal Astronomical Society, the first ladies to be so honoured.

'Molecular and Microscopic Science'

A few years later William developed a long-term illness and they moved to Italy where Mary kept up to date with developments in science through correspondence with John Herschel. In 1869, when Mary, remarkably, was eighty-nine years old her book 'Molecular and Microscopic Science' was published. Mary wrote *'It was exciting for me when the new technique of spectroscopic analysis meant we could determine the composition of the planets and stars and we learned that the fundamental elements which make our world are present throughout the universe.'*

Mary died three years later. She faced death with the same courage with which she had faced life, writing in her autobiography that *'The Blue Peter has long been flying at my foremast ... and now that I am in my ninety-second year I must soon accept the signal for sailing.'*

It was with justification that Mary Somerville was described in her obituary as the 'Queen of Science.' Women were indeed capable of taking a higher place in creation than that which had been assigned to them.

Her portrait was featured in 2017 on the Royal Bank of Scotland ten-pound note featuring famous Scots.



Quotations from Mary Somerville: 'Personal Recollections from Early Life to Old Age'

SAMUEL WHILEY AND HIS PRESENTATION BOWL

By John Greenwood

I have inherited a silver plated bowl inscribed '*The Drake* / [illustration of the ship] / *Sam. Whiley 1815* / *May Industry & Integrity meet its due Reward.*' It has the appearance of a leaving present. But who was Sam Whiley and why do I have the bowl?

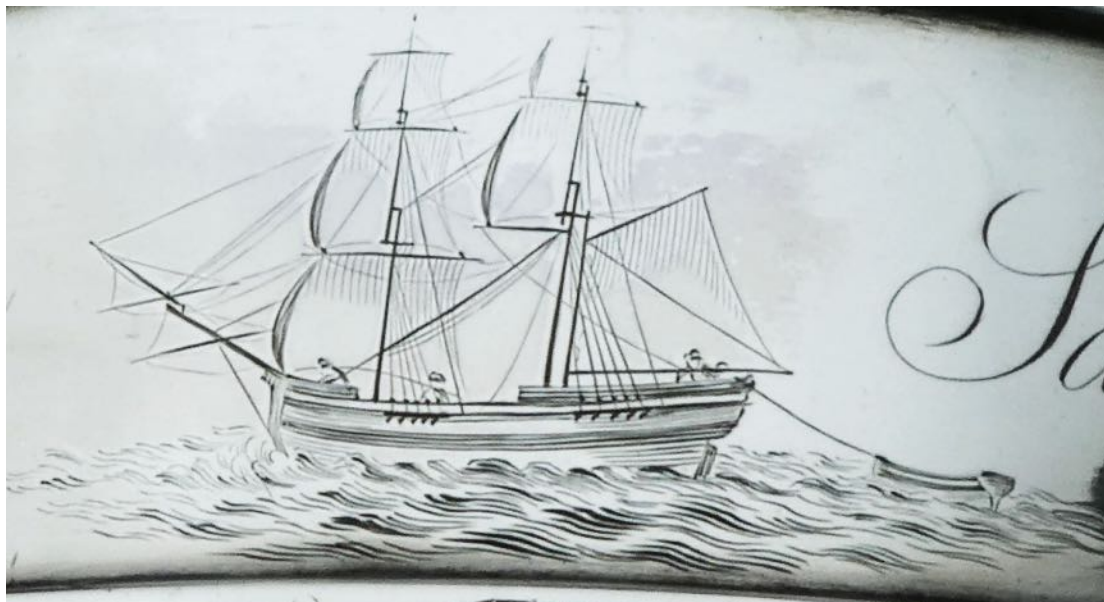


An initial search on Ancestry and FindMyPast revealed a couple of isolated facts, but nothing that could be connected with our family. It was only a separate search in the National Archives that led to a copy of his will. This helped me unravel the following story.

