

Ewhurst History Society Journal



We have a very full content for this journal, divided into two parts. Part 1 contains articles about local history and other subjects, whilst Part II is a report of our winter social and the objects bought along by members.

Martin Lockwood is a former pupil of Woolpit - St Thomas's School (now the Duke of Kent School) and having given us a talk about it a few years ago he has now written it up as an article. In November we had a talk from Michael Miller about Postal Services in Cranleigh and Ewhurst, and his talk included some particularly interesting letters connected with Baynards. He has written up the Ewhurst part of the talk and also a note on some interesting letter carrier's buttons found locally. We also asked the members who spoke at our family history evening at Christmas if they would write up their presentations and we have articles from Alan Webber about his father, a holder of the Military Medal, and Barrie Heathcote on a 'one-name' study of the Heathcote family. (The other two articles from the family history meeting will be carried forward to a future edition of the journal).

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We will be publishing the next edition in May 2023 and already have some articles, but extra articles are always welcome. 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

THE FOUNDING OF WOOLPIT (ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY SCHOOL) EWHURST

By Martin Lockwood

Woolpit stands on a sheltered plateau under the lee of the wooded hillside of Pitch Hill some 650 feet above sea level. The land was originally owned by "The Hospital of the Blessed Trinity" [Abbot's Hospital] in Guildford, who sold it in 1882 to Sir Henry Doulton, of Royal Doulton, who commissioned Sir Ernest George and Harold Peto to build Woolpit in 1885. It is now a Grade 2 listed building. The house remained in the family for three generations and was requisitioned for British and Canadian forces during World War II.



Woolpit was founded by the clergyman and educationalist The Rev'd Dr C K Francis Brown. He had been the headmaster of the Royal Grammar School lower school 1932-1942, Chaplain of St. Nicholas Church Guildford, a Deacon of Guildford Cathedral and Chaplain at Hockrill Teacher Training College. Prior to coming to Woolpit he had been Rector of East Clandon and also the headmaster of the Rectory Prep School, which he had started there in 1946. This was the first of five schools he would go on to found, plus an external University College linked to Oxford University. In his spare time he was the author of five books on Victorian Education.

Left: The Rev'd. Dr C.K. Francis Brown and his wife, Louise, at Ewhurst church in 1952.

With 15 pupils the Rectory Prep school at East Clandon eventually became too big for the Rectory and thus the need for larger premises. After the war Woolpit was acquired by school benefactors, Ronald Gaze and Bernard Newman, who leased the premises to the St. Thomas's Church Schools (Woolpit) Company Ltd. on a peppercorn rent of £1 per year. The choice of Woolpit seems to have come about through connections with Arthur Lockwood (my uncle), the estates surveyor to the Bray Estate. On taking occupation of Woolpit his staff found various debris left over from the occupation including discovering a few hand grenades left in a cupboard. The school opened on 6th May 1949 with sixteen boys, and the aim of having a maximum capacity of 75 boys.

Francis Brown's first employee was Major Ingram Blenkarn as bursar. The school often played cricket and football against another Ewhurst prep school, Desmoor School (which later became known as Cornhill Manor and is now a boarding house for Hurtwood School.)



Right: The headmaster's study.

