

Insights on Victorian Families in Ewell

By Tim Bauckham

As you all know, our volunteers have been busy copying the Census Data for Ewell taken at ten yearly intervals from 1841 to 1901 onto a computer database, and linking this to the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for St Mary's, Ewell. It is now possible to extract interesting information about Victorian Ewell from the database and I thought you might like a taster.



West Street, Ewell in the 1920s.
Courtesy Bourne Hall Museum

The average family was much larger in Victorian times than now; Queen Victoria herself had nine children. In Ewell, looking at the Censuses and Parish records of Baptisms shows there were 33 families which had 11 or more children, the largest number recorded being 19 (plus one stepson from a second marriage!).

Sadly, children of these and indeed of smaller families did not always survive to adulthood. Almost one third of all burials recorded in Ewell between 1851 and 1901 were of children aged 15 or less and almost half of those were infants aged less than one year.

However, in 1901 some Ewell families were shown as having large numbers of children living at home. The

highest number of children recorded in one dwelling was the twelve living with their father William Sparrow and mother Annie in four rooms in 'Gibraltar', now West Street. Their cottage would have looked very like those shown in this photograph, taken in the 1920s.

A Doll like Alice

By Bert Barnhurst

The Ruxley Lane air crash has been an ongoing story for some four years, and is still going on even now. At first, in 2004 during our D-Day event, we only knew that there had been a crash in Ruxley Lane late in the war. Research during the next year established many facts including the aircraft involved, a Warwick, and the circumstances of the crash, it was without a pilot, and crashed on 14 Ruxley Lane, Ewell, demolishing the house and killing the owner, Anne Swan, and her neighbour Edith Connor. Fortunately, none of the rest of Anne's family was at home – her husband was serving in the forces, her son Alan was at school and her daughter Margaret was an evacuee.

If you remember, members of the Swan family and neighbours met up at our '1945 Street Party' in May 2005. And it might have ended there until, in 2007, Mr. Peter Barrett contacted me having read the story of the crash on our website www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk/ and related an unexpected twist to the tale!



Margaret Dyson with 'Alice' and Edith Barrett.

Shortly after the crash Douglas and Edith Barrett, Peter's parents, who were visiting Ewell, walked past the ruins of the house as it was being cleared away and spied a bedraggled doll on top of the rubbish. The poignant image so touched Edith Barrett that she took the doll home with her, but without any real idea what she would do with it. But having read our story, Peter remembered the doll and contacted the History Centre who found the doll's original owner, Margaret Dyson (nee Swan), Anne's evacuated daughter.

So 63 years later, on the 28th June 2008, Peter's mother, Edith Barrett handed the doll, called 'Alice', to its original owner Margaret Dyson.

A few days later, I received a very nice letter from Peter Barrett which I reproduce here:

Hi Bert and Margaret

Well! What a super day Saturday turned out to be!

It was a real pleasure to meet everyone and my Mother hasn't stopped talking about it since we got home. There will now be a steady stream of photos and photocopies going out to the family and to old WAAF friends.

Very many thanks to you, Bert, and to your team for making the event happen, for your hospitality and for the super photos.

And special thanks to Margaret and to Alan for the fun and friendship we enjoyed at Bourne Hall.

It's an event that can't be repeated but we really do hope that we will be able to stay in touch.

Thanks again, everyone.

Best regards

Peter

Now there has been a further twist to the tale. Peter Reed recently received an email from Mr. Laurie Joyce, which said:

“ Hi There

I have just read the article on your website about the air crash in Ruxley Lane in 1945. Although I was only 5 at the time I saw the plane in question both before and after the crash, and I thought my little bit of information might be of interest to Bert Barnhurst who produced the article in 2005. Perhaps you will kindly pass this on to him.

I now live in Caversham Heights Reading but I was brought up in a little semi at No. 16 Willow Way Ewell Court from 1940 until around 1961. Yesterday I was visiting the Hendon Aircraft Museum and looking at the WW 2 aeroplanes. It triggered a memory of when I was a little boy. So I came back home and looked it up on the net and much to my surprise there it was - I read Bert Barnhurst's account with great interest.

