

Ewhurst History Society Journal



We have a very full content for this journal, divided into two parts. Part 1 contains four articles about local history and other subjects, whilst Part II contains a round-up of our summer activities.

Bob Verner-Jeffreys' father, Robert, was Lost at Sea in the Second World War when his submarine failed to return from a mission. Bob provided me with a photo of his father for 'Ewhurst 1910- 1960' and also wrote a lovely letter of his memories of Ewhurst. Nigel has contributed two articles for this issue: one about William Joseph Bailey, a previously unknown casualty for the First World War who is buried in Ewhurst churchyard, and the other about his pewter mug which used to belong to James Child, the landlord of the old Bull's Head in Ewhurst in the 1820s. Finally, Debbie Gauvain has written about her very unusual childhood, growing up on a Thames Barge moored at Conyer in Kent

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We would like to publish the next edition in February 2023 and hope that members will be able to contribute. Although we hope to keep a strong local emphasis, we are looking for articles on 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 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@googlemail.com

Bob Verner-Jeffreys is the son of Lt Robert Verner Jeffreys RN who was Lost at Sea in December 1942 when his submarine, HMS Traveller, was reported missing whilst on a reconnaissance of Taranto Harbour. Robert's name is listed on the Ewhurst Second World War Memorial at Ewhurst Recreation Ground and on the plaques in the two churches.

EWHURST MEMORIES

By Bob Verner Jeffreys

Although my mother, my stepfather, brother John and I only came to live at Upper House in 1947, Granny V-J had lived at Brockhurst since before I was born and we went backwards and forwards between Capel and Ewhurst; my father said he held the record for driving between the two - 15 minutes?

My grandmother, Dorothy Verner-Jeffreys, lost both her husband and brother in the First World War. Commander Robert Jeffreys was killed in February 1915 in HMS Clan McNaughtan and his brother-in-law, Commander Rudolf Verner, was killed 2 months later in HMS Inflexible at the Dardanelles. After their deaths, her father, Colonel Willoughby Verner, asked her to join the surnames by deed poll.

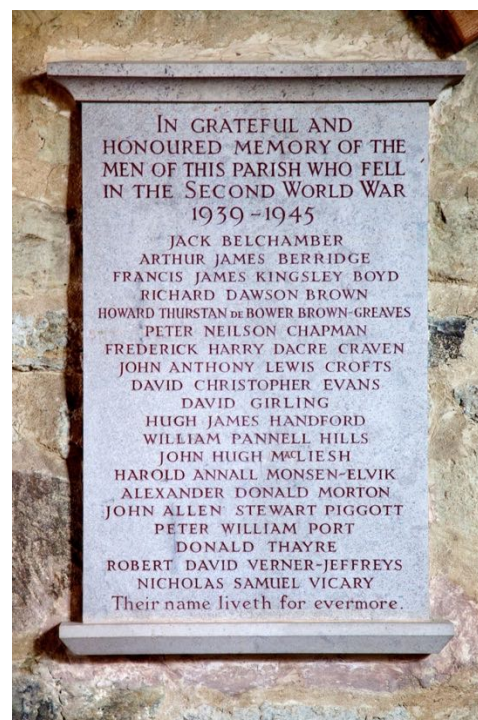
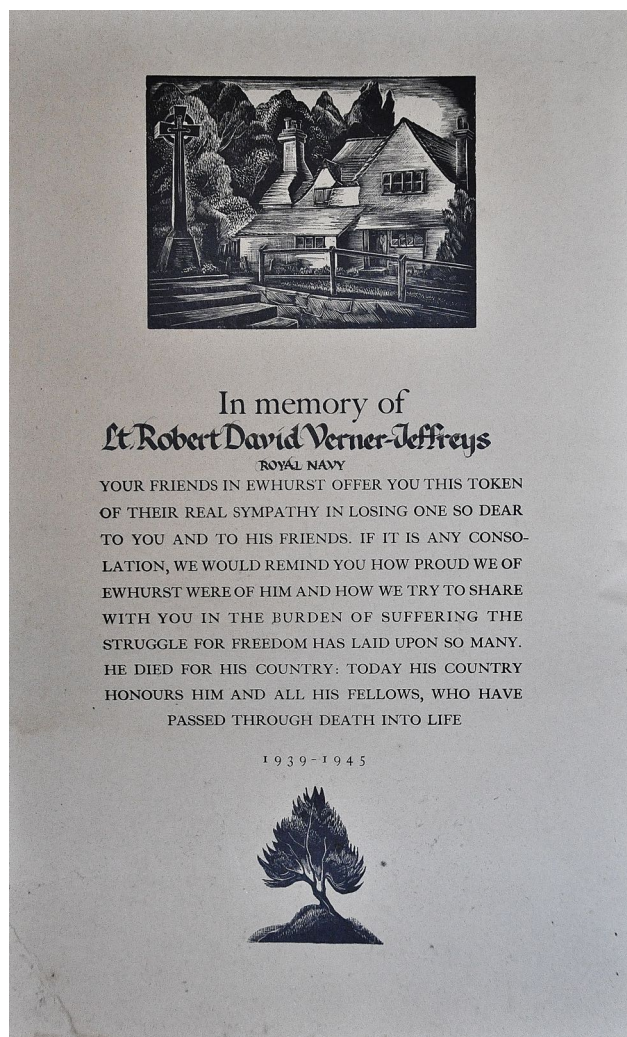
In about 1935 Dorothy and her 2 sons, (my father and his brother) moved from Devon to Ewhurst to Brockhurst, in Wykehurst Lane, which she rented from the Bray estate.