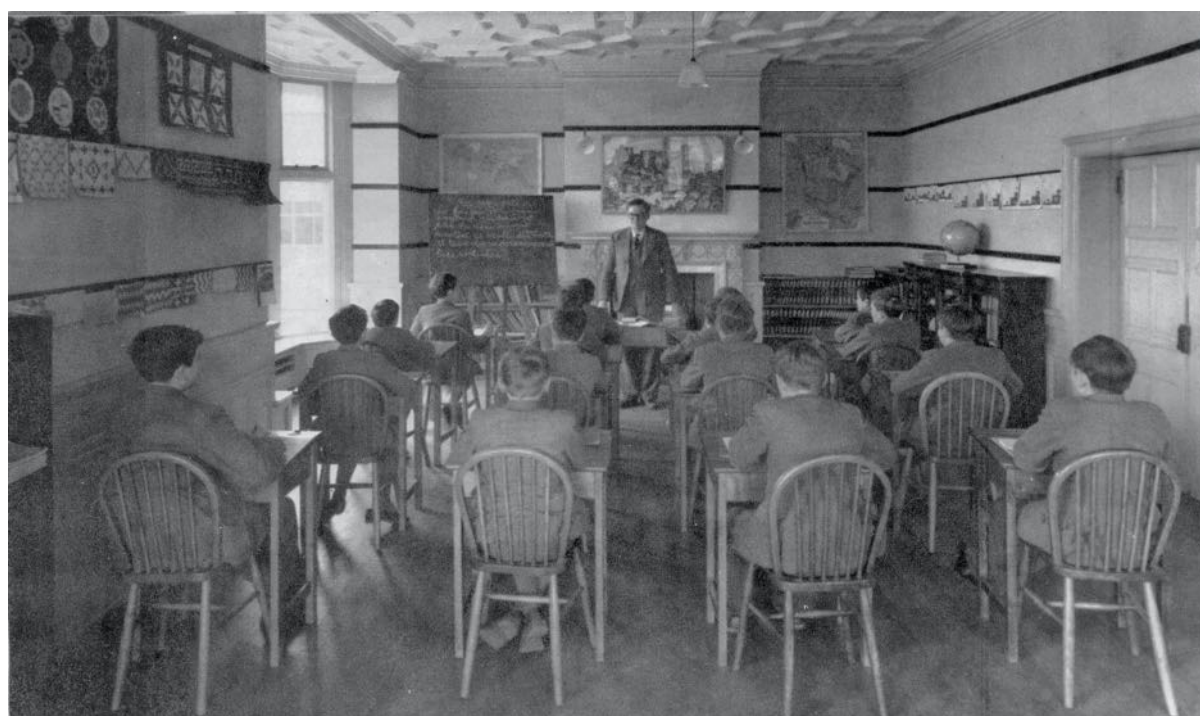
In 1950 the Canterbury Building was added, a gift of Mr. H Roscoe, part dormitory accommodation on first floor, whilst the ground floor was part refectory and teaching areas. During the construction Francis Brown “persuaded” the boys to help by carrying all the bricks off delivery lorries and placing them around the foundation areas (a means of cost reduction!)



The south front of Woolpit with the new Canterbury building on the left.

The little building on the far left is a garden Gazebo.

In October 1951 Woolpit School was formally recognised by the Ministry of Education, and the Canterbury building was officially opened by the Lord Bishop of London - the foundation stone was originally part of the fabric of Canterbury Cathedral for over eight hundred years. In the 1970s the building had a pitched roof added as the original asphalt flat roof had begun leaking.



A classroom.

Parents were only permitted to visit on a Wednesday or Saturday after 2.30pm. and boys were not to be taken out of school without written permission, and not permitted to be taken out of school games. Only a maximum of three visits per term were allowed. The domestic side of the school was organised by Louise Brown, the headmaster's wife. Each boy, on attending, had to have a certificate of health signed by a doctor, a dentist and an oculist.



A dormitory.



The dining room.

In addition to uniform and sports kit parents had to provide bedsheets, pillowcases, towels and tuck-boxes.