Briefly all I can add is that my mother sent up to the fish and chip shop with a note and money in my glove. I guess would have taken me around 15 minutes to get there. I cannot remember if it was both on the way there and back or only on the way back, but I clearly remember seeing a plane high up in the sky going round and round in circles for what appeared to be ages. I remember watching all the time as I walked home. When I got back to Willow Way I pointed it out to my mother and we watched it with another lady who was staying with us. I remember seeing what appeared to be an orange glow around it and then we saw small dots of people parachuting down and then the plane went into a dive. My mother said something like some poor devil would get it.

A few days later we were walking along Ruxley Lane and saw the remains of a demolished house and a large trailer removing the remains of the aircraft. I have no idea what type it was but it did have a lot of windows in the front. At the museum the Heinkel 111 reminded me of it, but it is a long time ago and I was only 5 at the time so I could not identify it now.

Years later my mother told me the people who were killed were eating fish and chips, they had asked for skate but rather than wait for it to be cooked they had taken the cod or haddock that was ready. If they had waited they would have been saved. At least this confirms the article.

I hope this is of interest.

“

Regards Laurie Joyce

Many thanks, Laurie. It's added some more information to our research on the crash.

Can anyone answer this?

When 'Alice' was handed over to Margaret Dyson, we were delighted that Mayor Alan Winkworth was able to attend together with the Lady Mayoress.

The Mayor was wearing his chain of office, but do you know who donated the chain to Epsom when it became a borough?



It's a Maze-ing

By Bert Barnhurst

The 11th October saw the annual London History Fair, The London Maze, which takes place at the Guildhall. Not only is this one of the largest events of its kind but this year it had the added distinction of being visited by three of our volunteers, Joanna Grant, Jill Alford and Bert Barnhurst. Joanna was helping to 'man' the East Surrey Family History Society stand, which was one of over fifty such outlets on display. Jill and Bert were looking to buy books and meet up with people.

Also during the day there were a number of talks on various related subjects together with 'walks' around the City if one so wished. One of the more unexpected tours was to the Roman Amphitheatre under the Guildhall courtyard. These remains were only discovered in 1988, but have now been turned into what is in effect an extension of the London Museum.

One has to schedule the events to get the best out of the day so as not to miss anything, such as how to amputate a limb in less than forty seconds! Members of the Old Operating Theatre Museum demonstrated how this was carried out before anaesthetics. We are pleased to report that the 'patient' was able to walk away afterwards.

And so it was that our intrepid trio found themselves watching Elizabethan Dancing in the afternoon, in the crypt of Guildhall, admirably performed by 'Renaissance Dancers' accompanied by musicians also in period dress and playing appropriate instruments of the time.



At one point the audience was asked if they would care to join in. Although Bert says that he tried to tell Jill and Joanna that this was not Strictly Elizabethan Dancing and that Anton du Beke would not be taking part, there was no stopping them.

After the dancing there was an Elizabethan 'striptease.' While this was not quite what one might have thought, being more to do with style of dress indicating rank, it was still very revealing. At this point there was no sign of Jill and Joanna, hence no picture! (Who said thank goodness for that?).

If you haven't been to the Maze don't miss out next year. It is thoroughly recommended.

W H O

DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The Family History Day on Saturday, 25th October 2008 was a great success with, we estimate, around a hundred visitors. I thought you might like to know some of the amazing range of family history enquiries we handled.

Most people wanted to know more about their relatives in Epsom & Ewell and a number wanted to trace the history of their house in Epsom & Ewell, either through photographs we hold in our records or from the Ordnance Survey maps we have from 1866 to date.

In view of the time of year, there were also people looking for military and service records and relatives who died in the Great War.

But we also had people seeking Jewish, Irish, Scottish, Polish, German, Prussian and Swiss family roots. And some were very surprised to find bigamists, adoption and even a breach of promise in their families.