My parents married in Malta in 1936 and went to live at Hurst in Capel. [Bob's mother Audrey Verner Jeffreys (née Bray) was connected to both the Bray family of Shere and the Broadwood family of Capel. Bob was born in 1937 and his younger brother was born in 1940]



My father's submarine, HMS Traveller, was a T class submarine built at Greenock and launched in August 1941. We lived on the Clyde for a time while she was built and commissioned. I was actually allowed on board once, but during the commissioning ceremony was banished to the shipyard secretary's office - my first memory of cherry slab cake.

Lt. Robert Verner-Jeffreys was serving in HMS Traveller when it was reported missing. HMS Traveller had left Malta on 28 November 1942 to carry out a reconnaissance of Taranto harbour. She was signalled on 8 December, but did not answer and on 12 December was assumed to have been lost, probably having struck an Italian mine.



Above: The Memorial Plaque in Ewhurst Church

Left: Scroll presented to Robert's family by the people of Ewhurst, 1945

During the war my mother was with the ARP at Pippbrook, Dorking driving an ambulance, as was her sister Elsa. She wrote beautifully illustrated books for me, including a friendly barrage balloon and a cow called Minnie who joined the Home Guard. After the war, when living in Ewhurst, she joined the Civil Defence.

At Brockhurst the blackout curtains were made by my aunt, Elsa, a Slade-trained artist and committed Communist, from propaganda posters. One day there we were called out to see what must have been a prototype helicopter, another aunt said "Oh look, an autogyro".

I also remember the searchlight battery on Shippen Hill almost opposite Granny's in Wykehurst Lane.

In 1946 my mother married again, to Edward Richardson. My stepfather's family were living at Shiremark, near Kingsfold, then in 1947 we moved to Upper House at Ewhurst Green.

I remember Dr Hawes, whose surgery was just across the green, and Mr Dollar was at the church. If I read or hear Matins it is Mr Dollar's voice I hear. Deliveries came from Lade's and Hazelbank Stores, including an awful South African sherry.

We spent much time with the family of one of my father's Naval friends from the Far East, the Underhills, who rented part of the cottage on the corner of Shere Road from Miss Ette [Old Cottage]. As young boys we haunted the barn of the Crown Inn, nearly next door, and were given bottles of strong Friary Audit ale by "Chunky" the landlord. The barn was a mess, but I remember finding and reading a wrecked paperback from about 1900 describing a Russian invasion and the Battle of Dorking!

A story about the Cumber brothers - they once painted the two sides of a customer's waggon different colours, but then as they said, "you can't see both sides at once".

In 1953 we went to London with my stepfather Edward to see the Coronation Procession. We were given seats at Admiralty Arch and a good day was had by all, but I missed the Ewhurst Ox Roast and local celebrations. We didn't get a TV until 1958 when I was 21 and just out of the Navy. But Granny V-J had a television quite early on, small and dark, and John and I would ride up to Brockhurst to watch it. I remember the BBC play of 'Nineteen Eighty Four' - then impossibly far ahead in 1954.