Samuel Whiley was born in 1778, give or take a year. His will states that he had qualified as a Master Mariner. The Master of a ship was subordinate to the Captain and responsible for the navigation and equipment. Captains of naval ships are well recorded, but Masters are not. In 1812, during the Napoleonic War, Samuel Whiley, Master, was released under an exchange of prisoners with the French, so he must have joined the Navy and been taken prisoner. He will then have joined HMS Drake, a 10 gun Cherokee class brig-sloop with two masts, which had been launched in Ipswich in 1808 as one of 115 ships built for the Navy in different yards to a standard design. (One of these was HMS Beagle, which later took Darwin on his famous voyage round South America.)

In December 1814, under Captain Grant, HMS Drake left Falmouth, much delayed, with a convoy for the West Indies, and arrived on 9 September 1815 in Kingston Jamaica via Madeira. At some point that year Samuel, as Master, must have been presented with his commemorative bowl. In 1816 HMS Drake was stationed in Jamaica where Captain Jackson took over. In 1817 she returned to Portsmouth. She returned to North America to report on

the fisheries of Labrador, but on 20 June 1822 was wrecked off Newfoundland with the loss of the captain and many of the crew. John Powers, the cook, survived the wreck: he had had his thigh amputated in 1815 and it is recorded that while undergoing what must have been an excruciatingly painful operation he astonished the surgeon by pointing out an error in a hawser above him.



Detail of the engraving

Samuel must have stayed in England and we do not know whether the news of the death of his former colleagues had reached him by 26 July when he wrote his will. He must have been on his deathbed as he was buried at St George in the East, Shadwell, on 3 August 1822. His family wasted no time in seeing to his will: it was proved by the court the day before his burial. He was 44 years old.

In his will he describes himself as a Master Mariner, living in John Street, Commercial Road, which is now Johnson Street in Shadwell in Tower Hamlets. He left money to his sisters, to the two sons of his brother George and to his nephew John Whiley, none of whom I can trace. But the rest of his estate was reserved in trust for his niece, appointing his executor Louis Michael Simon to be her guardian 'with the sole and exclusive power of maintaining educating advancing or placing out my said niece as he shall decide fit and proper for her'. At the time his niece was eighteen years old and living in Flanders.

The name of his niece was Ann Lee, which is the clue to the connection to our family. She had been born on 24 February 1804 in Yorkshire. On 7 May 1825, following her return from Flanders, she married the 29 year old George John Taylor at the same church as where Samuel was buried. George John Taylor was my great-great-grandfather.

George and Ann went on to have six children: George, born in 1826 and baptised at Stepney, Harriet in 1827, Jane in 1828, Frederick in 1830, Alfred in 1833 and James in 1836. Harriet married Thomas Dickson, born in 1816, and our family has two charming small portraits of him and his sister Eliza (with cat), still in their original frames, together with the Dickson family bible, a 'Barkers Bible' dating from the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1871 and 1881 Harriet

was back living with her parents. Alfred became a doctor and is my great-grandfather. James was given the second name Whiley, presumably in gratitude to Samuel's legacy, and became known as 'Uncle Whiley'. The family lived in Limehouse until the 1861 census when George was a clerk in the West India Docks. In 1871 they lived at 1 Church Road, East Ham and in 1881 at Manor Hall, High Street, East Ham. The family record says that he was a harbourmaster. He died in 1884.



Thomas Dickson (left) and his sister, Eliza (right). At this time it was the custom for little boys to wear dresses until they were 'breeched'. (Thomas was John's great grandfather's brother-in-law and not a direct ancestor)

So Samuel Whiley, Master Mariner, was my great-great-great-great uncle, and I have his presentation bowl.

A LOOK AT PAST PARISH MAGAZINES

By John White

One of my tasks during lockdown has been to put together past copies of the Parish Magazine (now called 'News and Views') with the intention of depositing them with Surrey History Centre. Combining the collections of Nigel and Janet Balchin, the church, myself and copies already at SHC, there is now a complete run from 1963 onwards together with a good selection of earlier magazines dating from 1903 already at SHC. My task has taken much longer than planned, not least because I could not resist reading many of those old magazines. To give a flavour of our past, I picked out copies from 50 and 25 years ago.