Isn't this what makes family history research so satisfying? It was a great day and thanks to everyone who participated.

Information from the General Register Office

By Joanna Grant

As of May 2008 the General Register Office is no longer selling copies of their indexes so, in the future, third party websites will not hold the recent indexes.

A complete set of the GRO Indexes including

- Births, Deaths and Marriages from 1837 – 2006
- Overseas from 1761 -2006
- Civil Partnerships from 2005 -2007
- Adoptions from 1927 – 2007
- Provisional indexes for Births and Deaths for 2007

are available at the following locations:

- The National Archives at Kew
- City of Westminster Archives Centre
- Greater Manchester County Record Office
- Birmingham Central Library
- Plymouth Central Library
- Bridgend Reference and Information Library

All the above locations will receive the GRO Indexes for more modern events as and when they become available and these arrangements are expected to continue until 'free on-line' access to the GRO Indexes can be provided. Local offices will not hold complete sets of the indexes, only events registered at their office.

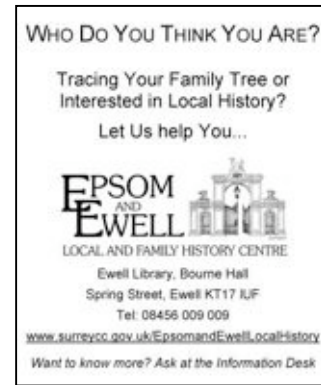
The GRO website gives information about the indexes by following the link

<<http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/research/groindexes/index.asp#0>>.

Since the above information was received it has been announced that the planned 'free on-line' access to the GRO indexes has suffered a major set back, three years after the project first started. The contract with the outside company providing the technology has come to an end and will not be renewed. So it is anyone's guess when the project to put up to date BMDs on -line will actually happen!

Keep an Eye on the Ashley Centre (or is it The Mall?)

I want to let you know that Angela has arranged for the Epsom and Ewell Local and Family History Centre to be featured, albeit intermittently, on the 'About Town' pages at The Mall. So, if you are doing a bit of window gazing in The Ashley Centre (we're not precious about brand names) keep an eye open for this poster on the screens. Also, the Ask Point has some of our new leaflets. If you see it, please let us know – leave a note in the Day Book at the LHC.



Some Forthcoming Events

2008 Christmas Party – put it in your diary

To bring some cheer to the start of the Christmas season the Epsom & Ewell Local History Centre Christmas Party will be held on **Monday, 8th December, 2008** at 6.30 pm in Ewell Library, Bourne Hall. Don't forget to bring some eats and drink to help the party along – and I'm sure we will have the usual challenging puzzles to resolve.

8th Annual General Meeting 2009

The 8th Annual General Meeting of the Epsom & Ewell Local & Family History Centre will be held on **Wednesday, 22nd April, 2009** at 6.30 pm in Ewell Library, Bourne Hall and, as usual, everyone is invited including members of the public. We are currently working on the speaker for this event and will let you know as soon as we have it confirmed.

Herald of Spring 2009

This enlightening event will be on **Friday, 20th and Saturday 21st February 2009**. The theme next year will be 'All the Fun of the Fair'. The event will be accompanied by a display on 'Show Folk'.

Celebrating the 150th Anniversary of Ewell Station 2009

This special event celebrating the opening of Ewell West station 150 years ago is being planned for **April 2009**. We'll try to keep you informed of progress.

50th Anniversary of the Nonsuch Palace Dig, June 2009

We'll keep you informed of progress once we have more details.

Forthcoming Surrey Heritage Events and Displays

We thought you might like to know about some forthcoming events in Surrey as advised to us by the Surrey History Centre.

Lest We Forget

Talks and events marking the 90th anniversary of the end of the Great War

The archaeology and infrastructure of the Great War in Surrey

Thursday 13 November 7.30pm

An evening talk by Paul Bowen.