WOOLPIT (ST. THOMAS'S SCHOOL) EWHURST SURREY				
CLOTHING LIST				
All articles, except boots, must be marked with Cash's woven names.				
Number required.	Number sent. To be filled in by Parent.	Article.	Number returned.	Remarks.
X 1	✓	Grey Flannel Suit (1 Extra Pair Trousers)		
X 1	✓	School Blazer		
2	2	Grey Woollen Pullovers (Sleeveless)		
1	1	Navy Blue Raincoat		
1	1	Dressing Gown		
X 3	3	Grey Flannel Shirts—with collars attached		
3	3	Pairs of Pyjamas		
3	3	Pairs of Pajamas		
X 3	3	Vests (3 Summer)		
4	4	Pairs of Grey Stockings		
12	12	Handkerchiefs		
1	1	Brush and Comb		
1	1	Flannel (with loop), Nailbrush, Toothbrush		
1	1	Toothpaste, Sponge Bag		EACH TERM
1	1	Week-end Case		
X 2	2	Pairs of Black Shoes		
X 1	1	Pair of Wellington Boots		
1	1	Pair of Wellington Boot Socks		
1	1	Pair of Bedroom Slippers		
X 1	1	Pair of Indoor Shoes		
X 1	1	Pair of Black Gymnasium Shoes		
2	2	Pairs of Navy Shorts		
*1	✓	School Tie		
*1	✓	Grey Belt		
*1	✓	Navy Blue Sweater (with loop)		
*1	✓	School Cap		
*1	✓	Blue Play Shirt		
*1		Grey Felt Hat		
X 1	(4)	Pair of Grey Flannel Shorts for Cricket		
2	(1)	White Cricket Shirts (with loops)		
X 1	(1)	Pair Cricket Shoes		SUMMER TERM ONLY.
1		Pair Sandals		
X 2	(2)	Pairs of Grey Ankle Socks		
X 1		White Sweater		
1		Bathing Drawers		
X 2		Towels (for Swimming)		
X 1	✓	Pair Football Boots—with bars or studs		
*1	✓	School Shirt for Soccer		
*1	✓	White Rugger Vest		AUTUMN AND SPRING TERMS ONLY.
*1	✓	Blue Rugger Vest		
*2	✓	Pairs of Football Stockings		
*1	✓	Sou'-Wester		
1	1	Rug		
X 5	5	Pairs Sheets		These are required the First Term and are then kept at the School and returned when the boy leaves.
X 3	3	Pillow Cases		
X 3	3	Bath Towels		
X 3	3	Small Rough Towels—with loops		
X 26	26	Cash's Woven Names		
1	1	Play Box		

School Outfitters : MESSRS. STAN HARDY, FRIARY STREET, GUILDFORD.

* These articles are obtained at School.

All clothes, and especially boots, must be sent in good condition. Everything sent must be plainly marked.
All clothing for Cricket and Football should have loops for hanging in the changing room.

In 1952 a fully furnished library was formed in one area off the main hall, the gift of Maurice Reckitt.

In 1954 Francis Brown left Woolpit to found Milton Abbey School in Dorset, and the following headmaster was John Hall who remained its headmaster for 21 years, retiring in 1976. The Rev'd Canon Henry Edward Symonds was one of the teachers at some point. More buildings were added, including an assembly hall and the sports hall built in 1954.



Playing football below the school.

In 1976 the premises were taken over by the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and re-named Duke of Kent School, which was merged with Vanbrugh Castle School, later becoming co-educational, non-boarding, and expanding from a Prep School to take pupils from 4 to 18 years.

The premises were later sold, in February 2000, to the Official Custodian for Charities on behalf of the Alexander Duckham Memorial Schools Trust, which then leased the premises to the Duke of Kent School in August 2010 for a period of 25 years. (Land registry register of Title Trust Deed SY460768).

Dr Brown was very good at setting up schools, but not good at the financial aspects, thus falling out with the school governors on occasions. His belief in further promoting Christian education possibly followed the occasion of surviving what would have been his likely death after being a Fire Warden in Marylebone during World War II, and one night exchanging his duty with a colleague who was killed that night in a German air raid attack. After founding The Rectory Prep School, Woolpit School and Milton Abbey, Francis Brown went on to found Cokethorpe Park School at Witney in Oxfordshire in 1957, Barcote School in 1964, and Buckland Hall University in 1963. He died in 1971 at the age of 61.

I was a pupil at Woolpit from 1954-1955, and then followed the Rev'd Dr Francis Brown on to Milton Abbey, and then to Cokethorpe Park School. I have many happy memories of my time at Woolpit, and as far as I know, I am the only 'old boy' living in Ewhurst.