Cast your minds back 50 years to 1971. The era of hippies, bell-bottoms, ankle-length maxi dresses, and hot pants. World events included the release of the first microprocessor, and the eruption of Mount Etna; in the UK the voting age was lowered to 18, decimal currency was introduced, and 66 people were killed at the Ibrox Stadium disaster in Glasgow.

Closer to home, 19 bungalows had just been completed at The Glebe, together with a Warden's House and Day Centre, to add to the 16 bungalows already built by Hambledon Rural District Council (which became part of Waverley District Council a few years later). The rents were £4.50 per week to include rates and water rates. Cranleigh Swimming Pool celebrated its first birthday. In the parish church, The Revd. Bensted was Rector and all the readers and sidesmen were male; ladies looked after cleaning and flowers. One of the churchwardens was George Nicholson and the secretary to the parochial church council was Mabel Edwards, both of whom many current residents will still remember. The Bishop of Guildford wrote about the diocese's link with Nigeria; much later, that link was headed up by two successive Rectors of Ewhurst until David Minn's departure in 2017. A bible in modern English was presented to the church to ensure that bible readings were finally in the language of the 20th century. Sunday services held to a regular pattern; an 8am Holy Communion was followed by Matins at 11am and Evensong at 6.30pm – and that was every Sunday.

There were only two advertisers in the bi-monthly magazine and they were both Cranleigh based – Waterbridge Farm Garden Centre in Knowle Lane and Cromwell Sandwich House in High Street. Five years later, the sole advertiser was Ewhurst Garage who sold DAF cars and offered Green Shield Stamps. It is not stated whether you got stamps with a new car – if so, it would have been a very considerable number.


Fast forward to 1996. On the world scene, the east coast of North America suffered a blizzard causing at least 50 deaths, an IRA bomb exploded in London's Docklands, the Olympic Games were held in Atlanta, Georgia, (GB only gained one gold), and Bill Clinton was re-elected president. Tailored skirt or trouser suits were in fashion for ladies, power dressing was all the rage but so was 'grunge' fashion – ripped jeans and Doc Martens. Hot pants made a return. 16 children and their teacher were killed at Dunblane in Scotland, the Spice Girls formed, and Take That split up. Dolly became the first cloned sheep, the film 'Jurassic Park' hit the screens, Prince Charles and Diana divorced, as did Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson.

In Ewhurst, developments continued. In the 25 years to 1996, housing at Lilyfields, Larkfield and Rectory Close had been completed. There was comment on the exceptionally cold weather and mention is made of a flu epidemic. The parish church had its first lady churchwarden, Joan Hobbs (she retired during the year to be replaced by yours truly), whilst Mabel Edwards was again secretary of the parochial church council. David Lewis was our Rector; of the 18 members of the council, six are still members of the congregation. Approval was obtained for re-ordering the South Transept (which was not without its critics), the Infant School celebrated its 150th anniversary and a mile of 2p's (63,360 in all) was laid in the school playground in aid of the school swimming pool fund; the total value was £1,267. An article noted that as early as 1709 the Rector was funding a charity school and this was followed in 1846 by the then Rector, John Mount Barlow, dedicating the site on which the present school was being built.

A forthcoming marathon walk by Revd. Denis Ackroyd was announced to celebrate his 60th birthday and 25 years in ministry. He was setting off from his parish in Yorkshire and ending at the Dorset parish from which he came before arriving at Ewhurst. His walk was to take him through his former parishes (including Ewhurst), a total of 375 miles over two weeks.

I must now bring myself into the 21st century with all its current problems. I have realised that, despite many changes over the years, Ewhurst is still recognisable as the same caring village and community to which my wife and I moved 40 years ago. I have no hesitation in reflecting that we made the right decision.

July/Sept. 1976. - PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS -



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LOCAL DELIVERIES

Adverts from 1976 (above) and 1996 (right)