Later, my maternal grandmother Joan Bray moved from Capel to Greenfield Cottage, Cranleigh Road, Ewhurst, about 1960 with her daughter Elsa, who had been a missionary in Canada (where she and my mother had been born). My grandmother Joan died in 1972 and Elsa in 1994. My stepfather, Edward Richardson, died in 1984 and my mother in 1989.

A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN FIRST WORLD WAR CASUALTY IN EWHURST CHURCHYARD: WILLIAM JOSEPH BAILEY

By Nigel Balchin

It was in October of 2021 when Janet and I, whilst walking up through the village, spotted, parked by the war memorial, a van bearing the name of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Being naturally curious, and aware that there are a handful of CWGC graves in the churchyard, Janet approached the driver to find out why he was here. The driver introduced himself as Kevin Barnes, CWGC Regional Operations Coordinator (South East) and that he was checking out the grave of a William Joseph Bailey. He explained that the CWGC were reviewing the United Kingdom Book of Remembrance, which commemorates United Kingdom casualties of the two World Wars who were not formerly recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The CWGC is now identifying where these individuals are buried and installing memorials as appropriate. William's name is not on the Ewhurst War Memorial or the commemorative plaques in the churches and we were surprised to find a First World War Casualty that neither we, nor Andy Bailey [no relation] who carried out much of the detailed WW1 research, had previously been aware of.

Looking into his family history it soon became clear that the Ewhurst connection came from his wife's family, the Alberys. William Joseph Bailey had been born in 1865 in Alverstoke, Hampshire. His father's occupation was coachman and William, at the age of 15, was employed as a groom. In 1882, aged 17, William joined the navy and served until 1890. At least 1890 is the last date shown on his service record. The record ends with the following note: *"Not to be borne on ships' books while acting as pte. [private] servant to Captain Beaumont of "Excellent""*. Captain Beaumont (later Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont) was captain of HMS Excellent from June 1893 until July 1894. More research is needed here

Despite apparently leaving the service he remained closely associated with the navy for the rest of his life. In 1891 he was employed as butler to Captain Markham RN (promoted to Admiral later the same year) at Portsmouth Dockyard. Just before Christmas that year William married Elizabeth Albery in London.

Sometime between 1881 and 1891, Elizabeth's parents, William and Elizabeth Albery, and four of their children (but not Elizabeth) had moved to Ewhurst. In 1891 her father was employed as a farm labourer at Westland Farm. He subsequently moved to Yard Farm, and it was here that Elizabeth Albery died in 1897. She is buried in Ewhurst churchyard. By 1901 William Albery had moved again, and was living at Moon Hall, again as an agricultural labourer. Meanwhile, William and Elizabeth Bailey were now living at Chatham Dockyard, where William was butler to Admiral Swinton Holland.

Back in Ewhurst, there was a double wedding in 1902, when two of Elizabeth's sisters were married. Ten years earlier, another Albery sister, Kate, had married a George Randell, who was the brother of Samuel Randell, a Ewhurst WW1 casualty commemorated on our war memorial. Elizabeth's father, William Albery, died in 1909 and was buried with his wife in Ewhurst churchyard.

The 1911 census shows William Bailey as living at St Georges, Hurstpierpoint, where he is butler to Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont. On the 16th November 1914 William, by then aged 49, enlisted in what became known as the Royal Defence Corps. (This was a Home Service Corps for soldiers either too old or medically unfit for active front-line service). He was discharged for reasons of ill health, from the

72nd Protection Company, on 11th September 1918 and was awarded the Silver War Medal. Also known as the Silver Wounds Medal, this medal was awarded to service personnel who had been honourably discharged due to wounds, disability or sickness.

He died of TB, aged 53, on the 3rd May 1919 at St Georges, the home of Admiral Beaumont at Hurstpierpoint, Sussex and was buried 5 days later in Ewhurst churchyard in a plot close to that of his wife's parents William and Elizabeth Albery. His wife, Elizabeth, moved to Ewhurst and was living at Hazelbank when she died in 1937. She was buried with her husband in Ewhurst churchyard.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission plaque was duly installed on the grave and a short dedication service, led by Rev. Clare Shepherd, and attended by a few History Society members, was held on July 13th 2022 in Ewhurst churchyard.



William Joseph Bailey's grave in Ewhurst churchyard, with the new plaque.

It is on the northern edge of the churchyard, close to the gate to the Old Rectory Drive.

IF ONLY THE MUG COULD TALK!