POSTAL SERVICES IN EWHURST

By Michael Miller

A postal service for a village such as Ewhurst would not have been available on a regular basis much before the mid 19th century. It would not have been the sort of Post Office we would recognise today but simply a local shop or pub which acted as a receiving house for incoming and outgoing mails.

The first record we have of a receiver in Ewhurst is a Frederick Child who was listed in Kelly's Directory for 1855 as a shopkeeper and Post Office [the house is now known as Deblins Green].

The other important part of the mail service was provided by the carrier whose job it was to pick up the mail from Guildford and take back any letters for forwarding on to their final destination. In January 1857 Mr Charles Chantler was appointed as the operator of the Mail Service between Guildford and Ewhurst at a fee of £90 pa. By February of the same year, it appears that Mr Chantler's performance was unsatisfactory and he was replaced by Mr Elliot, the carrier from Cranleigh. One has to have some sympathy for Mr Chantler because travel on foot over the hills during the winter snow and ice would not have been an attractive proposition. However, in December 1859 he reapplied for the job but for a higher fee of £105 pa. and this was accepted since the distance was recorded at 12 miles. We know that Mr Chantler did not live in Ewhurst and a look at the census for 1861 shows him as the licensee for the Horse and Groom Pub in Guildford. By 1871 he had moved to Godalming and his occupation is given as Mail Contractor. Living in the next house is John Eager (post boy) so it would seem that Mr Chantler was running the service and using others to expedite the walks.

In 1870 Alfred Walter Ede took over the grocers, drapery shop, and post office business, on the green. In 1890 the business was taken over by his son Walter who ran the business with his siblings Edwin, Clara and Susan, none of whom married.



Ewhurst Post Office in the early 1900s. An Edward VII post box can still be seen in the wall on by the gate.

At some time around 1910 the post office moved to The Mount, taking over the old building vacated by The Bull's Head, which had moved to new purpose-built premises in 1908. The postmistress was Mrs Hilda Pobgee. Her son Roy, who celebrated his 100th birthday in 2022 and is currently in the Old

Rectory, recalls his early days there with some affection. By 1935 it was being run by the Spencer family. The house is now known as 'The Old Post Office'.



Above: The Post Office on the Mount, just before the First World War.

Above right: The little boy with the postman is Roy Pobgee, son of the postmistress, who recently celebrated his 100th birthday.



After the war the post office moved to Hazelbank where it was run successively by Toby Ansell, John Pidgeon, Jean Cornwell and David Copp. It finally closed in May 2002.

Left: The Post Office at Hazelbank in the 1950s.

The letters from Baynards and the mystery of the bisected stamp

Actual posted letters from the first half of the 19th century are quite rare and becoming increasingly difficult to find. I have been extraordinarily fortunate in acquiring a series of letters posted from Baynards Park by the Rev. Thomas Thurlow and his son Thomas Lyon Thurlow. Baynards Park straddles the border of Ewhurst and Cranleigh parishes, but although the house is actually in Ewhurst, it is postally addressed as Cranleigh and so the sender's address on the first letter, dated July 4 1836, was written as "Baynards Park, Cranley, nr Guildford, Surrey. The letters are all addressed to Alfred Bell in Lincolns Inn Fields and relate to rather mundane legal matters. At this time envelopes were not in common use and letters were written on sheets of paper, folded over to provide space for the address and sealed using red or black sealing wax. Philatelists refer to these as "entires" or, more simply, covers. The postal charge was 8d which would have been paid by the receiver. In 1840 Rowland Hill's great Postal Reform was enacted and the first adhesive labels, the penny black and two penny blue, were issued in May 1940. At about the same time Thomas Thurlow seems to have handed over the running of the estate to his son Thomas Lyon Thurlow and from this time all letters are signed by him.



This cover sent by Thomas Lyon Thurlow to Alfred Bell dates from December 31 1840. The pre-paid postal rate was paid by the sender as indicated by the P.1 and the PAID tombstone in red.