Tickets £3.00. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Sources for the Forces in the First World War

Saturday 15 November 2.00pm-3.00pm

William Spencer, Principal Specialist of Military Records at The National Archives gives a talk on archival sources for ancestors in the First World War, plus signing copies of his latest book *First World War Army Service Records*. Tickets £3.00. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Digging the Trenches, The Archaeology of the Western Front

Thursday 20 November 7.30pm

An evening talk by Andy Robertshaw, of the Royal Logistics Corps Museum and TV's 'Digging the Trenches'

Tickets £3.00. Please phone 01483.518737 to book.

R C Sherriff's Journey - From Soldier to Playwright

Saturday 22 November 11 am -12.15pm

A talk by David Filsell

Tickets £3.00. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Tim Richardson and Craig Appleton - 'Soldiers Two'

Saturday 22 November 2.00pm - 3.00pm.

Family friendly event. Come and experience a rare view inside the 'old kit bag' and see uniforms and artifacts of a Tommy and officer from the Queens and East Surrey regiments, c.1918. A fantastic chance for all ages to learn more about soldiers of the First World War, how they were equipped and what they encountered.

Tickets £2.00. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Welcome Home: The reception for the returned Queen's Prisoners of War

Thursday 27 November 7.30pm

An evening talk by Duncan Sutton, Surrey Heritage

Tickets £3.00. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Commemorating the Fallen: Village War Memorials in Surrey

Saturday 29 November 11.30am - 12.30pm

Talk by Keith Grieves of Kingston University

Tickets £4.00 or £10 for a day ticket for the 29 November.

Boy Soldiers of the Great War

Saturday 29 November, 2.00pm - 3.00pm

A talk by author Richard van Emden

Tickets £4.00 or £10 for a day ticket for the 29 November.

Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front

Saturday 29 November, 3.30 pm - 4.30pm

A talk by Richard Holmes, CBE

Tickets £4.00 or £10 for a day ticket for the 29 November. Please phone 01483 518737 to book.

Learning in Surrey Libraries

Family and local History Events in Surrey libraries with Surrey Heritage

Surrey on Film 1914-1953: A Community in Peace and War

Walton Library - Thursday 20 November, 2008

Di Stiff from Surrey Heritage will present this fascinating compilation of rare moving images showing Surrey towns, villages and families in the first half of the twentieth century, celebrating in times of peace and coming together in response to the stress of two world wars. Come and enjoy a glimpse of bygone Surrey life through the lens of the cine camera. Films featured include Godalming in 1911, the Molesey Regatta of 1921, 'Hersham Makes Merry, 1935, Reigate Carnival, 1926 and Walton's March for Victory, 1941

Start time: 3.00pm. Duration: 1 hour.

Ticket price: £2.50. Places are limited so advance booking is essential either by phone on 08456 009 009 or by visiting the library

Who Do You Think You Are and Exploring Surrey's Past

Esher Library - Saturday 22nd November 2008

Have you met a problem in researching your family history? Are you interested in the history of Surrey? If so, then free advice from experts from Surrey Heritage can be obtained between 10am and 12.30pm at this drop-in event.

Information provided by:

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 6ND.

Tel: 01483 518737

Email: shs@surreycc.gov.uk

The Centre is open Tues, Wed, Fri 9.30 - 5.00; Thurs 9.30 - 7.30; Sat 9.30 - 4.00

Have You got News for Us?

We hope you've enjoyed reading this newsletter. Thanks to all those who provided information and stories. But to keep the momentum going we need more, so I make no apologies in repeating this message. If you have any

- reports on visits to various sites or centres
- intriguing Information Requests
- forthcoming projects or events
- interesting facts about local history or genealogy
- new research documents the LFHC has received
- or just strange tales to tell

please let Ian know - supporting photographs and pictures, if available, would be most welcome. It will help make the newsletter more interesting for us all. The next publication date will probably be in Spring 2009, so you have plenty of time to think of something.

IRP. 7th November 2008

*Who donated the Mayor's Chain of Office when Epsom became a borough?
Believe it or not it was Wandsworth Gas Company. Bert saw it engraved on the back.
But who knows why?*