By Nigel Balchin

With the reopening of the Bull's Head, after its lengthy refurbishment, I thought that it was appropriate that I document what I regard to be one of the most interesting items of Ewhurst history that we have collected over the years.

In 2019 I acquired, from a local collector friend, a pewter mug engraved "J Child Bulls Head Ewhurst". We know that a James Child was landlord of the old Bull's Head from 1819 until his death in 1840. (For those who don't know, the old Bull's Head is the building by the church now called the Old Post Office.)



The mug has a number of marks on it and, as I know nothing of pewter, I contacted the Pewter Society. They boast a database of some 20,000 pewterers. I sent them a number of pictures and I quote from their reply: *"This is a fine cast pewter pint truncated cone former pub mug with a "C" handle terminating where there is a decorative fillet around the body. The Excise marks include the three swords of Middlesex in a shield struck before 1878 and a similarly dated "D over SY" for Dorking Surrey. The third is detrited and more uncertain with a larger than normal crown over "W.R" possibly for William the Forth (sic) but by what authority is also unknown but certainly well before 1878 when the numbering system came in."*

In addition, they suggested that I look to see if there was a maker's mark, often found inside the mug at the bottom. I had not previously looked there, but following their instructions, which involved wetting the inside, I was able to read the name 'Smith'. The Pewter Society have well over two hundred 'Smiths' recorded in their database but many can be eliminated by working date. The Society suggested that it is likely to have been made by an unidentified London pewterer working between 1810 and 1840.



Far left and centre:
excise marks.

Left: makers mark for
'Smith' on the inside
(after wetting)

So how do the marks on the mug tie in with what we can find out about the Child family? James Child and Charlotte (née Wadey) were married in 1817 at St James in Westminster. At the time Westminster was part of Middlesex, not transferring to London until 1889, and this possibly explains the presence of the Middlesex excise mark on the mug. It is not clear what they were both doing in London (James was born in Ewhurst and Charlotte in Pulborough) but a connection with the licenced trade cannot be ruled out. The maker's mark of Smith is, in all probability, a London mark, and the working dates tie in well with the period prior to James taking over at the Bull's Head. The Dorking excise mark would have been added when they moved to Ewhurst.

James had been born in Ewhurst in 1791, one of ten children born to Solomon and Mary Child (née Lassam). The landlord of the Bull's Head prior to James Child was a Solomon Child and we presume that James took over the pub from his father in 1819. Solomon died in 1833 and is buried in Ewhurst churchyard. James died in 1840 and the 1841 census lists his wife, Charlotte, as Innkeeper.

The 1851 census lists George Child as Victualler and farmer at the Bull's Head. James and Charlotte had a son named George (b. 1824) and it is probable that he took over from his mother. By 1851 Charlotte had moved to Shere and she is recorded there in the next two censuses. She died at the Grove Hotel in Merton, in 1879, exactly one week after another of her sons, David, who was by then the publican at the Grove Hotel. Both James and Charlotte are buried in Ewhurst.

In August 1823, whilst James Child was the landlord at the Bull's Head, William Cobbett passed through Ewhurst. He recorded his experience in his book, *Rural Rides*: "*At Ewhurst, which is a very pretty village, and the church of which is most delightfully situated, I treated my horse to some oats, and myself to a rasher of bacon.*" It is likely that this took place at the Bull's Head and it is nice to think that Cobbett might have drunk from our mug!



The Bull's Head painted in 1822 by John Hassell. James Child was the landlord at this time.

Finally, I had the opportunity to take my mug to one of the two opening nights for the newly refurbished Bull's Head and have a drink out of it. If only the mug could talk – what tales it could tell!

LIFE ON A THAMES SAILING BARGE IN CONYER QUAY, KENT

By Debbie Gauvain

My parents moved to a Thames sailing barge on a residential mooring at Conyer Quay, in Kent, in 1949 from a flat in London, rather an extreme change! Ma's piano was brought from the flat in London and lowered into the saloon through the roof!

Thames sailing barges were generally 80 feet long by 20 feet wide, designed to be sailed by a man and a boy only. They were steered with a rudder and a leeboard on either side of the hull, with a spritsail rigging and enormous sails. The mainsail was approx. 27 feet by 34 feet, giving a sail area of 285 square yards in the traditional terra cotta colour. Because they were narrow and had a flat bottom, they could travel into shallow waters and rivers, along the Medway and Thames and up the east coast.