In April 2012 this cover took on a new significance when an article published in *Gibbons Stamp Monthly* showed part of an entire on which the sender had attempted to use a 2d blue cut in half (bisected) in order to pay the 1d postage. This was strictly not allowed under Postal Regulations and the stamp was struck through and the cover designated "Imperfect stamp". The sender then had to pay double the normal rate and a large "2" was stuck in red. When I saw this cover I immediately recognised the writing as being the same as on mine and therefore almost certainly sent by our own Thomas Lyon Thurlow of Baynards Park!



The letter with the bisected stamp as shown in 'Gibbons Stamp Monthly'.

When compared to Michael's letter sent by Thomas Lyon Thurlow to Alfred Bell (above) it is clear that both have been written by the same hand.

The bisect cover was sent a few months after the first adhesives were issued so why was the use of a 2d blue bisect necessary? One can only imagine that on trying to purchase a penny stamp the clerk may not have been familiar with current Regulations and could have said "Sorry, we have sold out of penny stamps but we still have some "tupennies" left so I could cut one of these in half for you". The sender, who may have been Thurlow himself or his manservant, obviously agreed to this as being acceptable or may have carried out the deed himself. It is strange to think that a man of such obvious wealth would engage in somewhat devious means in order to save a penny! The subsequent events are rather obscure but the GUILDFORD handstamp in red (pre-paid) was applied on July 28. On reaching London another clerk spotted the infringement of Regulations and applied a Paid Tombstone on July 29 over scribed with a red "2". As this was in red it is not clear whether the excess was to be paid by the sender, the Guildford office, or the recipient. In any case the sender seems to have been put off by his experience with these new-fangled bits of paper and by December has settled for the P.1 handstamp.

The significance of this cover in philatelic circles cannot be overstated. Being of such an early date (a few months after the first adhesive stamps were issued) it is claimed to be the earliest bisected stamp to be used on a letter. It was found at the bottom of a bag of rubbish in 1996 and recently came up for sale with a price-tag thought to be in six figures. The present owner is unknown and so at the moment the actual sender cannot be confirmed but I am sure that we have a valid claim to live near to where the earliest bisected stamp on a cover was sent.

Postscripts

The James Mangles letter to the Rev. Steuart

During my talk I showed a Free Front sent from James Mangles MP for Guildford dated 2 September 1833. Janet, sharp-eyed as ever, spotted that, although posted to Doncaster, it was addressed to Miss Kerrich and the Rev. C. Steuart, who was Rector of Ewhurst at the time. This prompts the question 'what were they doing in Doncaster?'



A clue was found in the book *Cranley Letters*. In a letter from Margaret Wolfe, wife of the Rector of Cranleigh, dated 7 October 1833 - "I am glad you liked Lucy's present from Mr Steuart..... Mr Miller [not me, I hasten to add!] had been on a visit to them, when he last wrote from the neighbourhood of Doncaster." The other addressee is a Miss Kerrich (sometimes Kerrich) and Janet informs me that Adeline Kerrich was the half-sister of the rector's wife.

Some early carrier's buttons found in Barhatch Lane

After the talk I was speaking with Sue Willis and she told me she had found two buttons in her garden [in Barhatch Lane, Cranleigh] which were from letter carrier's tunics and she was prepared to let me have them for the archives. Sure enough, the next morning an envelope arrived with the buttons in question together with details that Sue had managed to ascertain from Post Office Archives.

The first button is inscribed 'General Post Office' and with a number 66 in the middle. Barry Attoe from the Postal Museum said "We believe this button is similar to one in our collection, issued to a letter carrier which we date to being in use around 1793-1851. The first issue of numbered buttons to letter carriers was in 1793 mostly to the London districts and issue to the provinces followed more slowly. By 1851 the numbers had been transferred from the button to the lapel."

The second button is very worn. On the back it is inscribed 'Rudge & Co., 29 St Martins Le Grand'. This business would have been located close to The General Post Office, which was also in St Martins Le Grand. The PO Directory shows Arthur Jeffery Rudge to be 'button and trimming sellers'. The front shows a heraldic animal, which bears a strong resemblance to the otter and fish on the crest of the Proctor family, although it is not clear what, if any, connection the Proctor family had with either the Post Office or the Cranleigh area. Otters also appear in the crests of other families.



Above left: the General Post Office button, which predates 1851; Centre: the Rudge & Co. button; Right: the otter on the crest of the Proctor family bears a strong resemblance.

HEATHCOTE - A "ONE-NAME STUDY"

by **Barrie Heathcote**

I have always been interested in my own family history and have researched my family tree back to the 1600s but, in 2011, I decided to find out about the "Heathcote" name and started a "One-Name Study" on my surname.

The "Heathcote" name, meaning "the cottage on the heath" seems to have originated from the village of that name in Derbyshire. It was first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Hedcote and as Heathcote in 1244. The first recorded name of note appeared in the Pipe Rolls for Derbyshire of 1166 as Godfrey de Hetcota. By 1841, the Census listed 47 Heathcotes resident in the UK. In 2001 this had risen to about 2500, mostly living in Lancashire and Derbyshire.

Some Heathcotes were travellers, as many places around the world have been named after them. Heathcote Brook is in New Jersey in the United States. Point Heathcote is on the Swan River, Perth, Western Australia and was named after Midshipman G.C. Heathcote who is said to be the first European to land there. Heathcote, originally known as Bottle Forest, is a suburb in Southern Sydney but was renamed in honour of an officer who fought in the Peninsular War against Napoleon. There is a Heathcote in Victoria, Australia which is now a wine-growing area, but was first settled in 1836 and by 1851 had a population of 400 Europeans. In 1852, gold was discovered in the Pink Cliff area of Heathcote and within 6 months the population, mostly miners, had increased by 40,000. The find proved to be one of the richest during the Australian gold rush but, as it was easily found, a large proportion of the miners left by the end of the year. It was also the site of a gold robbery. In 1853 a party of bushrangers attacked a gold shipment, wounding 4 of the 6 guards and escaping with £10,000 of gold and cash.

There were several famous Heathcotes. Sir Gilbert Heathcote was a resident of Chesterfield in Derbyshire. He was descended from a Chesterfield family of Bell Founders whose bells can be found throughout England. He was Mayor of Chesterfield three times and owner of lead mines in the area. He was a major in Cromwell's Model Army and is said to have conducted himself with great bravery during several engagements. Gilbert, his eldest son, became a successful merchant in London, one of the promoters of the New East India Company and a founder and director of the Bank of England.



In 1702 he became an Alderman and was knighted and made Lord Mayor in 1711. He was the last Lord Mayor to ride on horseback in his procession. In 1700 he was sent to parliament as a Whig member for the City of London but was expelled for some dodgy business with exchequer bills. He was re-elected later in the same year. Although extremely rich, his meanness is referred to by Pope and accounts for his unpopularity with the lower classes. He was made a baronet eight days before he died.

Left: Sir Gilbert Heathcote.

Gilbert's younger brother Caleb who, as the story goes, was spurned by a beautiful woman, emigrated to America in 1691. He inherited a fortune from his uncle George. This was mainly invested in shipping and it is rumoured that he purchased a vessel in New York that had been captured by pirates in the Indian Ocean and brought back to America for sale. Caleb married well to Martha Smith, whose mother had been a maid of honour to the Queen. Caleb built up his estate, buying a large tract of land fronting

Long Island and adding land purchased from the Indians. These were incorporated into a manor which he named Scarsdale in honour of the valley of Scarsdale in Derbyshire at the head of which stands Chesterfield, his birth place. His estate is now the present-day town of Scarsdale. During his time in New York, he was made Mayor - two brothers being Mayors of New York and London, quite an achievement.

Gilbert's nephew George, born in Jamaica in 1700, was also made London's Lord Mayor in 1742 and was active in supporting the Jacobite rising of 1745. Through his wife, Maria, he inherited Southbroom House which is now part of Devizes School. One of the houses in the school is called Heathcote.