Barges worked along the east coast of England delivering cargoes of bricks, cement, hay, rubbish, sand, coal, grain and gunpowder. Timber, bricks and hay were stacked on the deck while cement and grain were carried loose in the hold. A man had to sit on top of the stacked hay to guide the skipper! Essex clay or clay deposits along the Swale were mixed with local chalk and town ash, transported by barge to Conyer, and the finished Kentish yellow bricks went back to London. These 100-ton capacity barges could carry around 40,000 bricks. Barges would go out on the ebbing tide and return on the flood.

Our barge, Sunbeam, along with many others, was built in Maldon, Essex. All the six barges in Conyer Creek were converted into beautiful homes, with all mod cons. On board Sunbeam there was a Rayburn in the kitchen and a coal burning stove in the saloon. However, when it rained, saucepans and buckets were placed around the interior to catch the drips. An annual job was to repaint the decks which hopefully made it more watertight. Everyone had beautiful gardens, and strong friendships were formed by the barge dwellers, still existing to this day. Even then my father kept chickens on the shore. I remember watching the Coronation on the first television in Conyer on the barge called Mermaid! My mother had a wind-up telephone to speak to our neighbour on the next-door barge, Waveney!

Conyer was a small village, surrounded by marshes and apple and cherry orchards, where the no-through road led up to one of the brickfields, which with boat-building offered much employment. There was a pub but no school; my friend Jeremy and I went on the bus into Sittingbourne, all by ourselves – we knew all the bus conductors in those days!

Being flat bottomed with a draft of 3 feet, barges rose up and down with the tide. During the great flood in 1953, our barges rose up with the high tide over the gardens, and the water flooded inland for several miles. Many livestock drowned and orchards were destroyed. As the waters receded, the barge inhabitants had to stay up all night to ensure the barges settled back into the creek.

Sunbeam had no rigging but the other barges in the creek did. Every weekend my father would start the engine to make sure it was working, and empty the bilges. Fencing was put up around the edges of the deck to stop us falling in – the only accident was our pure white cat called Billy Boy, who fell into the mud at low tide one day. I don't think we ever moved out of the creek which was narrow. We often had friends staying, and could sleep up to 8 on board with several bedrooms, two bathrooms, kitchen, the large open plan saloon with dining on one side of the keelson (the backbone of the boat) and sitting area on the other, a small bedroom, all of which had been part of the hold, and a corridor leading to two further bedrooms. A guest named the small cabin 'the Nutcracker Suite' due to constantly banging

his head on the low ceiling. After a while my parents both suffered from bad backs from bending to go through a low corridor to reach the bedrooms in the bows. When she was born in 1953, my sister Emma's cot was placed right in the bows in the foc'sle where normally ropes were kept, but it did her no harm!

We were lucky enough to be brought up messing about in boats, be it rowing or sailing. My father had various motor boats in which we ventured out into the Swale for trips, although my abiding memory is him trying to start the engine, which nearly always let him down, pulling and pulling on the starter rope. On one occasion, we overturned and were flung into the water. I was trapped under the hull and can remember it to this day, before my father managed to overturn the boat and I popped up! I must have been about six and it was quite traumatic as my mother remembers thinking that now she only had one daughter, my younger sister – who was not on board that time.

Some neighbours who owned the barge named Saltcote Belle sometimes went across to France in her, and took part in the annual Thames Barge Sailing race. In the 50s she was used in a film called 'Raising a Riot', starring Kenneth More, who had to rescue a cat stuck in the rigging, obviously not a real one, which took days to shoot, much to everyone's amusement!

Before the Second World War, William Edward Joyce, later known as Lord Haw Haw, kept a boat at Conyer where it underwent work. Later, when he was arrested, it was found that the gaps where the water tanks should have been were used instead for his radio transmitters and generators, to transmit information into Germany! He had been known as a polite and pleasant man while living in Conyer, but being found guilty of treason, he was hanged in 1946, but of course, that was before my parents moved there.



An old picture of 'Sunbeam' when she was a working Thames Barge, at Maldon Quay, c.1904.

In 1958 my father sold Sunbeam and we moved to Rumbeams, Ewhurst. After we left Conyer Sunbeam was moved to Chiswick Eyot in the Thames near Hammersmith and in about the mid 70s we found she was moored on the Thames near Windsor.