Not all Heathcotes were rich and powerful. In 1788 Rebecca Heathcote was convicted, in Chester, of larceny and transported for 7 years to New South Wales in Australia. She sailed in the vessel Neptune in 1789. At least 11 other Heathcotes were transported. In 1809 a Charles Heathcote was tried in Staffordshire for "Larceny in a big house", convicted and sentenced to death.

In the Slave Register of British Colonial Dependencies 1812 to 1834 there are 8 slaves with the name Heathcote. I presume that they were named after their original owner.

In 1815 Robert Heathcot was a private in a Sussex Regiment of Foot during the Battle of Waterloo and was awarded a Waterloo Roll Medal (as was everyone else). William Heathcote fought in the Peninsular War in a Derbyshire Foot Regiment.



In June 1857, during the Indian Mutiny, a 25-year-old lieutenant, Alfred Spencer Heathcote (left), was awarded the Victoria Cross. His Citation reads: "For highly gallant and daring conduct at Delhi throughout the siege, from June to September, 1857, during which he was wounded. He volunteered for services of extreme danger, especially during the six days of severe fighting in the streets after the Assault. Elected by the officers of his regiment."

Left: Alfred Spencer Heathcote V.C.

While Alfred Spencer was making a name for himself in Delhi, Surgeon Thomas Godfrey Heathcote of the Bengal Native Infantry and his wife were meeting a dreadful fate in Cawnpore. On the 27th June 1857 the garrison of Cawnpore surrendered to Nana Sahib in the belief that they were to be allowed to leave on boats for the safety of Allahabad. On arrival at Satichaura Ghat Dock the sepoys attacked, killing nearly all including Surgeon Heathcote and his wife Gertrude.

Paul Heathcote MBE is a chef and has appeared on many UK food television shows. He is one of only two chefs in the North West of England ever to hold two Michelin Stars.

Finally, there have been several actors with the Heathcote name. Bella Heathcote, born in 1987, appeared as Amanda Fowler in *Neighbours* and in several films including "Fifty Shades Darker".

Thomas Heathcote 1917 to 1986 was in "Above us the Waves", "Doctor at Sea", "Billy Budd", "Julius Caesar", "Quatermass and the Pit" and many others.

Ben Heathcote was in "Mama Mia", "Sister Act", "Fame", "Thank you for the Music" and "The Three Musketeers" among some others.



And I, of course, have appeared in a few productions for the Ewhurst Players.

ARTHUR RAYMOND WEBBER MM – A GOOD SOLDIER AND FAMILY HERO

By Alan Webber

This is a short part of my family's history which I started after my father died. To his children he was just an ordinary, hardworking Bristolian, a good father and husband. Although we knew about his disability, we never really questioned it and he never spoke about it, so we had very little idea about his life and wartime service until I started my research.



Arthur Raymond Webber was born on 8 November 1921, the eldest son of Gilbert, a machinery manufacturer, and Bessie, a machinist for a boot manufacturer. They lived on Stapleton Road, Eastville, part of the C19th expansion of Bristol and a predominantly working-class area of terrace houses and commercial and industrial uses.

We don't know much about Dad's early life except that he left St. Werburgh's school at the age of 14 with no qualifications, he played football on Eastville Park where Bristol Rovers trained and could have played for them if WW2 had not intervened. His first job was as a grocery delivery boy and later a grocery assistant for the Bristol Co-op and he knew many youngsters from around Stapleton.

Dad did not volunteer for military service in 1939, possibly because of the influence of his mother who had lost family in the First World War.

In April 1941 he was conscripted although his pay book says he volunteered. His medical classification was A1. He joined an anti-aircraft training regiment at Yeovil and became a loader for Bofors and Bren gunner and in July transferred to 53rd Light AA Battery.

For 3 years the battery moved around south east England as part of Eastern Command. Dad qualified as a Tradesman and Pay Duties Clerk and played football for his battery. In Spring 1944, they were stationed in Kent as part of Fortitude South, the deception operation when Patton's FUSAG deceived the Germans into thinking the Allies would invade the Pas de Calais. However, they were still part of Overlord Operation – the Invasion of Normandy.

They embarked for France on 6 July and defended bridges and airstrips in the bridgehead. However, they saw few German aircraft and spent most time sheltering from shelling, so after 4 weeks they came back to England and disbanded. In August, Dad joined the Royal Scot's Infantry Training Company and in October 1944 was "allocated" to the 7th/9th (Highlanders) Battalion even though they had already departed to Belgium.

At the start of November, the Royal Scots helped clear the Scheldt Estuary and captured Vlissingen and Middelburg. Dad joined D Company shortly afterwards when he helped round up surrendering Germans. In mid-November, the 7th/9th re-organised at s-Hertogenbosch before returning to the front line on the Maas river where they were involved in fierce fighting in wet conditions. On 5 December they moved to Maastricht and a few days later to near Gelsenkirchen to take over from exhausted British troops after Operation Clipper – an attempt to clear a salient in the Siegfried Line.

There followed a period of hotly contested localised actions and aggressive patrolling in freezing conditions to prevent the Germans re-establishing their defences in the Wurm Valley. On the night of the 8/9 January, D Company attacked a fortified farmhouse called Bruggerhof near a crossroads by passed in Operation Clipper.

The attack on the crossroads began successfully. Prisoners were captured, but suddenly the advancing troops found themselves in an uncharted minefield. Two were killed and 19 wounded but Lt. Stewart's platoon got through, with only six wounded, and took the position. As a result of the action two men were honoured. Lt. Stewart, as an officer, was awarded the Military Cross; and Private Webber was awarded the Military Medal. At this time the Military Cross was only awarded to officers. 'Other ranks' received the Military Medal, but since 1993 there has been no distinction in rank and the Military Medal has become obsolete.

Although blown up by a mine, and so seriously injured that he later lost both of his legs, he kept on firing at the enemy; the citation for his Military Medal refers specially to his *"courage, coolness and spirit"* in encouraging his comrades. His magnificent example was an inspiration to his platoon, and contributed largely to the success of the operation. The ground was frozen hard and snow deep. It was hard to clear lines in the minefields to take Webber and the others back to the Aid Post. With deep appreciation, Colonel Dawson recalled *"the splendid courage of the casualties as they lay in that frozen minefield and of Private Webber as he lay severely wounded yet firing his rifle and directing his comrades along a safe path"*.

Dad suffered multiple shrapnel wounds and was one of the last recovered. After emergency aid, he was moved to Antwerp for the first amputations and then to Brentford Hospital where they were completed. By mid 1945, he was at Llandaff Hospital for rehabilitation. There he and three friends, with only 4 legs and 5 arms between them, "escaped" down the pub in a car! At weekends, he travelled through Cardiff in his wheelchair strapped to the back of an uncle's coal lorry waving to passers-by.

He came home on 9 December 1945 and was discharged at Perth in February 1946 because he *"Ceased to fulfil Army physical requirements"* His Medical Classification was E and his Conduct Exemplary.



For his courage at Bruggerfof, Arthur was awarded the Military Medal on 20 December 1945, announced in the London Gazette in January 1946.

After the war he went back to work for BCS in banking and accounts, later became an Office Manager and retired in 1983. He married Elizabeth Nicholls, the younger sister of two of the old 'Stapleton crowd', in 1949 and had four children.

He got his first artificial limbs in 1947 and never used a wheelchair again afterwards. Until his 70s, he rarely used even his stick. He played golf – badly, cricket – batting without pads, and later lawn bowls but never again football. Although he continued to support Bristol Rovers who made special provision for the disabled.

He was a pioneer in Bristol of disabled driving, initially having a disabled buggy in which he carried my sister and me. In late 1956 he had one of the first fully adapted hand-control cars and taught others how to use them. In 1960 he got one of the first “Ministry of Pensions” Morris Minis and drove without accident or endorsement until 2004.



Left: Private Webber, still in uniform, in a wheelchair.



Right: After receiving his new limbs he never used a wheelchair again.

He passed away in August 2007, after 15 years post-retirement travel, playing bowls and helping with his grandchildren.